

# **DISTRACTED**

Capture Your Purpose  
Rediscover Your Joy

STUDY GUIDE | FIVE SESSIONS

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 Harper *Christian*  
Resources

*Undistracted Study Guide*

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# INTRODUCTION

*Distractions.* Like flies buzzing around a picnic, they seem inevitable to the human experience. You can barely begin your day without distractions grabbing your attention. Unexpected circumstances divert your focus and send you down unfamiliar detours. Urgent problems consume the energy you had planned to expend on fulfilling goals. Other people derail the tasks you're determined to complete. Relationships get complicated and require resources that you hadn't anticipated expending. You can get so distracted sometimes that you lose sight of why you're doing what you're doing and who you're doing it for.

Even worse, distractions can pull you away from spending time with God, from those you love, and from what you long to contribute to the world. As your attention drifts, you can get stuck in the past, worry about the present, and get distracted by the future instead of realizing the opportunities you have right now and right where you are. Distractions can cause you to compare yourself to others and try to act like somebody else instead of the unique person that God created you to be. They can even compel you to chase after goals that offer hollow satisfaction . . . and then you wonder why you're so exhausted and stressed all the time.

The purpose of this study is to help you identify these kinds of distractions, eliminate them, recharge and refocus your efforts, and then start living a less-distracted and more joy-filled life. It is to help you say *no* to the things that are taking you away from your goals so you can say *yes* to the greater opportunities that God wants to place in your life. This is something you have permission to do! When driving on the highway, no one asks for permission to stay on the road—and you don't need permission to live a more fulfilling life either. You can decide right now to live the rich, meaningful, and beautiful life that God has already given you.

Regardless of your age or stage of life, now is the perfect time to drill down and get clear on what you are actually aiming for in your life. It is time to discover how to get undistracted in your *attitude*, in your *service*, in your *relationships*, in your *faith*, and in your *purpose*. It is time to ask what those purposeful things are in your life that will go the distance—traits like faith, hope, joy, purpose, and love. These are the things Jesus said would outlast everything else. Once you have identified them in your life, then it's time to get busy implementing them. And there's no better place for this kind of work than the group you're in!

# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The *Undistracted* video study is designed to be experienced in a group setting (such as a Bible study, Sunday school class, or small group gathering) and also as an individual study. Each session begins with a welcome section, two questions to get you thinking about the topic, and a brief reading from the Bible. You will then watch a video with Bob Goff, which can be accessed via the streaming code found on the inside front cover.

If you are doing this study with a group, you will then engage in some directed discussion and close with a time of personal reflection and prayer. Each person in the group should have his or her own copy of this study guide, and you are also encouraged to have a copy of the *Undistracted* book, as reading it alongside the curriculum will provide you with deeper insights. (See the “For Next Week” section at the end of each between-studies section for the chapters in the book that correspond to material you are discussing.)

To get the most out of your group experience, keep the following points in mind. First, the real growth in this study will happen during your small-group time. This is where you will process the content of the teaching for the week,

ask questions, and learn from others as you hear what God is doing in their lives. For this reason, it is important for you to be fully committed to the group and attend each session so you can build trust and rapport with the other members. If you choose to only go through the motions, or if you refrain from participating, there is a lesser chance you will find what you're looking for during this study.

Second, remember that the goal of your small group is to serve as a place where people can share, learn about God, and build intimacy and friendship. For this reason, seek to make your group a safe place. This means being honest about your thoughts and feelings and listening carefully to everyone else's opinion. (If you are a group leader, there are additional instructions and resources in the back of the book for leading a productive discussion group.)

Third, resist the temptation to fix a problem someone might be having or to correct his or her theology, as that's not the purpose of your small-group time. Also, keep everything your group shares confidential. This will foster a rewarding sense of community in your group and create a place where people can heal, be challenged, and grow spiritually.

Following your group time, reflect on the material you've covered by engaging in any or all of the between-sessions activities. For each session, you may wish to complete the personal study all in one sitting or spread it out over five days. Note that if you are unable to finish (or even start) your between-sessions personal study, you can still attend the group study video session. You are wanted and welcome even if you don't have your "homework" done.

Keep in mind that the videos, discussion questions, and activities are simply meant to kick-start your imagination so you are open to what God wants you to hear and how he wants you to apply it. As you go through this study, listen to what he is saying and consider your own journey in light of the distractions that you are facing in your life.

Sound good? Then let's get started!



## SESSION ONE

# UNDISTRACTED IN OUR ATTITUDE

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and  
with all your soul and with all your mind.

