



Avoiding Weapons of Mass Distraction

1

Scripture

Then the **LORD** *answered* Job out of the storm. He said: “**Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge?**” (Job 38:1–2 NIV)

“**Brace yourself like a man; I will *question* you, and you *shall answer* me.**” (Job 38:3 NIV)

“Where were you when **I laid the earth’s foundation?** Tell me, if you *understand*.” (Job 38:4 NIV)

2

Scripture

“Who marked off its dimensions? **Surely you know!** Who stretched a measuring line across it?” (Job 38:5 NIV)

“On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone — while the **morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?**” (Job 38:6–7 NIV)

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Introduction

What do the **following** have in common?



Together, they are **weapons** — weapons of **MASS DISTRACTION**.

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Introduction

You are **cooking** something on the stove when you hear a **ping** from your smartphone.

You say, "Okay, I'll go see what that **notification** is about."

Oh no, **he's totally wrong!** I have to reply to this **post** ...

Ha, that **cat picture** is so silly ...

What a **cool video!** And that other video in the thumbnail looks interesting, too ...

That **high school guy** is totally wrong again! ...

Hmm, this **Wikipedia article** has a lot of cool information."



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Introduction

Journalist **Shankar Vedantam** knows that most of us react to the beeps and buzzes of our phones with **great urgency**, like parents responding to a baby's cry.

Although we know that this isn't **healthy** or **sane**, we still do it.

But now, **research** is showing that we really should make an **effort** to avoid distractions.

When we become **lost** in social media or email, **we lose our ability to focus**.

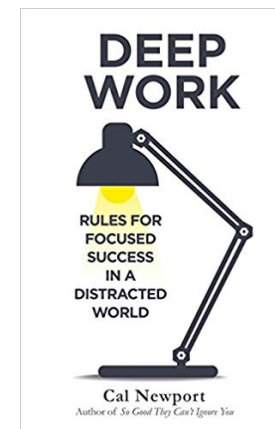


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Introduction

In his **Hidden Brain** podcast (July 25, 2017), Vedantam profiles **Cal Newport**, a computer scientist at Georgetown University and author of a book called **Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World**.

Newport believes that we should minimize the problems created by constant **interruptions**, and he insists that "**it's more urgent than people realize**."



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Introduction

Here's the problem: When we let emails or Facebook messages guide our workday, we're weakening our ability to do the most challenging kind of work — what Newport calls “**deep work.**”



This is the work that requires **sustained attention**, such as

writing a **report**,

solving an **engineering problem**, or

doing **significant research.**

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Introduction

The solution to **distractions**, according to Newport, is to do what we can to set aside long portions of many days to focus on **deeper thinking.**



This means no social media, limited email and strict limits on **appointments.**

The result is a **life** that is **richer** and **more human** than a life of robotically responding to emails and clicking on websites, which is what many of us end up doing all day.

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Reflection

A young boy was watching his mother sift through and delete a long list of **junk emails** on the computer screen.



“This reminds me of the **Lord's Prayer**,” the boy said.

“What do you mean?” the mother asked.

“Well, you know,” the boy answered, “the part that says, **'lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from email.'**”

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Introduction

In today's Old Testament reading, God challenges a **righteous man** named **Job** to do the “**deep work**” of answering the question of who he is in relation to God.



This is not a question that can be answered by a quick **Google** search, because it involves **deep thinking** about what it means to be a human created by God.

The challenge that God gives **Job** is also a challenge to us — one that pushes us to **unplug ourselves** long enough to ask and answer some **deep questions.**

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Job

I'm not sure many people realize it, but **The Book Job** is one of the most profound books in the Bible.

In fact it addresses the number one question that people would most want to ask God.

That is **what is the reason and purpose of suffering?**

More particularly, why do **bad things** happen to good, faithful, and godly people?



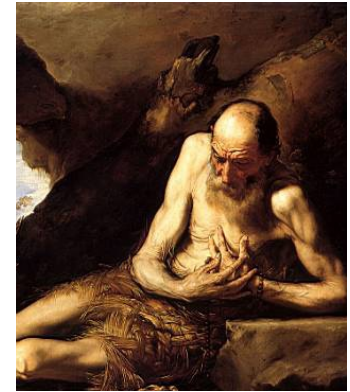
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Job

According to **Job's friends**, his sufferings were all the result of **unconfessed sin**.

While Job denied such accusation, he was at a loss as to why he was **suffering so intently**.

While Job did question God, the one thing that Job didn't do was to **blame** or **curse** God.



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Worst Advice Ever

In fact, not only were Job's friends no help, his **wife** wasn't either.

His wife said to him, "*Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!*" (Job 2:9 NIV)

He replied, "*You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?*" (Job 2:10a NIV)

In all this, Job did not sin in what he said. (Job 2:10b NIV)

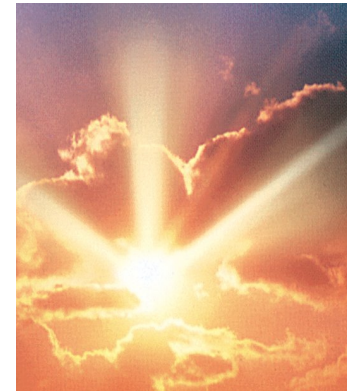


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Job

However, what Job didn't know, and what we should appreciate by **studying the text** and **using deep reflection** is that there was something else going on **behind the scenes**.

