

1 Fatal Fixation

2 Target Fixation

- Perseveration (per-SEV-er-a-tion)
 - It's a brain condition that causes people to get stuck in a particular pattern of behavior.
 - It is also known as target fixation and mental rigidity and can lead to destruction, disaster and even death.
 - It is what led to the death of German pilot named Manfred von Richthofen, the legendary World War I ace known as The Red Baron.

3 The Red Baron

- Manfred von Richthofen (2 May 1892 – 21 April 1918), also widely known as the Red Baron, was a German fighter pilot with the Imperial German Army Air Service (during World War I).
- He is considered the ace-of-aces of that war, being officially credited with 80 air combat victories, more than any other pilot.
- Manfred was such a good pilot that he wanted to make his presence known in the air, so he painted his airplane RED to dare anyone brave enough to come up and fight him.

4 Fatal Fixation

- However, on April 21, 1918, Richthofen did something that went totally against Dogfighting doctrine.
- He flew his red Fokker triplane straight into enemy airspace, allowing aircraft and ground fire to shred his plane to ribbons and kill him with a single bullet to the chest.
- According to psychologist Daniel Orme, "He had target fixation and a mental rigidity . . . violating all kinds of rules of flying—rules from the manual that he himself wrote."

5 Lost Common Sense

- Perseveration (per-SEV-er-a-tion) is a brain dysfunction that causes people to persist in a task — to carry on in a completely illogical way, even when the chosen strategy is doomed and could lead to death.
- While the Red Baron achieved 80 kills, more than any other World War I pilot.
- He suffered a traumatic brain injury in a dogfight nine months before his death, and researchers now believe this is what caused his dysfunction to develop.
- Today, the Air Force would have made him DNIF — Duties Not to Include Flying. But in 1918, his headaches, airsickness and fatigue were ignored.

6 Potential Problem in Us?

- Perseveration (per-SEV-er-a-tion) can be a problem for us as well, even without the dogfights — or cat-fights.
- Fatal fixations can pop up in our work, our parenting, our friendships and our faith lives, causing us to pursue strategies that are doomed and even disastrous.
- Think of fathers who work like slaves to provide for their families, only to put in such long and exhausting hours that they end up with little of themselves to give to their family members. It's a fatal fixation.

7 Examples

- Or women who put tremendous time and energy into their children's activities, only to become so immersed in kid-stuff that they fail to be good adult role models.
- Or friends who talk endlessly about themselves and others — analyzing, criticizing and ultimately destroying the very friendships that are the subject of their conversations.
- Or Christians who put such effort into being religious that they end up being self-righteous — and alienating the very people who need to hear the gospel.
- According to Oscar Wilde, "Nothing's a bigger turn-off than self-righteous folks who air their clean laundry in public."

8 Road Closed Ahead

- A man was driving on a winding road, when he saw a "Road Closed" sign up ahead.
- Not seeing any construction taking place, he ignored the sign and drove on.
- He discovered the construction around the next bend and had to turn around and go back to follow the detour.
- As he approached the blockade, he saw on the back of the "Road Closed" sign, in hand-scrawled letters, a message: . . .

9 Focus Fixation

- After Israel was exiled in Babylon, the people were determined not to backslide again.
- So they focused so intently on following the Law of Moses that they got bogged down in the letter and outward appearance of carrying out the Law where they missed the spirit and righteous intent of the law.
- "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices — mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law — justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. (Matthew 23:23 NIV)

10 Spiritual Fixation

- I believe Perseveration (per-SEV-er-a-tion) can pop up in our devotional lives as well.
- We can put so much attention on reading our Bible, praying, fasting, and large group worship that we too can miss the more important obligations contained in the Gospel.

- In other words, we can place so much effort on personal piety and trying to position ourselves for revival, that we fail to realize we lack faithfulness in other matters of the faith.
- If Jesus were here today, would he say, “Woe to you Pentecostals and Charismatics, you pray in the Spirit all day long and boast about your great faith, but you never visit or help your brothers and sisters who are in real need . . . unless you get credit for it.”

