

SIM *now*

East Asia Edition

DISTRACTIONS IN MISSION

Online Reading



Nehemiah 6: 3

I am carrying on a Great Work, and I cannot come down.

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SIM
EAST ASIA
Serving In Mission
国际事工差会

Distractions in Mission

REV. DR. CALEB CHIAN

Chairman, SIM EA Board, Regional Council & SIM East Malaysia Council



Distractions affect various aspects of our lives, and their consequences can range from minor to significant. If the flight path of an airplane or a ship is disrupted, it may not only fail to reach its destination but also face danger. Minor distractions are understandable, but if important matters are disrupted, it can lead to irreparable regret and loss. To fulfil the Great Commission of Jesus Christ, disciples must protect their mission from distractions and advance towards completion with full dedication.

Recently, I visited a mission field for an inspection and met a missionary used mightily by the Lord. He helped us paint a picture of unwavering commitment to the mission. He explained what it means to "press on toward the goal" (Philippians 3:13-14). Just like a marathon runner who focuses solely on winning the race, ignoring all distractions, and aiming straight for the finish line, a missionary must also press on towards the goal, unaffected by any disruptions along the way. Even if someone slaps him or throws a water bottle at him, he wouldn't stop to argue because the argument and the process are not the goal; the goal is the target. The missionary emphasised that

for those in mission work, there is only one goal: for all nations and people to hear the Gospel. SIM International's vision and mission strive towards this goal: **"Our vision is to see a witness to Christ's love where He is least known, disciples of Jesus expressing God's love in their communities, and Christ-centred churches among all peoples."**

The goal is clear, but whether it is a mission organisation, church, or individual, we will encounter numerous obstacles as we move towards this goal. These obstacles are distractions that can blur or even erase our goal. These include persecution, discord, criticism from enemies, misunderstandings, rejection, unfair treatment, shallow understanding of the gospel and Jesus' mission, and the desire for applause. When we encounter these distractions, will we stop to argue with these obstacles? Remember, they are not the goal. We must let the goal continue to guide us forward! Nehemiah, despite encountering many distractions, remained focused on building the walls of Jerusalem and succeeded (Nehemiah 6: 15). Thus, let us not be distracted by anything but remain focused on fulfilling the Great Commission.



Mission is Great Work given by our Great God

Nehemiah 6:2-3

REV. NATHANAEL TAN

*Hebron Bible-Presbyterian Church,
Associate Pastor*

Nehemiah's story gives us two key principles to follow.

Nehemiah was a man on a mission. God had called him to leave the prestige and safety of Susa, the capital of the great Persian empire and return to Jerusalem to restore her broken down walls and gates so that God's people could live safely with their heads held high. Nehemiah set out to fulfil this difficult mission and in a short time, the work was almost complete.

Desperate, the enemies of God tried a last-ditch attempt to stop this work: "...So Sanballat and Geshem sent a message asking me to meet them at one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But I realized they were plotting to harm me, so I replied by sending this message to them: **"I am engaged in a great work, so I can't come.** Why should I stop working to come and meet with you?" Nehemiah 6:2-3 (NLT).

Principle 1:

Realise that distractions increase, the closer we are to finishing the Mission.

Four times Sanballat plotted to lure Nehemiah out to an 'ulu' (remote) place to assassinate him (Nehemiah 6: 4). Do you sense increasing distractions from the mission God has called you to do? Perhaps it is because you are progressing well, so do not give up or be discouraged!

Principle 2:

Remember that our Great God has given us a great work to do.

Nehemiah gave a curt but wise reply to his powerful enemies, **"I am engaged in a great work, so I can't come."** The work was great because the safety and prestige of his people were on the line. But more importantly, the work was great because God Himself gave the work to Nehemiah! Never lose sight of the great work God has given you.



The mission that God has given every Christian is the great commission of Matthew 28:18-20. Whether we make disciples at home or abroad, know that the enemy will distract us especially when we are progressing well; but remember that our great God has given us a great work to do and so remain focussed.

