

Staying busy or serving the Lord

I find it easy to stay busy. Sometimes people ask me one of the Minnesota trivial greeting questions: "Staying busy?" I think this question comes from the Scandinavian work ethic, which says if you're working and busy, then life is good and you're OK.

I always respond, "Oh yes, that's easy. But my real concern is 'staying fruitful!' So...are you "staying busy"?"

Actually I love to "stay busy". It's one of the idols I have had to dethrone in order to have a prayer life. My flesh likes to be busy all the time. It hates for me to stop and listen to God!

I remember a day during a long season of waiting on God, when I was disciplining myself to spend long hours alone with Him. It was not pleasant. Not because God is unpleasant -- NO! IN HIS PRESENCE THERE IS JOY FOREVERMORE!

The problem was my own soul. In quietness I would face the anxiety and self-incrimination that is so common in people, in fact so common that someone wrote a book titled "When I Relax I Feel Guilty!"

In that season of learning I found I was nearer to my own unsanctified soul life than I was to God. As a result my hours trying to be "alone with God" turned into frustration. I was mostly alone with *myself* instead of alone with God.

On the particular day mentioned above, I had a schedule of meetings and responsibilities that caused me to be on the run from 6 a.m. until midnight. It was an 18 hour day of busyness with people and projects nonstop. For me, it was fun. I loved it. I was, I hate to admit it, happy that I had no time to pray! I was "staying busy". It really didn't matter to me if I was being fruitful! I just loved being busy.

Well, by now you might guess that I'm sneaking up on you with a message. The message is this: unless you know how to stop, look, and listen for the Lord, so that you do **ONLY WHAT THE FATHER SHOWS YOU**, you are destined to a life of busyness without fruitfulness in the things that matter most. You may complain about the "tyranny of the urgent"; but the fact is, your own flesh would rather keep busy with natural things and people than get alone with God. Stillness may not be a friend to you, because you have never learned to shut out the noisy voices that make you feel anxious or guilty when you try to quiet down on the inside.

If you have never dethroned your idolatrous soul, which exalts the needs and pressures of life above the voice of God, *it is time to do so*. Confess your bad mental habits and repent from them. Apply the blood of Jesus to your mind. This will stop the flood of urgent and anxious thought and allow you to recognize the refreshing presence of God.

I have been surprised at the quietness of my mind when the blood of Jesus has been applied to it. Instead of dozens of priorities and memories flooding my thoughts, my mind becomes like still water. In that blood washed inward hush, the Holy Spirit seems to feel welcomed. (*The Spirit can only come where the blood has been applied.*) It is then that I recognize the Lord present and personal. It is then

He speaks. It is then I am able to listen. It is then I can respond to Him. Out of this redeemed hidden life with God comes fruitfulness, not just busyness.

Don't worry workaholics. Listening to God will not relieve you of your great love -- working long and hard. Serving God is healthy and hard work, but you'll no longer be serving hidden idols in your heart which produce a lot of activity with no fruit in God's kingdom. Instead, you will know His presence in what you are doing, and watch Him bring about fruitfulness with lasting value.

Are you "staying busy" or serving the Lord HIMSELF?

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