

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

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Entangled in the World

Blake Stanley

No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier (2

Timothy 2:4).

The world wants your attention. There are an endless number of causes that try to get our attention: political issues, social issues, environmental issues. Much of the news is geared toward getting and maintaining our attention. Mainstream media — any network, take your pick — create anger, outrage, and fear to keep their viewers coming back.

The phones we carry are useful tools, but they, too, are geared toward obtaining and holding our attention. The apps on them are designed to be appealing and even addictive. Their developers understand how certain features cause chemical reactions in our brains, creating a satisfaction that soon abates and leaves our brains wanting more.

Sports, hobbies, and youth activities all have entire industries built around them, providing more games to watch, more gear to research and buy, and more opportunities to play.

There is nothing inherently wrong with those things. There are many causes worthy of attention. Phones are not evil. They're just a thing. News is not all bad. It is good to be informed. Activities are not evil. Some recreation is good and beneficial. There are many of these that we are free to enjoy in our lives and to pay attention to.

But therein lies a challenge. *"No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life..."* The word translated "entangles" means to entwine, interlock, or weave. A good visual is a rope or a basket made of many interlocked strands of cloth or wood. As the pieces are woven together, they, in essence, become one.

As Paul writes these words, he is invoking a metaphor of a

soldier engaged in war and his need to be occupied with the war. A soldier cannot entangle himself in the affairs of this life, as it would distract from his duty and purpose. This is a reminder to Timothy to focus on his faith and work for the Lord and not allow the world to entwine itself into his life, distracting him from his work.

That is what the world can do to all of us. All these things are clamoring for our attention, looking for ways to become more

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and more a part of our lives. They call to us continuously and relentlessly through the news, social media, advertisements, and societal pressures. While many of these things are not bad — some of them even have value — we can become too entangled in them.

The causes we take on, even the worthy ones, can become so a part of us that our thoughts and worries are consumed by them. The news can turn us bitter and angry and have us viewing the world through the lens of their narrative. We can all disappear into our phones. It's easy to fall into the endless scrolling, and instead of investing in meaningful things, we're

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stuck in a little box of repetition without progress. We can fill our lives so full of activities that we just float from one thing to the next without aim or purpose. These things take up our time; they fill up our minds, and they embed themselves in our hearts.

We all have limits to what we can do in this life. We have limited time, mental capacity, and space in our hearts. Giving time, energy, or effort to one thing leaves less room for other things. It seems that one of the great challenges in this life is giving the proper things the proper space where we order our lives in such a way that the Lord, His Kingdom, and His work are the priority, and we commit the appropriate time to His word and prayer, actively working to increase our faith.

It is hard to live in the world but not be entangled in it. In the parable of the sower, the third seed falls among the weeds and the thorns and is choked out. Christ tells us that this seed is representative of those who accept the word but have their faith choked out by the cares of this world. The seed cast by the sower needed room to grow. It couldn't compete with the weeds for the nutrients from the soil or the sun. So, too, our faith needs room to grow. That's what we're fighting. All of these things that clamor for our attention can be the weeds choking out our faith.

We need the time in our lives to spend in the word, prayer, and service to the Lord. We need to have the space in our minds to meditate on whatever things are true, noble, pure, lovely, and of good report. And we need room in our hearts to place the proper value on the Lord and His kingdom. With the world pressing for our attention, we must intentionally keep things in their proper place. It won't happen without our devotion to it. Set the patterns in your life that keep your faith growing and meticulously work to keep the things in this world from becoming the weeds that choke out our faith. It's hard work to keep from getting entangled in the world, but as Paul told Timothy, we must resist the pulls of the world to give God His proper place in our lives.

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Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty." Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1).

The Eternal Optimist

Charles Fry

When Jesus was in Jerusalem with his disciples just a few days before he was betrayed and condemned to death, he had a conversation with them about the troubling times that lay ahead. He warned of unrest among the Jews that would lead to the catastrophic destruction of the temple in Jerusalem along with much of the city, and He spoke of prolonged and recurring troubles that would distress every nation on earth. He mentioned manmade disasters, including wars between kingdoms and violence against his own followers, as well as famines, earthquakes, epidemics, and other frightening events (see **Luke 21:5-19**). None of these frightful events are presented as signs of His coming, nor did He speak of any particular sequence, only that such things will be happening on earth in the interval between his suffering to initiate the kingdom and his second coming.

In the midst of telling his followers that they would be abused "on account of my name" (**Luke 21:12**), He also said that his disciples would testify of Him (**verse 13**), giving purpose to the hardships. Jesus gave assurance that the troubles will in fact have an end (**verse 9**) in the Lord's own time. In fact, Jesus indicated that when the anguish of nations seems to be growing worse and worse, and people are filled with apprehension (**Luke 21:25-26**), that's the time when his own people should

cling to the hopeful expectation of his return and “*stand up, lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near*” (**verse 28**). Jesus message to his disciples then and now is “*make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves*” (**verse 14**) because he will provide help, the words and wisdom we need (**verse 15**).

