How To Lead in a World of Distraction: Four Simple Habits for Turning Down the Noise

In his making his case in How To Lead in a World of Distraction, author and pastor Clay Scroggins makes this compelling, spot-on observation: This world of distraction collects a toll from us. All the benefits of technology and our media-saturated, 24/7 consumer culture come at a cost. And it may be more expensive than you realize…Your distractions are pulling you away from other things, important things, things and people you love and goals you want to achieve. Your distractions are keeping you from gaining momentum in your life.

In many ways, this book is an over-due wake-up call, reminding us of the ever-expanding sprawl of distraction. Fortunately, with the author's warnings come field-tested plans for how to make progress in creating the space needed to be better leaders.

Here are a set of Book Notes that will give you an overview of the value that lies within.

Title: ***How To Lead in a World of Distraction:*** *Four Simple Habits for Turning Down the Noise*

Author: **Clay Scroggins**

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Book Description:

While many leaders have learned to tune out distractions that keep them from being productive, they remain deaf to their inner desires and emotions. In How to Lead in a World of Distraction, Clay Scroggins teaches leaders four simple habits that create space for emotional evaluation and exploration. These helpful practices will empower leaders to replace the chaos of their busy days with emotional competence and awareness that leads to a calmer, more fulfilling life.
You'll learn how to incorporate four noise-cancelling habits into your daily life—finding simplicity, speaking to yourself, getting quiet, and pressing pause—that will make you mindful and aware of the vital inner desires that need your attention. Transforming the toxic cocktail of emotional distraction starts with emotional awareness—being able to identify and understand your emotions—which ultimately leads to emotional healing and transformed leadership. And it all starts here.

How to Lead in a World of Distraction:

- Teaches leaders four simple habits that create space for emotional evaluation and exploration.
- Empowers leaders to replace the emotional chaos in their increasingly busy days with an emotional awareness that will lead to a calmer, more fulfilling life.
- Encourages leaders to fully embrace tangible steps each day until emotional distractions–the numbing nature of entertainment and social media and the urgency of

the daily grind–are permanently replaced by calm, effective, and gratifying leadership.

Book Quotes:

Before we blame the Millennials for another problem, I want to be clear this is not a generational thing, or a gender thing, or a temperament thing. Distraction—whether due to technology or simply the changing pace of life in our world—has affected all of us. It touches every part of our lives. LOCATION: 190

This world of distraction collects a toll from us. All the benefits of technology and our media-saturated, 24/7 consumer culture come at a cost. And it may be more expensive than you realize. LOCATION: 237

…I was able to identify several problems caused by distractions, and after categorizing and combining them, I've narrowed them down to three price tags you'll need to pay, if not now, then at some point in the future: 1. The opportunity cost of the unknown. 2. The lack of traction caused by the distraction. 3. The failure to live your best life. LOCATION: 247

An opportunity is lost with every distraction we feed. LOCATION: 259

Yes, to distract someone is to pull them away from something. Your distractions are pulling you away from other things, important things, things and people you love and goals you want to achieve. Your distractions are keeping you from gaining momentum in your life. They are keeping you from gaining traction in your life. LOCATION: 273

And that leads me to a simple observation: your distractions are holding you back from becoming a better you! They are getting in the way of your ability to grow as a person and as a leader. They are holding you back from exerting effort on your own improvement. LOCATION: 305

Distractions manage to do two things really well. First, they make us promises. Yes, some distractions annoy and bother us, but most of the time we are able to ignore or decline them in favor of what we want. The distractions I want to focus on fall into another category. These are the distractions that offer us something we want—at least in that moment. They promise us something that we find pleasurable or that helps us cope through a difficult challenge. LOCATION: 334

You can bank on the fact that distractions will always be there, doing exactly what they say they will do. LOCATION: 338

The promise behind many of the distractions in our lives is simple: If you pay attention to me, I promise you'll stop thinking about whatever you were thinking about. Again, that's what distractions do. They take your mind off whatever your mind was focused on. And that's about all they have to offer. LOCATION: 341

