

Two ministerial students from Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama, were doing summer evangelistic work in a rural area near Montgomery. One hot day they stopped their car in front of a farmhouse and proceeded up the path through a gauntlet of screaming children and barking dogs. When they knocked on the screen door, the woman of the house stopped her scrubbing over a tub and washboard, brushed back her hair, wiped perspiration from her brow, and asked them what they wanted.

"We would like to tell you how to obtain eternal life," one student answered.

The tired homemaker hesitated for a moment and then replied, "Thank you, but I don't believe I could stand it."

\*\*\*\*

*Job 3:26 I have no peace, no quietness;  
I have no rest, but only turmoil."*

How busy are we? How many of us have the time we need to do all the things we have to do? We feel stressed out. We're too busy. We don't have enough time to do the things we have to do. And if that's true, then where are we going to find the time to do the things we *want* to do? If we're only doing the things we have to do and not the things we want to do, then what kind of life is that? Like Job, we complain that we have no peace, no quietness, no rest and only turmoil.

How do we get out of this rut? Well, if most of you are like me, the way we get around this dilemma is to do the things we want to do and let the other things slide. Yeah, maybe I have to clean out the garage, but the game is so much more fun. The problem with this thinking is, obviously, that we end up not doing those things that we *need* to do. Our priorities get confused. And we still have no peace, no quietness, no rest only turmoil...but worse, we also have a whole bunch of *things* that need to be done!

I have a solution: We need to straighten out our priorities.

\*\*\*\*

A number of years ago a fascinating interview took place between Mr. Charles Schwab, then president of Bethlehem Steel, and Ivy Lee, a self-styled management consultant. Lee was an aggressive, self-confident man who by his perseverance had secured the interview with Mr. Schwab, who was no less self-assured, being one of the most powerful men in the world. During the conversation, Mr. Lee asserted that if the management of Bethlehem Steel would follow his advice, the company's operations would be improved and their profits increased.

Schwab responded, "If you can show us a way to get more things done, I'll be glad to listen; and if it works, I'll pay you whatever you ask within reason."

Lee handed Schwab a blank piece of paper and said, "Write down the most important things you have to do tomorrow." Mr. Schwab did so. "Now," Lee continued, "Number them in order of importance." Schwab did so. "Tomorrow morning start on number one, and stay with it until you have completed it. Then go on to number two and number three and number four...Don't worry if you haven't completed everything by the end of the day. At least you will have completed the most important projects. Do this every day. After you have been convinced of the value of this system, have your men try it. Try it as long as you like, and then send me your check for whatever you think the advice is worth." The two men shook hands and Lee left the president's office. A few weeks later Charles Schwab sent Ivy Lee a check for \$25,000--an astronomical amount in the 1930s! He said it was the most profitable lesson he had learned in his long business career.

\*\*\*\*

If we set our priorities properly, we will see that this restless period of turmoil will begin to slip away and instead, we will begin to find a peaceful, quiet, non-stressful life. The most important part of this is to prioritize properly. We need to recognize that prioritizing the wrong thing is as bad as not prioritizing at all. So what should be our priority? Well, being that you are here, chances are that you know what I'm going to say! Jesus needs to be our priority.

*Mark 4:39 He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.*

Jesus stilled the waters. Jesus calmed the sea. But more importantly, Jesus can do the same for us. *Philippians 4:6-7 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* Now there is a danger here. Does this mean we will never experience trouble? Does this mean that everything will always go well for us? NO! God never promises us that we will have no trouble. The opposite is true. God tells us that we will be persecuted for His name, that we will have to carry our cross. However, if our priorities are correct, then we can have peace through our difficult time.

So what am I saying? I'm saying to make God our priority. How do I make God my priority? We need to make time to get closer to God. Our spiritual well-being is as important as our physical well-being. We feed our bodies; we need to nourish our spirits. How do we do that? Well there are different ways, but here we're going to discuss the concept of quietness and solitude.

*1 Sam 12:16 "Now then, stand still and see this great thing the LORD is about to do before your eyes!"*

Being still and quiet before God allows God to do great things for us and through us. If we want to be used by God, we need to be still in His presence. If we want to lose the stress of our everyday life, we need to come to God in quietness. We need to set as our

priority, time to be alone with God in silence. We need to have a quiet time with God. What is this quiet time and what do we “do” during this time? Quiet time consists of being still, bible study, reading, meditation, prayer, praise, listening, visualizing, and writing.

Life stagnates; spiritual life stagnates, when we don't devote this time to God. Just like any relationship needs to have time invested in it, so does our relationship with God. The difference between our relationship with our friends and family and our relationship with God is that our friends and family are physical, loud and obvious and our God is spiritual, quiet and easily missed. So the way we might relate to our friends and family won't work in our relationship with God. Where we might come to our friends in a party setting, we need to come to God in stillness.

*Lamentations 3:26 it is good to wait quietly  
for the salvation of the LORD*

*Exodus 14:14 The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still."*

God will come to us when we come to Him in stillness. He will fight for us in those times. He will speak to us in the quietness.