Strengthened Amidst Distractions

ABRAHAM AND SARAH

Philippines



In our missionary journey, distractions come in different forms—busyness, discouragements, anxiety and even opportunities that may seem to be good but are not part of our calling. Yet, by His grace we have remained steadfast in our mission: to preach the Kingdom of God. Our work among communities of another faith—through livelihood programmes for women, child sponsorship, and relief efforts—are all methods, not the mission itself. These initiatives serve as bridges to proclaim the Gospel, not the goal in themselves.

Matthew 24:14 remains our guiding light: **“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”** We do not lose sight of this. During the pandemic, we unintentionally planted a church, and now we have 15 believers from another faith in our church actively serving in worship and media ministries. This is not something we planned, but something God orchestrated. And now, He is sending more people from another faith to our gatherings for discipleship.

Discouragement

Even amidst bringing many to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and discipling them, discouragement has tried to distract us, especially due to the lack of financial support. We’ve relied on other creative ways to raise funds, which take much of our time and energy. At times, we have felt overwhelmed, but God has remained faithful, always providing our needs in unexpected ways. These challenges have only strengthened our trust in His provision. Praise be to Him!

Fear and Anxiety

We haven’t faced direct opposition from people of other faiths, but we do have difficulties. One major challenge is the lack of a ministry centre to nurture new believers from other faiths. Discipling a family from another faith in their own environment has been difficult because many eyes are watching, making it hard for new believers to grow freely in their faith. But thanks be to God for, thus far, enabling us to walk the journey with new believers wisely.

While others may see the unexpected fruits in our ministry as a reason to shift focus, we are determined to remain focussed on the mission God entrusted to us. The harvest belongs to Him, and our role is to stay faithful in making disciples. Our strategy may evolve, but our calling does not change. We will continue to serve the community among whom God has placed us knowing that it is God who brings people from darkness to light. We press on, undistracted, committed to seeing the Kingdom of God advance.



Serving In Spite of Distractions

MELISSA

South Asia

After God's ten long years of preparation, I officially entered the field in a creative access nation in 2013. During my preparations for cross-cultural work, I encountered different challenges. Self-understanding, family issues, theological training, cross-cultural team experiences, difficulties in building my support team are part of my long faith journey.

Family Challenges

In 2018, while I was receiving training abroad, I woke up one morning to find a message in the family chat that said, "Our father passed away." It was a shocking moment as I struggled to understand God's intention in that situation. I felt sorry that I was unable to see my father one last time. However, I was grateful to God for allowing me to repair my relationship with my father while he was alive and for the wonderful moments we had shared together. Although it brought great pain to me to acknowledge that my father had left, I pursued and completed my cross-cultural training.

Financial Challenges

When I was thinking that everything was going on smoothly, my sending church informed me of its decision not to support my cross-cultural work. I wrestled with God until finally, I chose to seek another church

that was willing to support my cross-cultural mission. At that time, I didn't know what would happen next. I decided to leave my hometown and start all over again in another city. Facing an unfamiliar environment, a new fellowship, and a new life, all I did was to continue to believe in God's guidance, understand that the burden He had placed in my heart was not sudden, and to wait for His divine intervention. By the grace of God, He prepared a team that was willing to walk alongside the journey together with me and invited my previous church to join in to support me. What an amazing work God had done in my life!

Faithfulness amidst Distractions

God had been teaching me different lessons at each stage of this journey. Whenever I struggled to understand or felt hopeless, He reminded me not to forget my original call, which was to respond to His love. Due to His faithfulness and unfailing love, my life is being transformed by him day by day.

Now that God has led me to this country, I trust in His guidance and am determined to follow Him faithfully, no matter where He leads me.



**"By the grace of God, I am what I am,
and His grace toward me has not been in vain."
(1 Corinthians 15:10a)**

APR 2025

Distracted but Determined

PHILIP, *Central Asia*

On December 21, 2024, I suddenly contracted a virus during my travel abroad. I felt that my life was coming to an end, and that I wouldn't see the new year. I was so sick that I had to use a wheelchair to board the plane. When I arrived home on the evening of 23 December, I was directly sent to the intensive care unit for emergency dialysis due to kidney failure and severe infection of multiple internal organs.



