

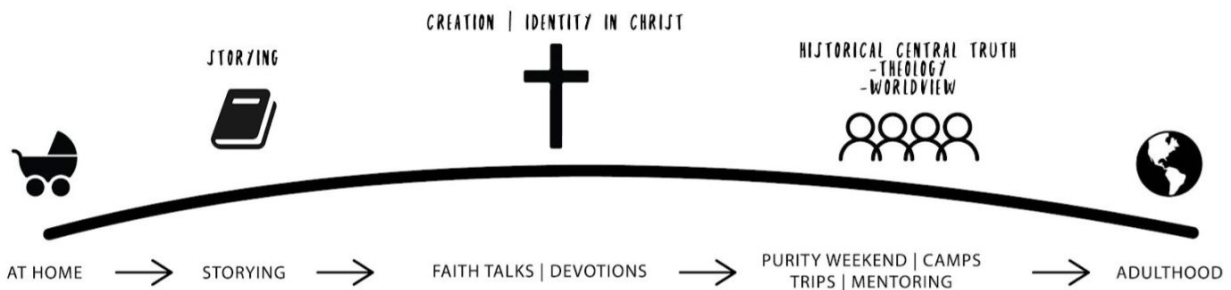
Distracted From Jesus, Luke 10:38-42

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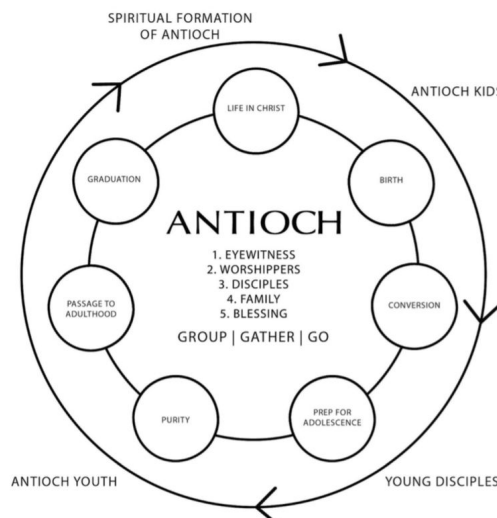
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Introduction

Good morning, my name is Brad and I'm one of the pastors here. Today we're bringing to a close a short sermon series titled Families Creating Culture. I hope it's been an encouragement to you, regardless of your season of family life. If you're looking for more on this topic, I commend to you our Family Ministry Resource Guide, which was put together by Pastor Patrick. There you'll find not only what we believe the Bible has to say about families, along with lots of recommended resources for each stage of a child's life, but also our framework for how the church comes alongside parents in discipling their children. It looks something like this. First, Family Ministry milestones:



And second, Family Ministry structure:



For today's message we'll be looking at a short story in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 10:38-42, which you can find on page 869 if you're using one of the Bibles in the chairs. The title of the sermon is "Distracted from Jesus," and the main idea is this: Families creating culture means parents disciplining their children in technology. The flow of today's passage, I believe, provides a helpful approach to our world of technology:

- 1) Reach For Formation - vv. 38-39
- 2) Recognize Your Distraction - v. 40
- 3) Receive His Correction - vv. 41-42

With that said, if you are able, please stand with me to honor the reading of God's word. Again, today's passage is Luke 10:38-42. Church, hear the word of the Lord:

³⁸ Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. ³⁹ And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." ⁴¹ But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, ⁴² but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her." Luke 10:38-42

May the Word preached here today echo in our hearts and among the nations. And all God's people said, *Amen*. You may be seated.

Exposition

Technology—it's an amazing thing, right? The level of human creativity and intelligence at play in harnessing the world is literally mind-blowing. It's also mind-blowing to think about some of the things that happen when technology meets humanity. Take, for example, the technology we affectionately refer to as Instagram, which allows you to not only take photos, but put beautiful filters on them and share them with the world instantly. Here are some signs that perhaps you should consider taking a break from Instagram:

- Driving while instagramming
- Posting pictures of the same thing over and over
- Something unfortunate happens while instagramming
- Your legs go numb while in the bathroom scrolling
- Deleting a post because it didn't get enough likes

- Being in a group that looked like this (everyone on their phones at a meal)

I know that last one is especially funny (in part, it's funny because it's true!), but it landed close to home for me a few years ago. Katie and I were on vacation and one night at a restaurant we noticed a family sitting nearby. They had finished eating their food, and every single one of them—adult and child included—were completely engrossed in their phones. No conversation. No laughter. No presence to one another. Just each person alone with his or her screen. And so from that point, as young parents Katie and I committed to one another not to go down that path in our family.

