



BUSYNESS!

by Mark Brunner

Be Still And Know! (Psalm 46:10)

I multitask. I can spot one task on the horizon and begin planning for it while I have another in this hand, balancing another in the other. I get a lot done this way and there is a certain amount of competitive thrill in the process of getting a lot done in the shortest amount of time. While this does get a lot done, there is a downside to multitasking. When I take on a lot of tasks, I inevitably have a difficult time slowing down. It's kind of like getting up a good head of steam. The pressure builds up and the only way to release that pressure is to just keep moving and keep doing.

While this does get the work done, it seldom leaves time to collect my thoughts and find valuable down-time.

Here's a story from Wynona Gordon: "Recently I had to take care of a friend's 13 birds and was told that they would enjoy some 'out of cage' activity. So, I shut the door to the room, and opened all the cages. When it was time to get them all back inside, I made a count. Eleven birds in and two missing! Who's missing? The one pair of green Linnies were gone! I searched for an hour; everything that I could move, under and around. They had to be in this room! What was I going to tell my friend? I called a neighbor to help me move the big stuff to see if they were behind or under something. Another hour passed and still no little green birds. Then,

suddenly, those little rascals appeared, right in the exact place where we had all looked a dozen times. They were there all the time and we just hadn't seen them. Praise God they were found. Sometimes we think we are seeking God and his will for us. We look here and there, up and down and sideways, but we are so busy looking that we fail to see. I hope I learned a lesson from these little creatures.” (Wynona Gordon)

The Bible says, “Be still and know that I am God . . .” (Ps. 46:10a) Being still is difficult for someone who is used to moving; isn't it? We multitask and often look beyond what is needed, ahead of what is important. We lose precious moments because we're too busy seizing them to understand where they came from and how they could be filled. Today would be a good day to practice stillness. Take a break for the busy and find ten minutes to share in silence with God. Who knows? Perhaps He's just waiting to bless us if only we'd slow down long enough to find out.

“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” (Matt 6:34)

Comma's In Our Busy Places! (Mark 6:31)

When we go on a long trip I like to drive with as few stops as possible. There's just something about “beating my best time” that really pumps me up for a good drive; that is until recently when my wife asked me about a town we had just driven through. “What town” was my reply? I hadn't even noticed we had passed through a town I was so fixed on the center stripe. Her suggestion that it might be a good time to stop and take a break made some sense. The center stripe had become my guide and not the towns we were passing through.

Focusing on the center strip may get you there faster but it probably won't get you there happier.

Here's a story from Brenda Wood: “An article I was reading said, ‘Jet fighters take off land and are stored on deck.’ How peculiar, I thought. That doesn't make sense. Then I stopped to reconsider. My knowledge of such ships is

limited, but I do know that they are called aircraft carriers for a reason! I revisited the sentence. ‘Jet fighters take off, land and are stored on deck.’ Aha! Now the sentence was clear. I had missed the comma! Some of us are missing many commas in our lives. We are scurrying around with a Blackberry (a handheld wireless email, phone, browser, and organizer device), a Daytimer, and a calendar full to the brim. Our lives don’t seem to make sense. We take precious little time to wonder about life’s meaning and ponder God’s purpose for our life. Then we ask why God has not spoken into our lives. His answers will become clear when we add some ‘commas’ to our busy spaces.” (Brenda Wood brewood@sympatico.ca –Sandy Cove, Ontario, Canada)

We often create our own schedules and then we ask God to bless them. We moan about our busyness and say “Yes” to one more event, job, or occasion when we ought to be asking the Lord to help us take the time to examine our schedules through His eyes, and then give us the courage to cross out the extras and replace them with some “commas”. When our Savior instructs us to “Come with (Him) by (ourselves) to a quiet place and get some rest” (Mark 6:31), perhaps it would be a good idea to drop everything and follow. Sometimes a comma in can be very relaxing as well as rewarding.

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Clutter! (Romans 12:1)

Clutter; we all live with it to some extent. It takes up valuable space, but saves us valuable time. At least, this is the way that I’ve often looked at it. My old, red toolbox in the garage is an example of this. Although it has trays for screwdrivers and compartments for separating other tools, I’ve seldom used it that way. When I’m finished using a tool, I simply open the lid and drop it in. The tool finds a place somewhere in the clutter. All I care about is that the lid closes. The rest seems inconsequential. The problem arises, however, when there is a new tool that needs to be stored. It seems where clutter reigns, space is often at a premium and one additional tool may not fit in a comfortable, old clutter.

And so it is with our lives. We move along comfortably, cluttered with everyday, happening stuff; that is until something important comes up.