11 The Big Picture

- One of the best ways of avoiding Target Fixation is to see the big picture.
- In aviation training, instructors will always tell their students that if they should get into trouble, don’t stop flying the airplane and don’t hit anything.
- So if we look at either the Old Testament or New Testament, we should understand that religious activity doesn’t always fulfill spiritual obligations.
- Israel’s biggest problem after their exile, wasn’t turning to other gods, but replacing obedience to God’s commands with religious ceremonies and sacrifices.
- It was not that they stopped observing the law of Moses, but instead replaced the core and the heart of the law, with religious ceremonial rituals and personal piety.

12 Micah’s Instructions

- With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? (Micah 6:6–7 NIV)
 - Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?
 - Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil?
 - Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
 - And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8 NIV)

13 Amos’ Instructions

- “I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies.” (Amos 5:21–24 NIV)
 - Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them.
 - Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them.
 - Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps.
 - But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!

14 Isaiah’s Instruction

- “The multitude of your sacrifices — what are they to me?” says the LORD. “I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. (Isaiah 1:11 NIV)

- Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. (Isaiah 1:14 NIV)
- When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen. (Isaiah 1:15 NIV)
- Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow. (Isaiah 1:16–17 NIV)

15 Jeremiah's Instructions

- ‘This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Go ahead, add your burnt offerings to your other sacrifices and eat the meat yourselves! (Jeremiah 7:21–24 NIV)
- For when I brought your forefathers out of Egypt and spoke to them, I did not just give them commands about burnt offerings and sacrifices, but I gave them this command: Obey me, and I will be your God and you will be my people.
- Walk in all the ways I command you, that it may go well with you.
- But they did not listen or pay attention; instead, they followed the stubborn inclinations of their evil hearts. They went backward and not forward.

16 Get the Picture?

- Israel was so fixated on burnt offerings and sacrifices that they missed the more weightier matters of God's will.
- Instead of inheriting a blessing they reaped a curse instead.
- The same thing can happen to us, when we don't major in the majors and minor in the minors.
- When we get fixated on a minor and make it a major, we can miss what is really important in our walk with God.

17 Pursue . . .

- The Apostle Paul tells his companion Timothy to, Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called (1 Timothy 6:12 NIV)
- So then how do we fight the good fight of the faith?
 - Paul tells Timothy to, pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. (1 Timothy 6:11 NIV)
 - Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. (2 Timothy 2:22 NIV)

18 The Corinthian Church

- The Corinthian Church was a church that did not lack any spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 1:7)

- However, the Apostle Paul refers to them as worldly instead of spiritual because of all the division that was in their midst. (1 Cor. 3:1–4)
- In fact, Paul testifies that their meetings did more harm than good because they neglected the needs in the church and ignored the poor and hungry.
- In other words, they focused more on the expression and operation of their spiritual gifts and ministries than looking after the body of Christ.
- They were fixated and didn't know it.

19 The Corinthian Church

- Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. (1 Cor. 11:27)
- The “unworthy manner” was how during their “Love Feast” they would humiliate the poor by not sharing their food.
- A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. (1 Cor. 11:28)
- For anyone who eats and drinks (partakes of communion) without recognizing (helping in the needs) the body of the Lord (church) eats and drinks judgment on himself. (1 Corinthians 11:27–29 NIV)

20 The Big Picture

- When we treat the body of Christ with contempt, we miss the big picture and that to our own harm.
- When the Lord says, “whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me,” (Matthew 25:40 NIV), what does that mean?
- It means that when we help our brother and sisters in the Lord with their burdens, it is a ministry unto the Lord personally.
- In fact, to those who have eyes that see and ears that hear, it is worship pure and undefiled.

21 Personal Examination

- The Red Baron flew into a shooting gallery and was blown apart because he was fixated on his own personal glory.
- So much so that he failed to look around and see if there was anything around him that had the potential of danger.
- We too can be fly into danger, if we fail to take personal examination of the way we are living seriously.
- So tonight, as we take communion let us examine ourselves and ask this question, how we are treating Jesus?
- Are we treating him with love and respect? Or are we missing the big picture and defining worship only in part and not in whole. Let us not miss the big picture!