But that is much easier said than done! Technology is the number one reason parents believe raising kids today is more complicated than in the past.¹ Living in an age of insta-everything has a way of invading every moment of our lives, whether we want it to or not.

To talk about technology in this series isn't to say that technology is bad. To tell parents to discipline their children in technology isn't a subtle way of encouraging you to become Amish; nor is it a gentle nudge toward a certain educational method. Technology in many ways is good, in the same vein that God pronounced his creation good.² It's a modern fulfillment of God's original mandate to create culture by subduing the earth.³ It may have taken thousands of years for us to subdue electricity and magnetism and energy, but God had put it all there from the very beginning, just waiting on us.

The thing is, for technology to be *very good*, it must be subdued by us rather than us by it. In other words, it must be put in its proper place.⁴

Andy Crouch, on whom I leaned for much of my approach today, says that

- *Technology is in its proper place when it helps us bond with the real people we have been given to love. It's out of its proper place when we end up bonding with people at a distance, like celebrities, whom we will never meet.*
- *Technology is in its proper place when it starts great conversations. It's out of its proper place when it prevents us from talking with and listening to one another.*

¹ Andy Crouch, *The Tech-Wise Family: Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in its Proper Place* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017), Loc 189

² Genesis 1:31

³ Genesis 1:28

⁴ Crouch, Loc 562

- *Technology is in its proper place when it helps us take care of the fragile bodies we inhabit. It's out of its proper place when it promises to help us escape the limits and vulnerabilities of those bodies altogether.*
- *Technology is in its proper place when it helps us acquire skill and mastery of domains that are the glory of human culture. When we let technology replace the development of skill with passive consumption, something has gone wrong.*
- *Technology is in its proper place when it helps us cultivate awe for the created world we are part of and responsible for stewarding. It's out of its proper place when it keeps us from engaging the wild and wonderful natural world with all our senses.*
- *Technology is in its proper place only when we use it with intention and care. If we aren't intentional and careful, we'll end up with a quite extraordinary mess.⁵*

The simplest way I know how to sum up the extraordinary mess that technology creates without proper boundaries is in a single word: *distraction*. In fact, if you're looking for a place in the Bible that explicitly refers to technology as we know it today, you won't find it. Sure, you can see the development of civilized tools like we talked about in Genesis 4, but not the kind of technology that only came into existence within a few generations, the kind that makes things almost physically and mentally effortless.⁶ But what the Bible *does* address is the principle of distraction, the removal of our attention from what God says is most important in life.

And that's where today's story comes in. It takes place in the Gospel of Luke, right after a critical turning point in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. We read of it,

⁵¹ When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.
Luke 9:51

In other words, when the time came for Jesus to complete his mission, to die on the cross for our sins and rise again for our salvation, there was clearly a great sense of urgency. Jesus would refuse to let anything distract him—he was going to listen and obey the Father. And along the way, he was going to call others to do the same, more urgently than ever. Yet immediately following that statement, Luke records multiple examples of distracted people doing just the opposite:

- some who want to claim their family inheritance before following Jesus⁷

⁵ Crouch, Loc 118-180

⁶ Crouch, Loc 389-421

⁷ Luke 9:59

- some who refuse to receive Jesus' messengers⁸
- and some who are more delighted in their own power than Jesus' power.⁹

And then one final example is recorded: the little story of Mary and Martha. It's the story that, when it comes to distraction, is the most enduring of them all; and the one that exposes all of our distracted hearts.

1) Reach For Formation - vv. 38-39

This brings us to our first step in a world of distraction: reach for formation. We begin reading in verse 38:

³⁸ Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. Luke 10:38

Now, we know much more about Martha than this little story tells us here. She also has a sister named Mary and a brother named Lazarus—yes, the Lazarus who later dies and is buried and Jesus comes and raises back to life. The Bible also tells us that these three siblings were close friends of Jesus.¹⁰ Perhaps today's story is where their friendship began.