In fact, this is what makes the book of Job so **profound** as it gives us a glimpse **behind the curtain** and into the **cosmic realm** of angels, other divine beings, and God.



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Behind the Curtain

What we see **behind the curtain** is **God** having court and the angels presenting themselves to him.

To one of these “divine beings” named **Satan**, God asks him where he’s been and what he’s been doing?

*Satan answered the **LORD**, “From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it.” (Job 1:7 NIV)*

*Then the **LORD** said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is **no one** on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.” (Job 1:8 NIV)*

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Behind the Curtain

Now is when things get interesting. Satan accuses the **motives** of Job and God giving favor to someone who really doesn’t deserve it. As he says, . . .

*“**Does Job fear God for nothing?**” Satan replied. “Have you not **put a hedge** around him and his household and everything he has?” (Job 1:9 NIV)*

“You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land.” (Job 1:10 NIV)

*“But stretch out your hand and **strike** everything he has, and **he will surely curse you to your face.**” (Job 1:11 NIV)*

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Behind the Curtain

Many of you know what happened. **God gave Job over to Satan**, but **commanded** not to physically harm him.

The result was that **Job** lost all his **wealth** and all his **children**.

How did Job respond? Did he **curse** God?

*At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in **worship** and said: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised.” (Job 1:20–21 NIV)*

*In all this, Job did not **sin** by charging God with wrongdoing. (Job 1:22 NIV)*

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Behind the Curtain

But **Satan** was not impressed and says to the Lord . . .

*“**Skin for skin!**” . . . “A man will give all he has for his own life . . . stretch out your hand and **strike** his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face.” (Job 2:4–5 NIV)*

God gave Satan permission to afflict Job and his body was covered with **painful sores** from the soles of his feet to the top of his head.

While **Job** ended up cursing the day of his birth, he never accused the Lord of evil. Instead, **he gave him glory**.

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The Book of Job

What the **Book of Job** teaches us is that there is more going on than meets the eye.

There is a **cosmic struggle** going on where the **integrity** of both **God** and **His saints** is being attacked and ridiculed by Satan.

To prove Satan wrong and create a world where **God's integrity is never again questioned**, he allows **trials** to happen even among the upright.

However, God never gives Satan permission to destroy us.

Instead, when the **time of testing** is over, God restores our lives at a level that before was unimaginable.

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Summary

There are many different ways we suffer.

Living in a **sin-cursed world** where nature is at times out of control.

Poor, foolish, or sinful choices made by someone **other** than ourselves.

Poor, foolish, or sinful choices made by **ourselves**.

The testing of our **integrity and faith** by our cosmic enemies.

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Psalm 73

However, there is one more **form of suffering** that I have not yet mentioned.

In fact, it is one of the **chief reasons** why the righteous can become very discouraged and even want to give up.

According to Psalm 73, it says, *Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart.* (Psalms 73:1 NIV)

But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. (Psalms 73:2-3 NIV)

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Psalm 73

The **prosperity of the Wicked** (Psalm 73:4-5)

They have no struggles;

Their **bodies** are healthy and strong.

They are **free from the burdens** common to man;

They are not plagued by human ills.

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Psalm 73

However, once **this person** took his eyes off the wicked and did some “**deep thinking**” his whole perspective changed.

*When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me till I entered the **sanctuary of God**; then I understood their **final destiny**.* (Psalms 73:16–17 NIV)

*Surely you place them on **slippery ground**; you cast them down to ruin. How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by **terrors**!* (Psalms 73:18–19 NIV)

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Psalm 73

*When my **heart** was grieved and my **spirit embittered**, **I was senseless and ignorant**; I was a **brute beast** before you.* (Psalms 73:21–22 NIV)

*Yet **I am always with you**; you hold me by my right hand.* (Psalms 73:23 NIV)

*You guide me with your **counsel**, and afterward you will **take me into glory**.* (Psalms 73:24 NIV)

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Conclusion

There is much **comfort** and **wisdom** in the **Bible**.

To allow our lives to be so **distracted** with trivial pursuits is really not wise.

God has a **plan** for the righteous and his **counsel** is good for our souls—especially when we are going through **trouble** or **disappointment**.

According to the Apostle James, *we consider **blessed** those who have persevered. You have **heard** of **Job’s perseverance** and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. **The Lord is full of compassion and mercy**.* (James 5:10–11 NIV)

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Conclusion

The **Lord** is full of compassion and mercy to those who **persevere**.

Therefore, when we **suffer** for whatever reason, let us remember **God’s promise** to us.

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has **stood the test**, he will receive the **crown of life** that **God** has **promised** to those who love him. (James 1:12 NIV)

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