Here's a story from Brenda Wood: Is your life full and busy—perhaps, too busy? Sometimes we fill our lives so full we don't have time for the important things. At such times I remember a story about a young girl and her bank. The little girl's father had just given her a silver dollar to put into her bank. She excitedly ran off to her room to “deposit” the coin. However, in a few minutes she returned and handed the silver coin back to her father. “Daddy,” she said sadly, “here's your dollar back. I can't get it into my bank.” “Why not?” her concerned father asked. “It's too full,” she said, obviously disappointed. Her father accompanied her back to her room and, sure enough, her bank was too full to accept even one more coin. It was filled with pennies! (From JOY ALONG THE WAY by Steve Goodier)

Sometimes our lives are like that bank. So full of petty obligations and activities that there simply is no room left for what is truly important. Grenville Kleiser has said, “To live at this time is an unbelievable privilege, and a sacred obligation falls upon you to make the right use of your opportunities. Today is the day in which to attempt and achieve something worthwhile.” Have you made room for any large coins in your bank; for those things you believe to be worthwhile? If not, you may have to remove a few pennies, but I suspect you will never know they're gone in the first place!

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Fast-Forward World! (Romans 12:1)

One of the things that I miss most about the 1950's and 1960's growing up was the fact that we had a different appreciation for time. We valued it, certainly. But, time was such a different commodity then. My world growing up was a world of dinner around the table with everyone there. Fast foods hadn't invaded the dinner menu yet. My Mom had spent hours of her time cooking. And when we watched a movie, it was on TV and there were commercial interruptions. This was the time to get up and raid the

refrigerator. Time seemed more in control. There were no remote controls or fast-forwards to get us there. It was a patient walk with time in a world where there was no fast-forward.

Here's a story from Phil Callaway: "I took my daughter, Rachel, to the swimming pool one evening. We ended up sitting in the hot tub surrounded by small children and adults. "Dad," said Rachel, tugging on my arm, "can I have two dollars for some treats?" "Nope," I said. "Well, can we go out for ice cream after?" I told her we couldn't, that we had better get home. The man beside me looked my way and whispered, "You take her. If you need the money, I'll give it to you." Turning, I noticed that there were tears in his eyes. "I'd give just about anything to take my daughter out for ice cream tonight," he said quietly. "She died of leukemia three years ago." That night we enjoyed ice cream together and I prayed for the man who had lost his daughter and sat wondering what would happen if we began measuring wealth in terms of life's small pleasures. "Did you know that I'm a millionaire?" I asked my daughter, when we lifted our heads. "Really?" She asked. "You see, this time with you right now is worth about \$10,000 to me. We're rich. So, so rich." (Callaway, Phil.)

One of the greatest tragedies of a fast-forward world is that we are less available to be surprised by the spontaneous. As we sacrifice relationships on the altar of busyness, we come to the end of the day tired but unfulfilled. All day we often make ourselves unavailable for a kind word, a game of chess, the sound of a child's laughter, the smell of fresh bread baking. We forget that the greatest treasures on earth are sometimes found in our own backyard. But we may not have tomorrow to hold those treasures close and to celebrate the joy they bring; not in a fast-forward world.

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Big Rocks First! (Hebrews 10:10)

Putting things off. When it comes to procrastination, I have to admit that I am guilty from time to time. Over the weekend I was faced with a priority task;

cutting out large pieces of plywood on my table saw. Instead of launching into it, I first undertook less important, side-tasks; like taking out the trash. When it came to making those cuts, I was faced with a hard, noisy and physical job; so I decided that I first needed to burn the trash and then I would get to the bigger task later. Unfortunately, by the time I got done with this and several other “busy” projects, there wasn’t enough time left to get the table saw job done well. I made mistakes because I was pushed to finish. It would have been better to start the big project first and save the smaller, less important tasks, to the end.

Here’s a story: One day an expert was speaking to a group of business students. He pulled out a one-gallon, widemouthed mason jar and produced about a dozen fist-sized rocks and placed them, one at a time, into the jar. When the jar was filled to the top, he asked, “Is this jar full?” Everyone in the class said, “Yes.” Then he reached under the table and pulled out a bucket of gravel, dumping some in down into the spaces between the big rocks. Then he asked the group once more, “Is the jar full?” By this time the class was onto him. “Probably not,” one of them answered. “Good!” he replied. He then brought out a bucket of sand and started dumping it in and it went between the rocks and the gravel. Once more he asked the question, “Is this jar full?” “No!” the class shouted. He grabbed a pitcher of water and began to pour it in until the jar was filled to the brim. Now the jar was truly full. He looked up at the class and smiled, “One thing about a jar full of rocks; if you don’t put the big rocks in first, you’ll never get them in at all.” (WIT & WISDOM - October 7, 1998)

What are the ‘big rocks’ in your life; a project that you want to accomplish; time with your loved ones; your faith, your education, your finances; a cause? Remember to put these big rocks in first or you’ll never get them in at all. Don’t live life as if you can always fit more in. Rather, live life as if it’s the only one you have and you need to get the big things done while you still have time. Tomorrow is in God’s hands, not yours. There is no place for busyness with our God. *“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” (Matt 6:34)*