**MATTHEW 22:37**

## WELCOME

How many decisions do you suppose you make in an average day? A half-dozen? Twenty? Fifty? One hundred? Studies have shown that on average, most adults make around 35,000 decisions each and every day. Now, some of these decisions are minor concerns, like whether to have Raisin Bran or Pop-Tarts, which blouse or shirt to wear, and whether to drive or take the bus. But some are weightier decisions: *Should you apply for that new position? Have the conversation with your boss? Take the next step in your relationship? Ask your kids some hard questions?*

Dealing with all these choices can leave you feeling exhausted, afraid, anxious, uncertain, confused, angry, worried . . . and a host of other emotions. Based on sheer volume, all these decisions can also leave you feeling incredibly distracted. The trivial and mundane decisions can blur into the more significant choices you make. It requires time, reflection, prayer, and due diligence to take giant steps in life. But when bombarded with thousands of other seemingly urgent demands, it can be hard to focus your attention on how to align your decisions and actions with your values and convictions.

Your decisions aren't the only variable influencing your attitude, but they definitely contribute to how you spend most of your time, focus your attention, and pursue various

activities. Your decisions are also influenced by the assumptions you've made and accepted as truth and by the stories you have told yourself. You probably know that not all stories and assumptions should be shaping the choices you make, but you may have a blind spot in seeing how certain ones are holding you back, keeping you distracted, and blurring your focus.

It's been said that decisions shape who you are. But what if instead "who you are" shapes the decisions you make? What if your identity, purpose, and faith in God guided the way you prioritized the decisions you make? If you want to be undistracted in your attitude, it's time to take an honest look at your decisions and what's consuming your time and attention.

## SHARE

If you or any of your group members are just getting to know one another, take a few minutes to introduce yourselves. Then, to get things started, discuss one of the following questions:

- What is something you consider to be a big distraction in your life right now?

— *or* —

- In the course of an average day, how often does your mind wander?

## READ

Invite someone to read aloud the following passage. Listen for fresh insights as you hear the verses being read and then discuss the questions that follow.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.

*2 Corinthians 1:3–7*

How have you experienced the comfort of God in times of trouble?

When has “patient endurance” in sufferings helped you comfort and console other people who were suffering? What did you have to offer them because of what you had experienced?

## WATCH

Play the video segment for session one (use the streaming video access provided on the inside front cover). As you watch, use the following outline to record any thoughts or concepts that stand out to you.

You want to have an awesome attitude? Be where your feet are. Be self-aware. Be situationally aware. Be emotionally aware. Be spiritually aware.

Jesus talked about loving God with your heart and your soul and your mind (see Matthew 22:37). He talked about loving your neighbors like yourself (see Mark 12:31). He talked about loving widows and orphans and doing things for people that were hurting (see Matthew 25:35–36).

Pilots follow a **GUMPS** checklist for flying that can also help us keep our focus:

**Gas:** What is fueling your ambitions and joy?

**Undercarriage:** Are you prepared for what is ahead?

**Mixture:** How are you applying your energy?

**Propeller:** Are you moving forward or just spinning in place?

**Seat Belts:** What is the basis for your security?

As you take off into this time, think about the following questions: *What am I doing? Why am I doing it? **What's distracting me from my purpose?***

Find out the **stories that you've made** about your life. Maybe some of the stories are about how you perceive yourself—*I just can't be that person, I need to be quiet, or I need to be gregarious and loud and silly*. Figure out the stories that you have made up about yourself along the way.

**Distraction comes at a high cost.** Think about it . . . what is it costing you to be distracted by an iPhone, old relationships that aren't squared away, and new ones that are crazy? It's costing us a ton.

The Bible says that God comforts us in our failures and times of sadness so that we can comfort other people with the comfort we got from him (see 2 Corinthians 1:3-4). Don't be taken offline by setbacks. You can **turn a distraction in your past into a bright future.**

When you are undistracted in your attitude, your joy and peace and willingness to serve becomes contagious. When you are “on tone,” everybody else will be on tone as well.

## DISCUSS

As you consider what you just watched, use the following questions to discuss these ideas, their basis in Scripture, and their application in your life with your group members.

1. What does it mean to you to “be where your feet are”? What are some ways you try to remain present each day?
2. What are the biggest distractions in your life right now? How would you describe or characterize them?
3. Do you agree that your primary focus should be on loving God completely, loving others as yourself, and serving those in need? Why or why not?



session you will find an exercise designed to help you apply the teaching so you can become undistracted and more present in your life. This practice will also be a way to help others in your group as you learn and grow together.

In this first session, you've started the process of exploring what it means to recognize distractions in your life and how you can refocus your *attitude*. Get a sheet of paper and write GUMPS as a vertical column on the left side of the page. Take a few minutes and fill in your assessment of this flight checklist as it applies to where you are in life. Use your video teaching notes to prompt your assessment for each category: Gas, Undercarriage, Mixture, Propeller, Seat Belts. You might also list specific distractions you're aware of within each category. Keep this checklist handy so you can review it later during times of personal study.