And if so, then it began with Martha taking the initiative to invite Jesus into her household. We should keep in mind that earlier in this same chapter Jesus describes the importance of such a person who welcomes Jesus and his messengers into his or her household:

⁵ Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!' ⁶ And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. ⁷ And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. ⁸ Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. ⁹ Heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' ¹⁰ But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, ¹¹ 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.' ¹² I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town. Luke 10:5-12

⁸ Luke 10:10-15

⁹ Luke 10:17-20, 25-29

¹⁰ John 11:5

So this idea of being attentive and welcoming to Jesus rather than distracted from him, it's more than good etiquette—it's a matter of life and death. There's something so sacred about the place in which we dwell, which is why at Antioch we emphasize welcoming each other into our homes. But even more important than that is welcoming Jesus into these sacred, intimate places. And so Martha chooses well, inviting Jesus to be at the center of her family's life by being at the center of her household.

And making that choice has an immediate impact on her family. We read in verse 39,

³⁹ And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. Luke 10:39

Look at how Mary responds to Jesus' presence—she's completely attentive to him and his word. Maybe it's just me, but it seems ironic that the literal posture she's taking is the same one we take in front of our tvs. Now, I don't think that's the intended exegetical application of the text, but the principle here is that what we place at the center of our homes will naturally capture our attention. In our culture, that typically means a large colorful box we call a tv (although between the light it emits and the way it mesmerizes my kids, it might be better to call it a bug zapper). On this note Crouch says something that was surprising to me:

if you do only one thing in response to this book, I urge you to make it this: Find the room where your family spends the most time and ruthlessly eliminate the things that ask little of you and develop little in you. Move the TV to a less central location—and ideally a less comfortable one. And begin filling the space that is left over with opportunities for creativity and skill, beauty and risk. This is the central nudge of the tech-wise life: to make the place where we spend the most time the place where easy everywhere is hardest to find. This simple nudge, all by itself, is a powerful antidote to consumer culture, the way of life that finds satisfaction mostly in enjoying what other people have made. It's an invitation instead to creating culture—finding joy in shaping something useful or beautiful out of the raw material of the world.¹¹

We get a glimpse of what this looked like in Martha and Mary as they take full advantage of the unique opportunity of having Jesus in their midst.¹² They are reaching for something other than the remote. They are reaching for their own formation, which only comes through soulful attentiveness to Jesus and his word and his world.

¹¹ Crouch, Loc 718

¹² Leon Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1988), 210

And *that* is the purpose of a family and a household. It's about the forming of persons. It's not just a space in which to be comfortable; it's not just a place to grow into a tech-savvy adult. It's about forming disciples of Jesus who understand what it means to be human, how to relate and create, not isolate and consume. It's intentionally using technology to help lead children down the path of the wise, not passively allowing technology lead them down the path of the fool. After all, as the wisdom of Proverbs tells us,

² A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion. Proverbs 18:2

And that, my friends, sounds a lot like what—unthoughtful social media.¹³ So, the first wise step toward putting technology in its proper place is establishing the purpose of your family and household. In the ways that technology serves that purpose, use it; in the ways that it doesn't, set it aside. Church, reach for formation.

2) Recognize Your Distraction - v. 40

But don't just reach for formation—along the way, recognize your distraction. This is our second step this morning. Although Martha and Mary began with the best of intentions, distraction soon enters the scene. Read with me in verse 40:

⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." Luke 10:40

Now, before we give Martha a hard time here, think about this with me. It's very likely that it wasn't just Jesus who showed up at her house, but all twelve of his disciples (perhaps more!), and maybe Lazarus too. That's at least fifteen people¹⁴ (not to mention that one among them is God in the flesh)—so you think Martha felt some pressure to provide some decent hospitality?! No wonder she was frantic! Any of us would be too in that situation.

Add on top of that, her sister Mary leaves her own responsibilities and parks herself at Jesus' feet. You're telling me that you wouldn't be a little upset with a dinner party of fifteen at your door and your family leaves you in the kitchen so they can go mingle? Yeesh, I'm just impressed that Martha doesn't drag anyone off by the hair!

¹³ Crouch, Loc 606

¹⁴ Hendriksen, 598-599

But all joking aside, even though Martha's frustration is understandable, she's missing the point. When Jesus is near, the need of the moment isn't a flurry of activity to please him, but to still our busy hearts enough to take in the pleasure of his presence.

