

Conquering Distractions

Baseball great Hank Aaron died on January 22, 2021. In 1974 Aaron passed the legendary Babe Ruth for lifetime major league home runs. I became a fan of Hank Aaron during the 1957 World Series, played between the New York Yankees and Milwaukee Braves. Aaron was early in his major league career at the time. I took a liking to his exceptional skills on the field and positive attitude. As a 10-year old, that was all that mattered.

As Aaron approached the lifetime home run record, I began to hear about people not wanting him to surpass Ruth's 714 home runs. Aaron hit the record-setting 715th on April 8, 1974. It was many years later when I became aware of the backstory of Aaron's life and pursuit of the home run record. Aaron endured racism and discrimination, forced to stay in separate hotels from the rest of the team. Meals on the road were served out of the back door of restaurants. As he approached Babe Ruth's home run record the racial slurs, insults, and death threats intensified. What is remarkable is that Aaron handled it all with grace, rising above the insults and staying focused on the field.



Concerning his faith, Hank gave this testimony: "I need to depend on Someone who is bigger, stronger, and wiser than I am . . . I don't do it on my own. God is my strength. He gave me a good body and some talent and the freedom to develop it. He helps me when things go wrong. He forgives me when I fall on my face. He lights the way." Aaron was a symbol of greatness on the field and dignity off it.

Others have succeeded in the face of public ridicule while displaying great faith. The Bible tells us about when God asked Noah to build the ark – a boat so big it couldn't be moved. The water would have to come to it. People ridiculed Noah, but he persisted to finish the task God had asked him to do. When the rains came God restored righteousness for the believers on board. There was a purpose to what God asked Noah to do.



While we may not possess world-class skills or have a humanity-saving role, God does have a purpose for our lives as well. The distractions of life are attempted roadblocks to our success. Distractions may come in many forms and directions, yet we can remain focused on our task at hand and our relationship with our Heavenly Father. Don't let others deter you from using your God-given skills to do what God wants you to do.

In my youth, I was oblivious to the distractions Hank Aaron endured. My admiration of Aaron was genuine then and is even greater now because I realize he didn't give in to the distractions he faced.

What has God enabled you to do well with your life that God might use for His purposes?

Question: What outside influences challenge your commitment to achieving success?

The Bible Says: *Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you. Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways. Do not turn to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.*

Closing Prayer: Dear Lord. Let us block out the distractions that threaten to divert us from accomplishing what you have created us to do. Amen.