Distractions don't make you better. LOCATION: 345

When we give our attention to anything, it will draw us away from something else. And that means that even good things like wanting to learn or wanting to be healthy can become distractions. It all depends on what you actually need to be focused on right now. LOCATION: 356

Distractions keep us from focusing on what's really driving us: the desires, emotions, motives, and needs that lie beneath the surface. LOCATION: 360

That's what this book is really all about. The real danger of living in a world of constant distractions is not the distractions themselves. It's the things we use to block them out—because our attempts to mask and hide can keep us from knowing who we really are. This world is filled with people who have become adept at using

white noise to lead successful lives. LOCATION: 440

We all have our own white noises—a variety of coping mechanisms we use to block out distractions in our lives. But that white noise also blocks out the emotions we'd prefer not to feel. And that can be dangerous . . . and unhealthy. When we feel overwhelmed, afraid, depressed, or discouraged, we turn up the dial on our white noise. Not only does it help us avoid the outward distractions, it mutes the inner voice telling us how we're doing. LOCATION: 464

Either you'll learn to handle your emotions or your emotions will end up handling you. LOCATION: 557

Your emotions are too important to stuff down, avoid, or deny. And it's all too likely you and I are doing this in some form at this very moment. The longer those emotions lie unattended to, the more devastating their consequences. Becoming a healthy person demands that you deal with them. And you can only deal with them if you're aware that they exist. LOCATION: 560

Being a better version of you demands that you turn down the noise. The future you, your future spouse, your future kids, the future people you hope to lead—they all demand that you turn down the noise. LOCATION: 572

What do you use to avoid the distractions, that white noise that seems to help and may even offer you the promise of a good night's rest, but is also hindering you from hearing the other sounds you need to hear right now? Until you identify it, you can't turn it down. LOCATION: 590

Self-leadership demands that you know more about yourself than anyone else. You need a PhD in you, and in order to become well versed in the ins and outs of yourself, you need to observe and understand the distractions and noises in your life. LOCATION: 608

But here's a question we all need to wrestle to the ground: If the game isn't ultimately about appearing successful, am I willing to lose all that in order to win? In other words, would you be willing to allow some of the veneer of your success to fade, to get real and honest about yourself, your faults, your fears, your weaknesses, and places where you are emotionally unhealthy in order to heal and grow as a leader? LOCATION: 797

Success can easily become a distraction that sets you up for long-term failure. Don't let your short-term wins take you out of the game. LOCATION: 835

The attraction of certainty is a dangerous distraction to our leadership because it leads us to compromise our integrity. In our longing to appear confident and certain, we become liars. LOCATION: 901

A 2002 study by the University of Massachusetts found that 60 percent of adults are unable to conduct a conversation of longer than ten minutes without telling a lie. LOCATION: 905

We all crave certainty in uncertain times, and leaders are prone to provide that certainty whether they have good reason to do so . . . or not. LOCATION: 909

But here's why this brand of leadership is so poisonous. People will follow you while you wing it—for a while. But when your duplicity becomes known, you will lose credibility and sacrifice your integrity. People don't follow leaders they can't trust. They may go along with the program out of fear, but you will have lost trust and with that, any influence you may have had. LOCATION: 915

Authentic leaders are comfortable letting others know they don't have all the answers. When you become an authentic leader, you give up the need to always be right, to always have the answer to every problem. LOCATION: 920

Being authentic, honest, and humble is not easy. It requires you to embrace vulnerability and self-awareness, qualities some of us are not comfortable showing to others. But vulnerable leaders will earn trust and increase their influence. LOCATION: 925

Without self-awareness—an understanding of who you are, what you feel, and why you do the things you do—you will not be emotionally healthy. And the last thing the world needs is more leaders who are emotionally constipated, sick with an inner disease they don't even realize they have. LOCATION: 1026

Awareness is as powerful as unawareness is problematic. That's why the old cliché is still true: the secret of leadership is knowing yourself. You can't get where you want to go if you don't know where you are. But even more basic than knowing where you are is knowing who you are. And a leader who doesn't know themself is a dangerous guide. LOCATION: 1037