## PRAY

Conclude your session by sharing any requests you would like the group to lift up in prayer. Thank God for bringing you together for this study so you can help and encourage one another as you seek to recognize and overcome the distractions. Ask God to give you clarity, wisdom, and discernment as you proceed. Trust that he will give you eyes to see and ears to hear the truth of how, when, and where to focus your time, attention, energy, and resources.

# SESSION ONE

## PERSONAL STUDY

Reflect on everything you've covered in session one of *Undistracted* by engaging in any or all of the between-sessions activities that follow. Keep in mind this part of the study is not about doing homework or following a set of rules. These activities are simply designed to maximize opportunities to bring your dreams to life. First, you will **Reflect** on a passage from Scripture related to the main points of your last group session. Next, you will **Refocus** on the priorities of your life as you identify and eliminate distractions you're facing. Finally, you will **Recharge** by applying what you've been learning in simple and practical ways. For this first personal study, you will find it helpful to have read chapters 5, 7, 10, and 15 in *Undistracted*. At the start of the next session, you will have a few minutes to share any insights you learned with the group.

## REFLECT

As you begin identifying the distractions that pull you away from your focus, it is helpful to hit pause at times and reflect on where you are in your life right now. The book of Psalms can be helpful in this respect because it is filled with the experiences of individuals who took such moments to stop and reflect on their situation, purpose, and what God was doing in their lives. Keep this goal in mind as you read the passage below and answer the questions that follow.

You have searched me, LORD,  
and you know me.  
You know when I sit and when I rise;  
you perceive my thoughts from afar.  
You discern my going out and my lying down;  
you are familiar with all my ways.  
Before a word is on my tongue  
you, LORD, know it completely.  
You hem me in behind and before,  
and you lay your hand upon me.  
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,  
too lofty for me to attain. . . .  
For you created my inmost being;  
you knit me together in my mother's womb.  
I praise you because I am fearfully and  
wonderfully made;  
your works are wonderful,  
I know that full well.

*Psalm 139:1–6, 13–14*

How do you feel as you consider that God, the one who created you, knows you better than you know yourself? How can being reminded of this truth help you eliminate distractions?

Considering that God knows you intimately, why is it important to ask him to search your heart? What is he wanting to reveal to you about what's in your heart right now?

What does it mean to you to be “fearfully and wonderfully made”? How does this truth anchor you to the unique purpose for which God created you?

Reread the passage and ask God to give you wisdom on how to overcome obstacles that are impacting your attitude. Thank him for how he is helping you to move forward.

## REFOCUS

It's tempting to fall into the trap of believing that we will be happy *someday*. We tell ourselves, "I'll be happy *someday* when I finish my degree . . . get the right job . . . meet the right person . . . have kids . . . or when the kids finally move out." All too often, we consider happiness to be something *out there* that we need to attain. But such an attitude only serves to keep us looking ahead to the future instead of enjoying where we are in the present and what you have right now. The apostle Paul knew how easy it is to make contentment conditional in this way, but he had also learned the secret of eliminating this distraction-trap. Read through his words on this subject below and then answer the questions that follow.

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. . . .

I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation,

whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

*Philippians 4:4–7, 10–13*

Paul states he had “learned to be content whatever the circumstances.” This includes being content in the *present*. Despite the trials he endured—angry mobs, beatings, shipwrecks, snakebites, and more (see 2 Corinthians 11:24–29)—he was able to find contentment. The same can be true for you if you rely on the same spiritual power source. You can declare, “I *will* be content and I *will* be present” without waiting on any future goals, accomplishments, or milestones to be attained. While you can never completely control your circumstances or anticipate all the setbacks you will face, you can ask God to help you spot any distractions that are obscuring your view of what he’s already doing and where he wants to take you next.

When have you chosen to rejoice in the Lord right where you were rather than make your joy conditional on future events? What were the consequences of making such a choice?

According to Paul, what is the secret of overcoming anxiety? How could you apply his solution to any anxiety that is currently having a negative impact on your attitude?

When you consider what you face most days, what distracts you most from experiencing the kind of contentment and “peace which transcends all understanding” that Paul describes?

What are three things you can thank God for providing right now? How does focusing on gratitude and counting your blessings help to eliminate distractions in your attitude?

## RECHARGE

If you want to live a more undistracted life, you will need to get honest with yourself and acknowledge the distractions that you accept and accommodate. The blanket term “busyness” is one of the greatest culprits for distracting your focus and stealing your joy. So, if you want to see change

in your life, take a realistic look at where you are right now and how you spend your time on most days. On a separate sheet of paper, draw a large circle—or, better yet, use a paper plate if you have one. Think of this circle (or plate) as the twenty-four hours you have to spend each day. Now think about how many hours you spend doing the following activities, blocking out or shading that amount of your twenty-four-hour circle. Again, choose an average day filled with most of the responsibilities, relationships, and realities you usually encounter.