What Jesus said in his discourse with the disciples on the Mount of Olives just shortly before he was betrayed amounts to instructions to be optimistic when everything seems to be spiraling out of control. Christians are assured that the Lord has everything in hand when things appear most chaotic, and he will never leave us nor forsake us (**Hebrews 13:5**). There is a purpose to faithfully testify of Jesus in all circumstances (**Luke 21:13**), and there is an end when all will be set right (**Luke 21:9**). Consequently, just a couple of days later, Jesus ate the Passover with his disciples and instructed them to remember Him, body and blood, in the consecrated bread and fruit of the vine, in that night of His betrayal, He assured them (and us) that we should not let our hearts be troubled, but rather believe in God, and believe in Jesus himself (**John 14:1**). With violent death overshadowing His immediate future, Jesus didn't just say not to be afraid, He said not to even let ourselves have troubled hearts. The followers of Jesus have every reason for optimism in what looks like the darkest hour or the hardest ordeal.

Our reasons for optimism in Christ include the fact that Jesus came to save sinners (**1 Timothy 1:15, Luke 19:10**), including tax collectors and the very people who viciously persecuted his followers. Jesus came with the intention of saving sinners, and he finished what he came to do (**John 17:4, 19:28-30**). He made his gift of salvation freely available to all who will trust him. The fact that Jesus died for our salvation and then was raised from the dead by the power of God gives believers assurance that death holds no threat, no power, and we too will rise in immortal glory (**1 Thessalonians 4:14**).

Having finished his work in the flesh and overcome death, Jesus has received all authority in heaven and on earth (**Matthew 28:16-20**). He reigns in unimpeachable victory over every power in heaven and on earth (**Ephesians 1:17-23**) and will keep those who turn to him from the devil himself (**1 John 3:8, James 4:7**). In Jesus's name, Christians have victory over

sin and death (**Romans 8:1-2**) and over every opponent or force that might rise to the attack to pry the Lord's people out of his mighty hand (**Romans 8:31-39**).

Christians live with the assurance that the authority Jesus holds and the kingdom He rules will not be shaken and will never end, continuing through all generations until He comes again (**Daniel 2:44, Matthew 16:18 and 28:20**). He will always be with His followers, the Shepherd with His sheep, the merciful High Priest tending to our needs and calming our fears. The promise of He who died for our sins and rose in victory is that he will certainly hear and respond to everything we ask, helping us to understand his will and conform to it (**1 John 5:13-15**). The assurance of Jesus' help for his people in this world is bound up with the promise of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, the deposit guaranteeing the rest of God's promises (**2 Corinthians 1:20-22**), the living water that wells up and overflows from the life of Christians to impact not only themselves but the world in which we live and move (**John 7:37-39**). With the help of the Holy Spirit, Christians can testify of Jesus with calm assurance in a chaotic world, not worrying or letting our hearts be troubled, looking forward with eternal optimism to the end of distress that God has promised to those who love him and are called according to his purposes.

But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:57-58).

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Glory to God!

Those who attended the **Midwest Bible Campout in Eminence, MO**, witnessed five precious souls added to the kingdom on July 4.

Angelina Letts obeyed the heavenly call and was baptized for the remission of her sins.

Megan Sue Martin confessed her faith in Christ and was buried with Him in baptism.



Please check your expiration date!

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Drue Overstreet became a child of God when she was clothed with Christ in baptism.

Reece Morris found true freedom on Independence Day when Jesus freed her from sin in baptism.

Griffith Anderson made her faith alive by confessing Jesus and submitting to His will in baptism.

The church in **Blue Springs, MO** rejoiced when God raised **Eden Jennings** up with Christ. Eden was baptized following the Midwest Bible Campout.

Abby Johnson, of **Martinsville, IN**, obeyed the gospel by confessing Christ and received the Holy Spirit in baptism.

The church in **Harrisburg, VA** praised God with the heavenly chorus when **Lucas North** put on Christ in baptism.

Special Meetings

2024 Meetings

- August 25.....White Oak, rural Ethel, MO
- August 31-September 1.....Pleasant Hill, IA
- September 29.....Braymer, MO
- October 4-6.....Fall Campout, Unionville, MO
- October 19-20.....Nixa, MO

The schedule for the annual **Labor Day Meeting** in **Pleasant Hill, IA** has been released. Please make plans to join our Iowa brethren for a weekend packed with spiritual food and uplifting fellowship. You can find the schedule using the QR code to the left.



The church in **Braymer, MO** is holding a special one day

meeting on September 29. The church has asked **John Morris, Flint Fenton, Louis Garbi, and Wade Stanley** to speak. Please make plans to join them for a morning worship service at 10:00 a.m., lunch at noon, and a second service beginning at 2:00 p.m.

The third annual **Northern Missouri Fall Campout** is scheduled for October 4-6 in Unionville, MO. The churches in **Martinstown** and **Unionville** have invited **Doug Twaddell** and **Tad Morris** to teach, and **Michael Eldridge** to lead a gospel singing. The theme, topics, schedule, and accomodations can all be found by following the QR code to the right.



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