And this is very likely why the author of this Gospel, Luke, decided to put this little story here, right after the Parable of the Good Samaritan, even though the events aren't in chronological order. One could easily read the parable and come to the conclusion that being in a flurry of activity caring for our neighbors is what's most pleasing to Jesus. But the story of Mary and Martha seems to remind us that love and attentiveness to neighbor is only pleasing to Jesus when it's combined with love and attentiveness to God.¹⁵ And therein is the balance of the greatest commandment: to love God with all our hearts and to love our neighbor as ourselves.¹⁶

What distraction does, however, is it keeps us from love and attentiveness to God and neighbor. Look at Martha's two-way indictment. Obviously she is frustrated with her sister; but it also breaks down her relationship with Jesus: "Lord, do *you* not care"—it's similar to Adam's blaming of God for his sin in Genesis 3: "the woman whom *you* gave to be with me".¹⁷ Except Martha goes a step further and commands Jesus, "Tell her then to help me."¹⁸ Her distraction has landed her on the path of the fool.

And we walk this very same path when we're so consumed with our phone or computer or television or tablet that we end up at odds with our household. I am painfully aware of my own hypocrisy in preaching this message today. My family could tell you just how much I have been attached to my phone and computer over the years, so much so that if I don't change my ways soon, my children may grow up believing it's normal to always be looking at your phone, even while someone is trying to talk with you. So, one of my practical steps toward repentance has been to purchase this little \$5 magnetic basket and put it on my fridge. When I get home, I pry my phone out of my hands and put it in the basket. I can still check it occasionally if needed, but it doesn't nudge me toward distraction.

In today's world, all of us on a regular basis have to recognize our distraction, awaken to how far down the path of the fool we have gone in a given moment. Not so that we develop these perfect families where no one ever messes up—that's not what family is for! Rather, as Crouch says,

¹⁵ Morris, 209-210; Hendriksen, 597

¹⁶ Matthew 22:34-40

¹⁷ Genesis 3:12

¹⁸ Morris, 210; Hendriksen, 599

*Our busyness, our laziness, our sullenness, our short tempers, our avoidance of conflict, our boiling-over conflicts—living in a family is one long education in just how foolish we can be, children and adults alike. And yet [an] amazing thing happens in families at their best. Our foolishness is seen and forgiven, and it is also seen and loved...Somehow, in the discovery that we are great fools, we also begin to develop wisdom.*¹⁹

The wisdom of the gospel, which not only rebukes our sinful distractions, but then corrects us with the grace sufficient for our transformation.

3) Receive His Correction - vv. 41-42

And the path of the wise means not only recognizing our distraction, but receiving that correction. That brings us to our third step this morning. Read with me in verse 41:

⁴¹ But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, ⁴²but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.” Luke 10:41-42

In classic Jesus fashion, he speaks into this drama in a way only he can; and with only one short statement, he leaves us with an eternity of wisdom to digest (—contrast that with the constant information overload we all experience daily! We are called to a God who whispers to us an eternity of wisdom through his Word and Spirit, often in silence and solitude—no wonder the enemy loves our distraction!).

Look at the power of Jesus’ words. First, he cuts directly to the heart of the matter, and confronts Martha’s distraction. But he does so with tenderness, speaking her name with double emphasis.²⁰ This is a picture of the presence we all need among our family and wider church family—people who love us enough to confront our distraction, but do so tenderly.

But notice that Jesus doesn’t just rebuke—he also corrects: “you are anxious and troubled about many things,” literally pulled in pieces;²¹ “but one thing is necessary.” All Martha’s best intentions for food and drink and comfort and atmosphere are fine—they just aren’t necessary. To see them as necessary is to be distracted by them from the

¹⁹ Crouch, Loc 438-455

²⁰ Morris, 210; Hendriksen, 599

²¹ Hendriksen, 603

one thing. What is the one thing? Apparently it's what Mary had chosen, "the good portion". What's that mean? Well, in Psalm 73 we read of this movement of heart that almost like a Martha turning into a Mary:

²¹ *When my soul was embittered,
when I was pricked in heart,*

²² *I was brutish and ignorant;
I was like a beast toward you.*

²³ *Nevertheless, I am continually with you;
you hold my right hand.*

²⁴ *You guide me with your counsel,
and afterward you will receive me to glory.*

²⁵ *Whom have I in heaven but you?
And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.*

²⁶ *My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. Psalm 73:21-26*

And there is it, the good portion. God is the good portion. He's the one thing that in light of him, makes all the other demands on our love and attention unnecessary.

But again, this doesn't mean we should become Amish. There's something to be said here of Mary maybe at least helping her sister pass out one dish before she settles at his feet. Now, Jesus isn't going to take her choice away from her, but he's also not going to call all his followers to be monks who withdraw from the modern world to focus only on him.