*1 Kings 19:11-12 The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by."*

*Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.*

And it doesn't matter who you are. If you are the least or the greatest, this is how God comes to you. Even Jesus realized this and worked to make this a priority in his life.

*Mark 1:35 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 6:31 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."*

*Luke 4:42 At daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them.*

When Jesus needed the power of God, he went into solitude. When he needed the peace of God, he went to a quiet place. When he needed rest, he went where he could be alone. Jesus knew that to do the things that he needed to do, to do the things that he wanted to do, he needed to first get alone and get quiet so that he could get with God, the Father. If it was good for Jesus, we should realize that it is good for us. We need to make being alone with God in stillness and quietness a priority in our lives.

You need to plan this, be purposeful about it – it won't come about accidentally. We can't leave this place saying, "OK, I'm going to spend time with God tomorrow in quietness" and just expect that suddenly, you have found all that extra time that was sitting around waiting for you to use it up. Instead, if you approach it like that, you will find that you will come back and say, "I have no time to spend with God! I'm too busy!"

In this day and place, finding time from our busy schedules is hard. There is work, family, home, and when we finally get some free time, play. When do we fit God into all this? We've got so many things we need to do. How do we determine which things we keep in and which things we get rid of?

\*\*\*\*

A lighthouse along a bleak coast was tended by a keeper who was given enough oil for one month and told to keep the light burning every night. One day a woman asked for oil so that her children could stay warm. Then a farmer came. His son needed oil for a lamp so he could read. Still another needed some for an engine. The keeper saw each as a worthy request and measured out just enough oil to satisfy all. Near the end of the month, the tank in the lighthouse ran dry. That night the beacon was dark and three ships crashed on the rocks. More than 100 lives were lost.

When a government official investigated, the man explained what he had done and why. "You were given one task alone," insisted the official. "It was to keep the light burning. Everything else was secondary. There is no defense."

\*\*\*\*

Sometimes, we have to make difficult decisions. Sometimes, we need to do things that don't feel right. Sometimes there will be pain. But we need to recognize what the priority is. What's the big picture?

We need to prioritize our time. What is most important? What do we HAVE to do? We need to sit down and consciously make a schedule. What time do you wake up, go to work, exercise, play, eat, go to sleep, etc. What time is left in the day?

We might find that we don't have any time. Can we squeeze 10 minutes from somewhere? Do we need to sleep 10 minutes less? Can we play 10 minutes less? Can we relax 10 minutes less? If we can start with just 10 minutes, then we can always grow that. 10 minute a day is over an hour a week. Not a lot, but better than nothing! Can we do 30 minutes a day? An hour a day? If we are awake for 16 hours a day, one hour is less than 7-percent of your time. That's not even tithing. That's not even what we pay for sales tax.

Someone has calculated how a typical lifespan of 70 years is spent. Here is the estimate:

Sleep.....	23 years.....	32.9%
Work.....	16 years.....	22.8%
TV.....	8 years.....	11.4%
Eating.....	6 years.....	8.6%
Travel.....	6 years.....	8.6%
Leisure.....	4.5 years.....	6.5%
Illness.....	4 years.....	5.7%
Dressing.....	2 years.....	2.8%
Religion.....	0.5 years.....	0.7%
Total.....	70 years.....	100%

*Our Daily Bread, November 25, 1992.*

We spend so little time on the thing that is most important in our life. What can be more important than being with God? What can be more important than hearing His voice, knowing His plan for us? What can be more important than our eternal life? Do you remember something that you thought was so important to you a couple of years ago? It might have been the most important thing in your life back then. But today, it doesn't really mean much. Things change. Our priorities change. But we need to keep in our minds the big picture. What is the real priority in our life? It must be things of eternity, not things of this temporary time period. That will go away, but eternity will not.

\*\*\*\*

A beautiful swan alighted by the banks of the water in which a crane was wading about seeking snails. For a few moments the crane viewed the swan in stupid wonder and then inquired: "Where do you come from?"

"I come from heaven!" replied the swan.

"And where is heaven?" asked the crane.

"Heaven!" said the swan, "Heaven! have you never heard of heaven?" And the beautiful bird went on to describe the grandeur of the Eternal City. She told of streets of gold, and the gates and walls made of precious stones; of the river of life, pure as crystal, upon whose banks is the tree whose leaves shall be for the healing of the nations. In eloquent terms the swan sought to describe the hosts who live in the other world, but without arousing the slightest interest on the part of the crane.

Finally the crane asked: "Are there any snails there?"

"Snails!" repeated the swan; "no, there are not."

"Then," said the crane, "you can have your heaven. I want snails!"

\*\*\*\*

Are we like the crane, looking for things of this world, looking at the short-term picture? Or are we like the swan, knowing that there is something much greater than the things of this world, whether they are BMWs or snails?

Let's tomorrow, not decide to spend time with God. Instead, let's today decide what our new priorities are. Let's determine how much time we're going to give to God every day. Let's determine when we will go into a quiet place and be still before God. Then when we're there, let's just practice being in His presence for a week. Next week, we will discuss the things we need to do in that quiet to come closer to Him: being still, bible study, reading, meditation, prayer, praise, listening, visualizing, and writing.

1 Peter 3:4 Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.