

Time Out: Don't Rush the Rest

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You've probably heard the story of the tree chopping contest. It was a long, hot, grueling day for the novice lumberjacks. At the end of the day, the downed trees were counted, and everyone was shocked to find out the winner. One guy went over to him and said, "How is it that you won? Every time I looked over at you today, you were sitting down!" "Ah," the winner replied. "But what you must not have seen was every time I sat down to rest, I sharpened my ax."

Today, in the midst of summer vacations and a relatively slower pace for many of us, (unless you are a children's or youth pastor!), it is time to talk about what we do when we sit down to rest.

First of all, every single one of us has to sit down. And most people in this room have a hard time doing that. Only 14% of Americans plan to take a 2-week vacation this year, and 1/3 of us don't use all of our paid vacation days.

One time a pastor got a call from someone in his church on a Saturday, and he didn't answer the phone. When this man saw the pastor the next day, he asked why he couldn't reach him the day before. The pastor reminded him that he had Saturdays off. The church member said, "Well, the devil never takes a day off!" To which the pastor replied: "That's right! And if I didn't take any time out, I'd be just like the devil!"

So, each of us should be glad that Corky has taken some time off this summer with his family, so he doesn't become just like the devil! I'm sure Deedie would chime in on this if she were here.

Do some of you have trouble sitting still? I remember when I was a little girl in church, I would sit up in the first few rows with my friends Cheryl and Janine. My parents sat a few rows back from me. Almost without fail, we'd start talking and giggling (you know the kind where the pew starts to vibrate?) and I'd turn around and get a glimpse of my mom who would do this twirly thing with her finger with a stern look on her face, which I knew meant, "TURN AROUND and BEHAVE!" Even all these years later, I just like to be active. It isn't my nature to sit and think.

How many of you have a hard time taking Time Out, either in the form of a relaxing vacation or down time on a regular basis? God is speaking to me in this sermon today, because I clearly have a hard time with it. I even had a hard time finding the time to write this sermon this week (note the topic – Time Out) in between all the other ministry and family things going on. How lame is that? Pete and I had to sell our house, cars, and most of our stuff and move onto a sailboat in order to stop the rat race we were on in Washington DC. One of the

things that drew us to Merritt Island when we became landlubbers again after 2 years traveling aboard was the slower pace of life. And yet, 4 years later, we are right back in it. How is it that this happens? And how important is it to step out of it?

You know the phrase, "Silence is golden." And yet all we seem to do in this decade is to mute the silence. We go from TV to radio to internet to Ipod to video game to house phone to cell phone to pager to pda, and now people are chomping at the bit for the soon-to-be-released iphone. Am I the only one in the house that turns my car radio off when I am alone in the car? It is one of the only quiet places in my world.... I love my car.... Sometimes I just sit in it at a park to eat, study or to write. Because there are no distractions; or at least I can control them. It is a form of Time Out.

When my kids were little, we employed the Time Out form of discipline. Recently in frustration, I blurted Time Out to one of my teenagers, at which point we all froze baffled, and then they all burst out laughing. It clearly isn't effective anymore. Anyway, when the girls were small, and tensions were high, I periodically locked myself in my room rather than them in theirs, and I'd let them know "Mommy needs a Time Out!" I don't know if they thought it was funny or if it scared them, but on those occasions, it really didn't matter. If a Time Out was needed, I had to take it for everyone's sake.

In sports, Time Outs are used to regroup, to either affirm or change the game plan. Sometimes it is just used to give a pep talk. Of course there are times that you use it to throw the other team off balance, to get their attention. But most often, they are used to step back and see where you are and where you need to go. One thing is the same in all Time Outs - they are led by the coach. The players have to listen – they rarely talk.

Personal time outs are needed for the same reason! We need to step back, evaluate where we are and where we're going. But it isn't enough for us to do that on our own or even with the other players in our lives – we have to listen to the Coach. The Head Coach.

And there are times when the coach has to take us out of the game. We not only need to rest, but we need the coach's guidance on how to play in a way that can preserve our energy.

We need more than rest. We need to be restored. About 3 weeks ago, I made huge changes to my eating habits and started exercising faithfully. In my new plan, I learned that I need to drink way more water than I was getting. The rule of thumb is to take your weight, divide by 2, and that is how many of ounces of water you should drink daily. For example, if you weigh 200 pounds, you should drink 5 20-oz bottles of water each day in order to flush out the bad stuff from you body and to rehydrate it. Taking Time Out is basically a rehydration of your soul.

