

A Stop by Quiet Waters

By

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The Importance of Enjoying “The Quiet”

A pastor friend sent me the following question in response to a “Quiet Waters” article I wrote a few months ago. *“Do you ever have problems really easing back and enjoying the quiet? I do. Even at this advanced age I get so in the groove of doing that chilling out is difficult.”* My answer was, “Yes, I do.”

Why Are We So Busy?

This brother is about my age, so the problem of “too much to do and too little time to do it” is not unique to younger pastors. It is foisted on us by our culture, and more specifically, by the culture of the modern church. Let me first give you a brief picture of some of the pressures and demands you and I are facing, which make it so hard to relax and enjoy quiet times, then I will comment on how I have learned to do it.

- We are pastoring in a time of unprecedented religious pluralism. New religions born in America, and others coming from around the world, are competing with us for the allegiance of our friends and neighbors. Even in our own churches some are secretly wondering if Christianity is really the only true religion, or if there are other ways to heaven.
- Religious books and magazines are pouring off the presses of Christian publishers like water over a dam, and we feel that in order to keep up with the latest thinking, trends, etc., we must read as many as possible.
- We are battling a strong current of spiritual consumerism in the hearts and minds of many Christians. We feel that unless we can keep our church or ministry innovative and growing, we will lose people to the new church nearby or to one that comes up with a better twist on marketing spiritual products. Going to church for many has become like shopping at the local supermarket.
- No matter how small your congregation is you have one or more special interest groups who see their particular focus as more important than anything else in the church, including your vision for the congregation. These often become fertile breeding grounds for conflict.
- We have been cast into the role of the CEO of the church, and unless we perform up to the standards of the lay leadership, or some other power bloc in the church, we will be discharged. Though most lay people still give lip service to it, faithful and effective pastoring of the souls of the people is no longer seen by many as the pastor’s primary responsibility. Making the church grow in numbers and dollars has replaced it. I have recently been giving support to a pastor who doubled his congregation, added an associate, and led the church in a successful major building

program, all in 5 years. He was told by the elders the week after the dedication service that they felt he needed to resign as he did not have the leadership gifts they believed the church needed.

- A recent Barna study revealed that the average congregation has 16 significant expectations of their pastor. Barna concluded his analysis of this study with the comment that this was a formula for failure.
- Behind all these is the unrelenting attack of the powers of darkness against God's servant-leaders. Satan knows that if he can get to the pastor of a church or the leader of a ministry he can frustrate and hinder that work for years.
- Several others could be added to this list, such as our own unrealistic expectations of ourselves, but these are enough for us to get an idea of what is driving us.

How Do We Resist All This and Learn to Enjoy the Quiet?

The secret, if it can be called that, is found in a statement the Lord Jesus made to the disciples when they came back from their first ministry assignment. *"The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.'"* Mark 6:30-31, NIV

Before I explain what I do please note that the disciples were as besieged with people seeking all kinds of things from them as we are today. They had just come back from an extended time of preaching, healing, casting out demons, etc., and were nearly as sought after as Jesus was. *"...so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat..."* So Jesus said to them, *"Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."* Mark 6:30-31

The Lord Jesus said three specific things here, each of which is crucial to enjoying the quiet enough to get rested so you can go back into the battle He has called you to as a leader in the Kingdom of God. First, *"Come with me."* Second, *"...by yourselves."* Third, *"...to a quiet place."* The result is that you will *"...get some rest."*

I learned to do this about twenty-five years ago and am convinced this has had as much to do, if not more, than anything else with me being able to:

- stay balanced
- avoid burnout and loss of passion
- escape from the people and pressures which constantly sought\seek to drive and control me
- not run from the problems and challenges by going elsewhere to pastor

Every month I get away alone with the Lord for a day of prayer and pondering. I go where I know I will not be disturbed. I take only my Bible, a song book, a notebook, a **short** list of the most crucial things I am dealing with, and one article which deals with

some facet of personal spiritual development. This may be in a magazine or a chapter in a book.

First, I just read the Word and sing to the Lord in response to what I have read. On other occasions I begin by singing, sometimes for an hour or more, before I open my Bible. This generally takes up at least half the day, and I make notes of things He says to me as I do this. Sometimes I will read the article or chapter during this time and then talk to Him about what I have read. On other occasions I never get to it because I feel that being with him in his Word is more important than reading what another has to say. After all it is a day away with Him.

In the early afternoon I begin to lay out before Him in prayer what seems to me to be the most crucial of the issues I have brought with me. I do a lot of quiet waiting and write down anything I sense in my spirit might be from Him regarding the issue. When I have received clear guidance concerning the issue, I take a break by going for a walk, etc., then I go on to the next one. I am also free to take a nap if/when I feel sleepy.

I am repeatedly amazed and delighted at how clearly He puts things in my mind, and at how often I come away from such a day with clearer direction for these issues, and with my spirit and mind both quiet and joyful in Him. I am truly refreshed and feel it even in my body. Many times I have had others mention how relaxed I appear in the days after I have been on one of my retreats with the Lord.

I am praying that this will be of encouragement to you. Do not chastise yourself if you have not yet learned to do such a thing, but make a commitment to begin it within the next month or two. **You are not too busy to do this.** God keeps no one that busy. I mark these days in my schedule for the entire year in January when I take a three-day prayer retreat to reflect on the past year and look ahead to the new one. I treat these as primary commitments and change them only under the most significant of circumstances.

Peace and joy in Christ,

Dick Germaine

Scripture Resources

“The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, ‘Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.’” Mark 6:30-31 NIV

“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.” Mark 1:35 NIV

“After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone” Matthew 14:23 NIV

“Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” Psalm 90:12 NIV

He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters.” Psalm 23:2 NIV

The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.” Zephaniah 3:17 NIV