Health complications

The doctor initially diagnosed leptospirosis, with both kidneys failing to function and other damaged internal organs needing medication for recovery. While being in the ICU, whenever I closed my eyes, I would experience hallucinations of my soul drifting away. On 24 December, after a second dialysis, my kidney index dropped from 1000 to 700 (normal index is 110). Thankfully, the CT scan report was good, with no tumors or stones in my body. The virus-damaged liver, pancreas, bladder, and other organs were recovering, and I could start eating, but I was asked to slowly exercise to restore digestive functions. However, the doctor said my condition was still critical and I might need to remain warded in the ICU for another seven days. Final tests showed it was acute hepatitis A, caused by food poisoning. On 28 December, the tubes in my body were removed as my organs started functioning independently. On 30 December, nine days after being admitted, the doctor allowed me to be discharged.

Unexpected Fall

One day while recuperating at home, I went to the bathroom to clear my throat, and unfortunately fainted, hitting the left side of my face as I landed on the floor. When I was taken to the hospital, they found that the bones around my left eye and left side of my face were fractured, and my jaw was displaced too. Since my organs were still recovering, I was advised against taking painkillers. The doctor told me to endure the pain instead. I prayed to the Lord for strength to endure, thanking Him for His grace and for the lessons on quietness He was teaching. I also thanked the Lord for allowing difficult situations in my life which must be according to His good will, though I could not understand why He permitted them.

Depending on His Grace

But I know that our Lord's purpose of leading me through this difficult time is a reminder that my mission for Him is not yet over. Depending on His grace, I am determined to overcome all the distractions and finish the task that He has entrusted to me!

New Appointments



ANGELO TJ TAN

*SIM West Malaysia
Acting Director*

Angelo is married to Kezia and they are blessed with two sons. Coming from a Chinese Taoist background, Angelo was led to the Lord by his teacher during his high school days. He completed his Bachelor of Theology in Singapore Bible College in 1994 and later his Master of Divinity in Melbourne, Australia in 2002. After serving a Korean Congregation in Kuala Lumpur as an Associate Pastor for 6 years, he was tasked to do church planting in the city. Angelo joined SIM West Malaysia as its Ministry Director in 2017 and SIM West Malaysia Acting Director on 1 January 2025.

GRACE NGAN, *SIM Hong Kong Acting Director*

Grace joined a short-term mission team to Kenya in 2009 to explore the possibilities of serving in M* ministry. She joined SIM for long term mission and served in Kenya from 2014 to 2024, reaching out to the M* communities. Grace, because of her speech therapy and banking background, initially worked in a hospital and community centre where she also did most of her outreach. Later, she was involved in other projects such as internship training, mobilising local churches, ministering and empowering believers. Grace moved back to Hong Kong in 2024 and began her new role as Acting Director of SIM Hong Kong on 1 February 2025.

Marthen Luther who was appointed as the Acting Director for SIM Indonesia, and began his new role on 1 March 2025. Marthen and his wife, Mieske, joined SIM East Asia in 2006 and have been actively involved in church planting, evangelism, and discipleship. He had also served as Mindanao Region Field Coordinator, and as the Ministry Coordinator of the Indonesian Missionary Fellowship in Jakarta, Indonesia. Marthen holds an MA in Theology and a Master of Theology degree majoring in Systematic Theology.



MARTHEN LUTHER

*SIM Indonesia
Acting Director*

Project Introduction

PASTORAL E-BOOK SET (PROJECT NUMBER: 90808)

This project aims to provide excellent and easily accessible resources to pastors, church planters, missionaries, evangelists, youth pastors, and church leaders from countries with limited or no access to the internet. The intent is to equip users with the needed resources for an effective teaching and preaching ministry.

Many Chinese and Indonesian speaking pastors serving in remote regions lack good resources for their ministries and teachings. Pray that the Lord will provide for the purchase and distribution of resources for an effective teaching and preaching ministry.



We hope to see: • 1,000 churches grounded in sound teaching on Evangelism, Discipleship and Mission • Believers encouraged to reach out to their communities: family members, close relatives, neighbours, and friends.

Project commenced: October 2015

For more information, please contact us at eastasia.projects@sim.org

Please use the project number and name when communicating with us about this.