

## **Warning: Distractions Ahead**

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**A sign says:** *When life becomes fuzzy, adjust your focus.*

Alvin Kelly did not seem to have much focus. He ran off to sea as a teenager, where it is said he survived several ship sinkings. Returning to dry land he became a boxer. Whenever he hit the canvas, fans chanted, "Sailor Kelly's been shipwrecked again!"

Shipwreck got a job with a skyscraper construction crew walking steel girders. When he discovered that he had no fear of heights, his life became a bit more focused. He became a professional stunt man. In 1924, a Los Angeles theater owner hired him to sit on a flagpole as a publicity stunt, and thus began the flagpole-sitting craze.

Shipwreck Kelly became a national hero for his ability to sit perched atop a flagpole on a small 13-inch wooden disc. He slept in 5-minute catnaps with his thumbs locked into holes bored in the pole. Any wavering as he dozed would bring twinges of pain and wake him. His food and other necessities were hauled up in a basket on a rope pulley. In 1930 he set a world record by sitting on a flagpole on top of the Steel Pier in Atlantic City, 225 feet high, for 49 days and one hour. Such a feat required focus.

**Another sign:** *Your life is too important to give it to distraction.*

The great English mystery writer, Dorothy Sayers, also wrote about the Christian faith. This thrust her into the spotlight as a spokesperson for Christianity. She was invited to most every Christian gathering in England to bless it with her presence. And she hated it because this was not in keeping with the purpose of her life. She wrote to a friend, "How dare they (the clergy) talk about Christian vocation, when at the same time they try to take me away from my vocation, which is to be a craftsman with words... to waste my time doing something for which I have no vocation and no talent, merely because I have a name."

**Yet another sign:** *Let's recapture intent.*

Nehemiah had returned from Babylonian exile to Jerusalem, which by then was part of the Persian Empire, to help the Jewish people rebuild a life there. The walls of the city, which were needed for defense, had been torn down. Enemies of Jerusalem tried to distract him from wall repair. "So I sent messengers to them, saying, 'I am doing a great work and cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?'" - Nehemiah 6:3

**Quote:** *Life is full of distractions nowadays. When I was a kid we had a little Emerson radio and that was it. We were more dedicated. We didn't have a choice. - Stan Getz*

Os Guinness says in his book, *The Call*, "Modern media brings us the world and its dazzling array of options... The heightened awareness of the presence of others increases our awareness of possibilities for ourselves. Their cuisines, their customs, their convictions can become our choices, our options, our possibilities... Choice is no longer just a state of mind. Choice has become a value, a priority, a right. To be modern is to be addicted to choice and change."

Whereas some choice is certainly a good thing, "In the modern world there are simply too many choices, too many people to relate to, too much to do, too much to see, too much to read, too much to catch up with or follow, too much to buy... We're overloaded."

**The reason** I bring up focus, purpose, intent, dedication, and distractions is that I asked a retired fellow if he had time for coffee. He said, "Hey, I'm retired. All I have is time." On more than one level that is not true. Certainly not if we want to continue contributing to the lives of others and more fully experience the joys of God's world. Obviously, we have less time today than we did yesterday.

*"The Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; one thing's enough.'"* (Luke 10: 41,42) We may need to give poor old Martha a break by substituting our names for hers. She's hardly the only one.