To help you cultivate emotional curiosity, I want to give you a simple formula to remember. Emotional detective work requires three simple steps: identify the emotion, find language for the emotion, and then deal directly with the emotion. LOCATION: 1093

Noise and distraction kill our curiosity. LOCATION: 1095

We have the capacity to listen to, name, and question our emotions, and we also have the ability to disagree with them. In fact, this is a mark of emotional maturity: as you learn to understand your emotions, you can begin to take control of them. You get to determine whether you will allow an emotion to affect you and if so, how you will allow that emotion to affect you. Just because you feel it doesn't mean you need to internalize it. LOCATION: 1276

All leaders face the strong temptation to become focused on external results while missing the internal work that emotional health requires. LOCATION: 1335

Great leaders learn how to turn down the noise low enough and long enough to be ruthlessly curious about their emotions. LOCATION: 1340

My goal in writing this book is not to try to make you more emotional. I'm not out to change your personality or turn you into a more touchy-feely person. You are already an emotional being and don't need to become more emotional; rather, you need to become more emotionally aware. You need to find space to tune in to the emotions that are already inside you. They're always saying something, trying to communicate with you. And if you don't turn down the noise low enough and long enough to pay attention, you won't be able to manage the emotion. Unless you listen to, name, and ask questions of your emotions, they will eventually manage you. LOCATION: 1346

The trend line of your career progression will parallel the trend line of your emotional health. As you grow in emotional health, you will grow in influence. As you grow in influence, you will grow in opportunities. This correlation could not be more important. LOCATION: 1386

But it's the invisible habits of self-reflection, self-inspection, and self-discovery that will allow you to develop into the leader you want to be. LOCATION: 1441

When you can clarify your why—and by that, I mean the answer to every "why do you do what you do" question—you can start to live and lead effectively. Finding the why will help you find the traction in life that builds momentum, and it will keep you from being pulled away by distractions. LOCATION: 1498

Good leaders know three things: where they're coming from, where they're going, and how they're going to get

there. LOCATION: 1536

The distinction between important and urgent comes from something known as Dwight D. Eisenhower's decision matrix. Eisenhower is famously known to have said, "What is important is seldom urgent and what is urgent is seldom important." LOCATION: 1590

We know that simplicity brings clarity, and the same is true the other way around. When we clarify what's important, we can simplify our lives. LOCATION: 1600

If simplicity is about finding your why, then self-talk is about finding your way. If the last chapter was about packing your bags and opening your map, this chapter is about getting in the car and turning out of the driveway. And as with all travels, the destination you desire will determine the direction you choose. If you haven't defined your why, then finding your way won't make sense. LOCATION: 1733

The destination you desire will determine the direction you choose. LOCATION: 1747

That voice inside your head has power. It can control your day by discouraging and demotivating, or it can encourage and empower. The great news is, it's up to you. LOCATION: 1803

The main way to regulate your inner voice is to filter out the noises that aren't adding value. Whether you're reading books and articles, watching shows and movies, or surfing the web, all these sources are saying things that the voice inside your head is communicating to you. That's a lot of voices and a lot of noise. LOCATION: 1850

Here are two good questions to ask as you set up your calendar: 1. What is motivating me to say yes to this? 2. Is there someone else who can do this? LOCATION: 1886

Here are two other self-regulating questions you can ask yourself: 1. What would a great leader do here? 2. What advice would I give someone else who was in this situation? LOCATION: 1899

Whether you practice silence and solitude in the morning, throughout the day, or at night, you can't do it without intentionality. LOCATION: 2068

If you want to be a good leader, knowing who you are and what you're about is crucial. LOCATION: 2121

Solitude offers great relief and great frustration. On one hand, you don't have to "get anything out of it." On the other hand, sometimes there is nothing to "get out of it." If you're a high achiever, this will be a frustrating paradigm. But that's exactly something you should lean into. Part of the noise of the world is an unspoken pressure to perform and to achieve. Solitude is an inherent rebuttal of that noise. LOCATION: 2150