Our response to the distractions of technology probably shouldn't be going off the grid indefinitely. Wisdom wouldn't call for that (except perhaps for a short season just to get things under control). Instead, it's a matter of putting technology in its proper place with intentional boundaries, and receiving Jesus' correction when that gets out of order. It's things like:

- Our dinner table is for conversations, not devices.
- Our bedrooms are for rest, not vegging out. (In fact, there's something to be said of our devices going to bed before we do.)
- We wake up to the word of God, not our email. (I say this knowing that according to studies, 62% of adults in this room open your eyes—and then immediately

open your emails and/or social media. How will you ever put technology in its proper place if you invite it to consume you first thing in the morning?²²)

- We use screens purposely and communally, not aimlessly and alone.
- Spouses have one another's passwords, and parents have total access to children's devices.
- When we are bored, we check our hearts, not our devices.
- We give one another immediate access in person, not to others through text messages.
- If mom and dad text and drive, son and daughter will text and drive.
- Sometimes we listen to music together, and sometimes we sing together.
- After we watch, we process together.²³

And putting some of these things in place in the culture of your home isn't about rules. It's helping one another to choose the good portion.

Conclusion

At the beginning of today's message we talked about the sad image of a family sitting around the dinner table on vacation, and yet a million miles away from each other, lost in their phones. And through the rest of the sermon we've made a plea to avoid the ways that technology keeps you and your family distracted from what God says is most important in life. And sure, that might be enough to keep you from spending the rest of your Sabbath binge-watching Netflix. But if this sermon is just about a little behavior modification, then get me off this stage!

For the sake of our souls and those of our children, we must fight to choose the good portion; we must lay hold of that Light which, when all other temporary things are ripped from our hands, will not be taken away from us. The psalmist David put it this way in his own battle with distraction:

¹ *The Lord is my light and my salvation...*

⁴ *One thing have I asked of the Lord,*

that will I seek after:

*that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,*

*to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord
and to inquire in his temple. Psalm 27:1a, 4*

²² Crouch, Loc 1004

²³ Crouch, Loc 348

Do we want this one thing too, church? Then why are we so easily distracted from it?! I know his correction is hard to receive. Just think of what Jesus' correction did in Martha. "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but [only] one thing is necessary"—*choose the good portion*. What does Martha do? In the moment we don't know. But we do know that later she will make two of the most marvelous confessions of faith in the Bible:

²¹ Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." ²³ Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." ²⁴ Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." ²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" ²⁷ She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world." John 11:21-27²⁴

She got it! She received his correction and laid aside the distractions and she got it—got *him*. You see, the only hope we have of being able to lay aside the distractions in an insta-everything world, is through a Savior who did it first; a Savior who had every reason not to set his face toward Jerusalem, not to listen and obey the Father—but he did anyways. Not just so we could say of him from Psalm 16, "The Lord is my chosen portion," but so that he could say of us from Deuteronomy 32,

⁹ But the Lord's portion is his people, Deuteronomy 32:9

"We are his portion and he is our prize / drawn to redemption by the grace in his eyes / if grace is an ocean we're all sinking / heaven meets earth like a sloppy wet kiss / and my heart turns violently inside of my chest / I don't have time to maintain these regrets [insert distractions] / when I think about the way he loves us".²⁵ That oughta be enough to make us put our phones down and listen for his voice again, in the quiet, in the creation, in the laughter of loved ones.

At a table with just a little bread and wine. On the night that he was betrayed, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it, broke it and said to his disciples, "This is my body, which is broken for you; eat this in remembrance of me." He also took a cup of wine, and after blessing it, gave it to his disciples and said, "This cup is the new covenant

²⁴ Hendriksen, 600

²⁵ John Mark McMillan, "How He Loves," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U0luHiWwi08>

marked by the shedding of my blood. For as often as you eat this bread and drink from this cup, you announce the Lord's death until he returns." **Today we are announcing that Jesus Christ died for our distractions so he could be our good portion.**

Our tradition here at Antioch is to come forward and break off a piece of bread and dip it in the juice. There will be stations here in the front; gluten-free bread will be available to your right. If you're a baptized believer, come and remember who you are and whose you are. If you're a believer but not yet baptized, before coming to the table, we would love to help you first come and declare your faith publicly through baptism. If you're not a Christian, this sacred symbol is not for you, but rather than taking communion, we encourage you to take Christ. He has made himself available to you this very moment. There will be pastors in the back to talk and pray with you about any need you have. Let's pray.

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