- Sleeping
- Working (both on-site and at-home)
- Exercising / self-care (working out, walking, stretching, playing sports)
- Praying / Bible study / time with God
- Volunteering / serving
- Connecting with family (talking, listening, sharing activities, caring)
- Connecting with friends and neighbors (talking, listening, helping, serving)
- Other (anything else you do most days not included above)

After you've shaded or blocked out all of the hours in your circle, take a look at what is really consuming your time. Other than sleep, what takes up most of your time each day? How important is this activity to you?

Are what and who you care about most accurately depicted in your circle?  
How do you feel about these results?

What activities that you value are not being practiced regularly? What is lacking most in how you spend your hours each day?

If you showed your circle (and your answers to these questions) to a family member, close friend, or spouse, would they verify its accuracy? In other words, are you seeing clearly when it comes to how you're actually spending your time? Why or why not?

***For Next Week:*** Write down any insights or questions you want to discuss at the next group meeting. In preparation for next week, read chapters 3, 8, and 13 in *Undistracted*.

## SESSION TWO

# UNDISTRACTED IN OUR SERVICE

Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.

**HEBREWS 13:1-2**

## WELCOME

All too often, events in life don't turn out the way that you had hoped or expected. A text severs a decade-long business partnership. Someone else gets the last spot in the new training program. The flight gets cancelled. The car breaks down on the way to the airport. The hurricane hits. The resources dry up. The offer gets rejected.

These last-minute curveballs can be downright confusing, especially when you're doing what you think you are supposed to be doing. But that's just it . . . what if what you think you're supposed to be doing isn't really the point? What if the point is to make the most of *wherever* you are *whenever* you're there? Basically, to be giving and caring and serving those around you regardless of what you thought, hoped, expected, or planned?

The reality is that distractions will *always* pull you away from plans, schedules, goals . . . and especially volunteer opportunities. But just as God calls you to follow Christ every day and not just on Sundays or when you are attending church, so serving others requires a constant focus that is undistracted by all the unexpected twists and turns that you will encounter. You don't have to wait until the conditions are just right or until you think you're ready to serve. You don't have to go overseas on a missions trip. You can help people right where you are.

You don't have to be the smartest, richest, most talented, or most experienced person to serve the needs of those around you. Your motives don't even have to be pure! You simply have to be *available*. When you look at the stories of Jesus told in

the Bible, you find that even though he was often tired (if not exhausted), not to mention frustrated by those plotting against him, he was always *available* to help those in need.

Following Jesus means following his example. As we will discuss in this session, this means being undistracted in your service . . . to move past distractions, see the needs around you, and meet them as best you can. After all, if we say we love God but don't love and serve the people he made—and this includes *all* people, even the strange and odd and ones slightly different from us—then we have a heart condition that we need to address.

## SHARE

If you or any of your group members are just getting to know one another, take a few minutes to introduce yourselves and share any insights you have from last week's personal study. Then, to get things started, discuss one of the following questions:

- How do you usually react when an unexpected disruption derails your plans?

— *or* —

- Do you like to plan each day's activities out well ahead of time? Or do you like to improvise and be more spontaneous based on your mood?

## READ

Invite someone to read aloud the following passage. Listen for fresh insights as you hear the verses being read and then discuss the questions that follow.

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

“What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

“You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an

inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.”

Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

*Luke 10:25–37*

Why do you think that Jesus answered the law expert’s question—“who is my neighbor?”—with this story? What answer does the example of the Samaritan provide?

What might have distracted the priest and the Levite and kept them from helping the traveler? What is significant in the fact that the Samaritan stopped while the other two did not?

## WATCH

Play the video segment for session two (use the streaming video access provided on the inside front cover). As you watch, use the following outline to record any thoughts or concepts that stand out to you.

What if God wants to surprise you? What if he wants to just surprise you with the relationships and the things that he has already put adjacent to you? You won't see them if you're distracted!

God didn't invite you to a business trip. He invited you on an *adventure*. And he has brought plenty of people along—some kind-of-odd ones and some really fun ones.

God wants us to have our heart start beating the way his heart is beating. His heart beats for the people who are hurting and lonely and isolated and afraid. **We can bring availability.**

Don't get head-faked when you encounter setbacks and don't get the things you really want. **Don't get distracted . . . get busy.** Start working on the next thing.

**Would you reset your heart?** What would you be willing to do to have your heart beat the way that Jesus' heart beats? The way that his heart beats for the poor, the disadvantaged, the lonely, the isolated? Could you get so available to people that you would actually stop your heart to start it again?

**Get a new heartbeat.** You can't be available to everybody all the time, but you can be available to somebody some of the time. Find that new rhythm and you will find yourself leaning into opportunities.

**What can you launch in your world?** What can you launch in the world of other people? It could be just one kind word from you. The *right* word from you.