Great leaders turn down the noise low enough and long enough to be ruthlessly curious about their emotions. LOCATION: 2206

The noise of the world is never going to tell you this truth. Noise is inherently opposed to silence. But shutting up, shutting off, and shutting down are going to work wonders for your mental, physical, and emotional health. If you don't believe me, try it and decide for yourself. LOCATION: 2209

So far we've talked about the habits of finding simplicity, speaking to yourself, and getting quiet. Chances are, none of those were foreign to you. While you may have never practiced them or understood how they might work tangibly in your life, the concepts themselves probably weren't unfamiliar. Now we're talking about pressing pause. One of the strongest examples of pressing pause is found in the concept of the Sabbath. LOCATION: 2237

To understand the power of pressing pause, we have to understand why the habit of taking a Sabbath has stood the test of time. For thousands of years, cultures have instituted and instilled the value of taking breaks from work for the sake of rest and reflection. LOCATION: 2254

But I want to show you how the Sabbath isn't only about Sunday and it isn't only a spiritual practice. It's a personal discipline for the sake of becoming a healthier person, which will make you a better leader. LOCATION: 2260

In a literal sense, taking a day to observe the Sabbath means trusting that God will give you the time and energy you need to get everything else done that week. This is no small feat. You're saying, "I trust someone other than me to help me do what I need to do." And that person is God. The one who designed us to need rest also designed us to find rest in him. LOCATION: 2307

But here's the secret of the Sabbath: rest can be found, not at the end of a to-do list, but in the midst of everything you do. True rest isn't waiting for you just beyond the next deadline—it's not something on the distant and ever-elusive horizon. Rest is right where you are. If you can acknowledge that there is something bigger than you, then resting in what you do is possible. Followers of God realize they are small and inconsequential in his grand scheme. And this knowledge frees them up to rest—and to work diligently and faithfully, of course—while believing God is still accomplishing his plan and his will. LOCATION: 2316

I am all for an evaluated life. Unfortunately, most of us fail to turn down the noise low enough and long enough to actually evaluate what's inside us. That's where the Sabbath can help. LOCATION: 2358

Finding space away from all the distractions can give you the chance to find your why. LOCATION: 2400

Life isn't about getting through. It's about living. LOCATION: 2473

One of the reasons leadership growth is so difficult for you and me is because so much in our lives resists growth. Growth requires change. Change requires giving up something today for something better tomorrow. Most people don't like giving up that kind of control. Actually, growing as a leader has more to do with control than most realize. LOCATION: 2486

If you never turn down the noise of the distractions around you, you will miss what's most important for your own growth as a leader. LOCATION: 2583

The best you is not a destination. Being the best you actually happens along the journey. LOCATION: 2592

You can't win in helping others until you have dealt directly with the emotions inside you. The people around you are demanding that you get it right within so you can help them best. I'm telling you . . . it's possible and it's worth it. As counterintuitive as it seems, you have to give up control to be able to get there. LOCATION: 2615

Finally, you'll never be able to hear from God until you turn down the noise. Hearing from God works in tandem with giving up control. The more you give him control, the more you can hear from him. Also, the more you quiet the noise, the more you'll want to give up control to be able to deal with what's inside you. LOCATION: 2620

My hope is to rally a generation of leaders, young and old, who are willing to join me in the pursuit of clearer, stronger, distraction-free leadership. I want this generation of leaders to put their own ambition on the back burner and put the sake of others and the good of others at the forefront. The only way we can do that is by handling our own emotional health with the care it deserves. LOCATION: 2630

I look forward to continually leading others better, but I know my efforts are futile unless I'm leading myself as well as possible. The same is true of you. As attractive and addictive as the noise is, it can be turned down. Actually, it must be turned down. And when you can begin to habitually decrease the distractions and noise in your life and leadership, the world will be better for it! Let's raise the volume of our influence by turning down the noise! LOCATION: 2637

Note: should you wish to find any quote in its original context, the Kindle "location" is provided after each entry.