

Fatal Distractions: Conquering Destructive Temptations



Kay Arthur, David & BJ Lawson

40minute
BIBLE STUDIES

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PRECEPT MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL



WATERBROOK
P R E S S

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FATAL DISTRACTIONS: CONQUERING DESTRUCTIVE TEMPTATIONS

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HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

This small-group study is for people who are interested in learning for themselves more about what the Bible says on various subjects, but who have only limited time to meet together. It's ideal, for example, for a lunch group at work, an early morning men's group, a young mothers' group meeting in a home, a Sunday-school class, or even family devotions. (It's also ideal for small groups that typically have longer meeting times—such as evening groups or Saturday morning groups—but want to devote only a portion of their time together to actual study, while reserving the rest for prayer, fellowship, or other activities.)

This book is designed so that all the group's participants will complete each lesson's study activities *at the same time*. Discussing your insights drawn from what God says about the subject reveals exciting, life-impacting truths.

Although it's a group study, you'll need a facilitator to lead the study and keep the discussion moving. (This person's function is *not* that of a lecturer or teacher. However, when this book is used in a Sunday-school class or similar setting, the teacher should feel free to lead more directly and to bring in other insights in addition to those provided in each week's lesson.)

If *you* are your group's facilitator, the leader, here are some helpful points for making your job easier:

- Go through the lesson and mark the text before you lead the group. This will give you increased familiarity with the material and will enable you to facilitate the group with greater ease. It may be easier for you to lead the group through the instructions for marking if you, as a leader, choose a specific color for each symbol you mark.

- As you lead the group, start at the beginning of the text and simply read it aloud in the order it appears in the lesson, including the “insight boxes,” which appear throughout. Work through the lesson together, observing and discussing what you learn. As you read the Scripture verses, have the group say aloud the word they are marking in the text.
- The discussion questions are there simply to help you cover the material. As the class moves into the discussion, many times you will find that they will cover the questions on their own. Remember, the discussion questions are there to guide the group through the topic, not to squelch discussion.
- Remember how important it is for people to verbalize their answers and discoveries. This greatly strengthens their personal understanding of each week’s lesson. Try to ensure that everyone has plenty of opportunity to contribute to each week’s discussions.
- Keep the discussion moving. This may mean spending more time on some parts of the study than on others. If necessary, you should feel free to spread out a lesson over more than one session. However, remember that you don’t want to slow the pace too much. It’s much better to leave everyone “wanting more” than to have people dropping out because of declining interest.
- If the validity or accuracy of some of the answers seems questionable, you can gently and cheerfully remind the group to stay focused on the truth of the Scriptures. Your object is to learn what the Bible says, not to engage in human philosophy. Simply stick with the Scriptures and give God the opportunity to speak. His Word *is* truth (John 17:17)!

FATAL DISTRACTIONS: CONQUERING DESTRUCTIVE TEMPTATIONS

If you are a Christian, you have already made the most important decision of your life: you have surrendered your life to Christ! But you've probably discovered by now that the Christian life is not problem-free. Yes, you have the Holy Spirit living in you to provide guidance and strength, but you still struggle to live the way you know you should. This is because you are battling two enemies: Satan and yourself. Your nature was changed when you came to know Christ and He made His Spirit to dwell in you (1 John 4:13). But the Spirit dwells in a body of flesh,

which is why you still find yourself struggling to do the right thing.

All of us commit individual acts of sin. But you may have noticed that certain sins seem to be more of a problem for you personally. Sometimes we wrestle with certain sin patterns or habitual sins—behaviors we fall into when we try to get our needs met apart from God. The source of that struggle is called *the flesh* or *the old man*. And if we live in the flesh rather than by the Spirit, these habitual sins will distract us from our pursuit of righteousness. They can literally kill our spiritual growth and keep us from maturing in our journey with Christ.

The early church identified a number of “capital sins”—the sins from which they believed most other sin originates. The church fathers named seven sins that are so corrupting, so evil and dangerous that for the last seventeen hundred years, they have been commonly called the seven deadly sins. And they are deadly—deadly to your spiritual growth. That is why we call them *Fatal Distractions*.

In this study we’ll be identifying and discussing six of these seven deadly sins, sins that can distract you from nurturing your relationship with God and, left unchecked, can even be fatal to your spiritual journey: *pride, anger, jealousy, gluttony, slothfulness, and greed*. (We’ve decided to omit the seventh sin of *lust*, because

we already have multiple Bible studies on the problem of sexual sin, including *The Truth About Sex* and the 40-Minute study *What Does the Bible Say About Sex?*)

As you learn more about these fatal distractions in the weeks ahead, we encourage you to ask God to help you identify, through His Holy Spirit, any subtle ways one or more of these sins has taken hold in your life and to help you conquer these destructive temptations, so that you can walk in victory with Him.

WEEK ONE

Of all the sins that can distract us from living effectively for Jesus, pride is one of the most insidious. It twists our perspective on the good gifts of God. We are tempted to believe that any successes or blessings come through our own efforts or depend on our own abilities. Pride takes our focus off God, and life becomes all about us, our accomplishments and goals.

This week as we consider what God says about pride, the first of our six fatal distractions, carefully examine your life for any evidence that this fatal distraction has taken root in your heart.

OBSERVE

Let's start by looking at Uzziah, a man whose life illustrates the way pride creeps into our thinking.

Leader: Read 2 Chronicles 26:3–5 aloud.

- Have the group say aloud and draw a box around each reference to **Uzziah**, including pronouns:

As you read the text, it's helpful to have the group say the key words aloud as they mark them. This way everyone will be sure they are marking every occurrence of the word, including any synonymous words or phrases. Do this throughout the study.

2 CHRONICLES 26:3–5

³ Uzziah was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Jechiliah of Jerusalem.

⁴ He did right in the sight of the LORD according to all that his father Amaziah had done.

⁵ He continued to seek God in the days

of Zechariah, who had understanding through the vision of God; and as long as he sought the LORD, God prospered him.

2 CHRONICLES 26:16–21

¹⁶ But when he became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly, and he was unfaithful to the LORD his God, for he entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense.

¹⁷ Then Azariah the priest entered after him and with him eighty priests of the LORD, valiant men.

¹⁸ They opposed Uzziah the king and said to him, “It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn

DISCUSS

- What did you learn about King Uzziah in this passage?
- What was his primary focus?

OBSERVE

After telling how God “marvelously helped” and strengthened Uzziah until “his fame spread afar” (26:15), the Bible describes a change in Uzziah’s life.

Leader: Read 2 Chronicles 26:16–21 aloud. Have the group say and...

- draw a box around each reference to **Uzziah**, including pronouns.
- mark the word **proud** with a **P**.

DISCUSS

- What did you learn about Uzziah in this passage?