

Dangers of Distracted Driving

The Governors Highway Safety Association provides a working definition for distracted driving.

“Distraction occurs when a driver voluntarily diverts attention away from driving to something not related to driving that uses the driver’s eyes, ears, or hands.”

Handheld phones are the most notable culprits, but everything from lighting up a cigarette, to applying makeup, to eating a Big Mac qualifies as a distraction.



Consider the danger of phone use alone. According to the *World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention*, “Research has shown that the reaction time of drivers increases by 0.5 to 1.5 seconds when they are talking on handheld phones, and drivers have difficulty maintaining the correct positions in their lanes, maintaining appropriate speeds, and judging and accepting safe gaps in traffic. Some evidence indicates that drivers who use handheld phones face a risk of crash four times higher than the risk faced by other drivers, imperiling themselves and other road users.”

Another recent study considered the impact of visual distractions. Psychologists Dr. M.A. Recarte and Dr. L.M. Nunes, of the Universidad Complutense in Madrid, Spain, examined whether a driver’s eye movements would be affected by additional tasks to the point where the driver’s ability to pay attention to his or her surroundings is sacrificed. The authors found that when distracted, drivers fixated on certain points longer and, therefore, glanced at their mirrors and dashboard less.

“It seems that during the visual distractions, a person’s eye freezes up, and the eye’s visual inspection window decreases, which impairs perception of the environment,” said Dr. Recarte.

There is a spiritual corollary to these findings. When navigating the highways of life, distractions can be deadly. Don’t allow the competing voices of culture and peers to deafen you to the voice of the Savior, or the sights of worldly temptation to blind you to the wisdom of God.

If we are going to fixate our gaze on anyone or anything, let it be on Jesus.

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:3).

– Beecher Hunter