It is something we should do up big at least annually where we totally step out of our routines and then, we should also step out to a lesser degree on a more regular basis.

But remember, it isn't enough just to step out, you have to spend that time listening to the coach. Jesus provided us with an example. Remember how he was always going off alone to pray? He wasn't just going off alone to either curse or try to escape his circumstance. He was simply resting in God so he could hear the voice of his Father so he would know which play to run next.

We talk a lot about reading our bibles, but how many of you take it with you on vacation? That is exactly when we need it most! Because that is one of the ways God speaks to us best, and vacation time is about being restored, not just escape. Our bibles are like one big text message from God, and he expects it to be a 2 way conversation!

What would it mean if on your next vacation, or even during some summer downtime, you started to watch for God in nature? What if you started to point out to your kids God's awesome design of nature? We live on Rockledge Drive and the last few weeks, we have enjoyed the blooming of the Queen of the Night cactus which blooms only one night a year. If you don't pay attention, you can miss it! You have to watch for it to bud out and then every night you have to check it. Drive down Rockledge Drive at night this week and you might see some! They are a climbing cactus attached to other trees.

There are other ways we can use down time to develop our Christian walk. Why don't you use your vacation to read a family devotion once a day? There is no shortage of Christian devotion books at any major bookstore. Why don't you work in a little service project (could be as simple as picking up litter on a section of the beach) and talk about how that honors God's creation?

During your next vacation, how badly would it freak your kids out if you asked them to leave their cell phones off for a week? Or only allowed ipod use when you are off alone by yourself? Or left the gameboys and video games at home? Or how about if you left your laptop at home? Remember, it is the noise of the world that keeps us from hearing God and each other. Let's not create any more static than we need to!

When we step back and truly take a Time Out, we can begin to hear the Coach. About 10 years ago, I had a forced Time Out in the form of a moderate depression. I was running on empty. I needed to be restored. One of my favorite definitions of depression I learned from my therapist. She said that depression is "breaking down for repairs." I came out of that experience much stronger. I was repaired and restored. And not only that, I learned to live a much more observed life, which allowed me to hear God so much more clearly. Psalm 46:10 was my mantra, as I heard God speaking that to me almost audibly. It

says, “Be still, and know that I am God.” It doesn’t just say, “Be still.” It also says, “Know that I am God.” Both pieces are critical. After about a year of reflection and reorganizing my priorities, I heard God call me into the ministry in the year 2000. Because I allowed myself to be still, I heard the voice of God. Now, don’t be afraid that if you rest, you’ll get called into the ministry! Most of you won’t be called into The Ministry, but God has some sort of ministry designed for each of you.

Let’s open our bibles to 1 Kings 19, and learn about a prophet who definitely learned to hear God in the silence.

Let me give you a little background. King Ahab was king of Israel, and he was one of the worst kings ever. The bible says he did evil in the sight of the Lord more than all that were before him. And, he took for a wife Jezebel who was a foreigner who worshipped Baal, who was a pagan god and put up altars to Baal all over the place.

Jezebel tried to keep the Israelites from worshipping our God, who they called Jehovah and she was ruthless in the use of her royal power to do that.

On comes Elijah onto the scene. Elijah lived around 850 BC, and was a prophet who performed miracles and was able to tell people what God was about to do and to call the people back to faithfulness. Through miraculous events, all of the prophets of Baal were killed, which caused this evil wife Jezebel to threaten to kill Elijah who was responsible for the death of her prophets. Elijah was afraid and ran for his life.

He found himself so tired that he didn’t know how he could go on. He collapsed under a tree, and then angels appeared and fed him, giving him some strength. Then he slept. The Lord’s angels woke him to eat some more, and then he traveled 40 days and nights until he arrived at a cave in Mt. Horeb (this is the same mountain where God met Moses). Let’s pick it up at the middle of verse 9.

End verse 13. God got Elijah’s attention with a gentle whisper. Then God in verse 15 gives him the game plan. He’s going to change out some players, and he tells Elijah to anoint Elisha to succeed him. Now, let me fast forward a little and tell you about Elisha. He ends up being Elijah’s attendant and when Elijah knows that God is about to call him home, he asks Elisha, “What do you want me to do for you?” Elisha replies, “Give me a double portion of your spirit.” Elijah tells him okay, but only if Elisha sees God take him from the earth. As they were walking along, Elijah was taken up into heaven in a whirlwind (the only recorded person not to die a human death). And sure enough Elisha ended up with a double portion of Elijah’s spirit – bringing people back to life, and performing many other miracles.

