

First United Methodist Church

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Distractions...our world is filled with them. From the sights and sounds around us, to smells that come our way (pleasant and unpleasant), to the advertisements we invite into our lives through the various medias we utilize, to anything else that is out there seeking our attention, distractions are very much present in our world...and therefore, in our lives. The question becomes, how do we handle them.

Just the other day I was at the church for our 7:07 ASK Prayer Team meeting. An important part of that time is spent in quiet and focused prayer in our facility. During that quiet time my wrist started vibrating. No, this wasn't some special Holy Spirit moment, it was my "Fitbit." A Fitbit is a device one wears on their wrist, like a wristwatch, that counts the number of steps you take, the flights of stairs you climb, it keeps track of your heart rate, etc. But, not only is it a health device, it also connects to my cell phone and can let me know when I get a message, phone call, or e-mail. That's what the vibration on my wrist was about. My Fitbit was telling me that I had a message.

Suddenly, there was an inner tug-of-war going on inside of me! There was a strong desire to pull my cell phone out of my pocket and check what my message was. But just as equally strong, there was another pull within me that said, "No, this is your time of prayer...you're praying for this church...you're connecting with God. This is not a time for messages/distractions." But what if it's a message from Nancy...what if it's from the Bishop... All sorts of crazy things were going through my head. Looking back on that moment, I'm amazed at the pressure I felt to respond to that distraction.

Ultimately, I said "Yes." Not to the cell phone, but to God. I said "Yes" to the fact that this was my time of prayer and I was going to honor that commitment. You see, one of the mottos I was taught years back that I try to keep in mind in life is, "To say YES to something means you're saying NO to something else." In that moment, this past Tuesday morning, I was saying YES to my time with God, which meant I was saying NO to a distraction the world (or my crazy life) was sending my way.

I'm reminded of a passage from the Bible that I believe speaks to this very reality. Roman's 12:2 says, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – God's good, pleasing and perfect will."

Our world today is telling us that we need to be always "connected." Connected to our computers, connected to the internet, connected to others through our technology. In fact, some people seem to thrive or feed on what others think, feel, tweet, snap, swipe, etc. Some people find their validation or value in life in the number of "Likes" or "Follows" their post or account has. Yet, that is not the message of Jesus. That is not the Good News of God! For God so loved the world (that's you and me) God gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. Yes, that previous sentence is from the Bible – John 3:16.

Today my goal, and maybe your goal too, is to say YES more and more to be connected to God and say NO to the distractions that surround us in our lives. To me, saying YES to focusing on God is what Romans 12:2, is all about, not conforming, or allowing the distractions of the world to drive my day. But rather I'm striving to be transformed by the renewing of my mind, by saying YES to God's presence, power, and love in my life and in the world around me. Today, let's say YES to God!

Serving Together,

Pastor Keith