If Elijah hadn't gotten away from the noise and heard God's voice, he may not have ever known to tap Elisha as the future prophet. Hearing God's voice is what he needed in order to get back in the game. But he never would have heard it unless he took a Time Out.

If you are suffering from depression like Elijah was – and at any given 6 month period, about 5 % of the population is – you need to know that a special kind of Time Out is called for, and I know a really great repair shop.

Psalm 46:1 says: God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. There is a river that makes glad the city of God, the holy place where God dwells. God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at the break of day." Then, later in that chapter is the well-known verse 10: Be still and know that I am God.

If you aren't experiencing any thing like depression, but you just find yourself on a treadmill that doesn't seem to stop, or if you have down time but it never seems to be enough, or if you are just too occupied to find God, I urge you to find a way to take a Time Out where you really listen to the coach, the master teacher, the ultimate athletic director.

Corky recently passed on a story that I think came from one of us within our church that I want to share with you. **(USHERS – PASS OUT MARBLES)** A certain man told about how he loved Saturday mornings. He didn't know whether it was because he was the first to rise or because he was just so happy not to have to go to work. One day, he was shuffling toward the garage with a steaming cup of coffee in one hand and the morning paper in the other. What began as a typical Saturday morning turned into one of those lessons that life seems to hand you from time to time.

He turned up the dial on the phone portion of the band on his ham radio in order to listen to a Saturday morning swap net. Along the way, he came across an older sounding chap with a tremendous signal and a golden voice. You know the kind; he sounded like he should be in the broadcasting business. He was telling whomever he was talking with something about "a thousand marbles." He was intrigued so he stopped to listen to what he had to say.

"Well, Tom, it sure sounds like you're busy with your job. I'm sure they pay you well, but it's a shame you have to be away from home and your family so much. It's hard to believe a young fellow should have to work 60 or 70 hours a week to make ends meet. It's too bad you missed your daughter's dance recital," he continued. "Let me tell you something that has helped me keep my own priorities." And that's when he began to explain his theory of "a thousand marbles."

“You see, I sat down one day and did a little arithmetic. The average person lives about 75 years. I know, some live more and some less, but, on average, folks live about 75 years. Now then, I multiplied 75 times 52 and I came up with 3900, which is the number of Saturdays that the average person has in their entire lifetime. Now, stick with me, Tom, I’m getting to the important part.”

“It took me until I was 55 years old to think about all this in any detail,” he went on, “and, by that time, I had lived through over 2,800 Saturdays. I got to thinking that, if I lived to be 75, I only had about a thousand of them left to enjoy. So I went to a toy store and bought every single marble they had. I ended up having to visit three toy stores to round up 1,000 marbles. I took them home and put them inside a large, clear plastic container right here in the shack next to my gear.”

“Every Saturday since then, I have taken one marble out and thrown it away. I found that by watching the marbles diminish, I focused more on the really important things in life. There is nothing like watching your time here on this earth run out to help get your priorities straight.”

“Now, let me tell you one last thing before I sign off with you and take my lovely wife out for breakfast. This morning, I took the very last marble out of the container. I figure that if I make it until next Saturday then I have been given a little extra time, and the one thing we can all use is a little more time.”

“It was nice to meet you, Tom. I hope you spend more time with your family, and I hope to meet you again here on the band. This is a 75-year old man, K9NZQ, clear and going QRT, good morning!”

You could have heard a pin drop on the band when this fellow signed off. I guess he gave them all a lot to think about. The man listening had planned to work on his antenna that morning, and then was going to meet up with a few hams to work on the next club newsletter.

Instead, he went upstairs, woke his wife with a kiss. “C’mon honey, I’m taking you and the kids to breakfast.”

“What brought this on?” she asked with a smile.

“Oh, nothing special, it’s just been a long time since we spent a Saturday together with the kids. And hey, can we stop at a toy store while we’re out? I need to buy some marbles.”

This summer, as you live slower, be certain that you take time for those most important to you. And remember who is the most important of all – the Head Coach who needs a word ... with you.

