

## Learning to Be Still...An Antidote to Burnout

by Charles H. Chandler

There's little question but what ours is a "Rush! Rush!" society. Something is amiss, however, when a person's whole day can be affected by missing one section of a revolving door. By contrast, if our forefathers missed a stage coach, they waited patiently for a week for the next one.

John Tadlock, in his book, *When It's Rush Hour All Day Long!*, uses the term "hurry sickness" to describe our society. Never has it been more evident than in the lives of young parents today as they leave the work scene after having "rushed" all day long to meet deadlines only to face a multitude of additional deadlines in getting children to ball practices and games, dance studios, scout meetings, cheerleader practices, drama or choral rehearsals, and band, piano, or voice lessons. With so much "rushing," sitting down together as a family for dinner is a rare experience for too many. I thought we lived in a rushed culture a generation ago when our children were young, but as I watch the schedules of our grandchildren and the demands placed on their parents, by comparison, our pace was rather tame.

Carl Jung, a noted psychiatrist of an earlier era, wrote that hurry is not merely of the devil, it is the devil. A hurried culture robs us of the true essence of the joy of living. It deletes time for reflection on our blessings, our relationships (or lack of relationships), as well as our mental, emotional, and spiritual well being. A good life requires time for nurturing. So do relationships whether they are family, community, or spiritual.

Tadlock points out that *Pert Plus* became the top seller of shampoo *after* they included shampoo and conditioner in the same product, hastening the process. "Hurry sickness" also affects our physical wellbeing, including sleep deprivation.

The Psalmist admonishes us to "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 45:10). Dr. Glenn Hinson, noted scholar and author in the field of Spirituality, spends the first hour of his day in a fast pace walk – in solitude. He refers to it as his mental "cobweb remover," his emotional stabilizer, and a source of spiritual nurture. It is also a vehicle for physical fitness.

"Being Still" before God is more about having an uncluttered mind than about cessation of movement. Removing the focus from self and observing the beauty of God's creation provides an openness that allows God to guide our thoughts. It is good preparation for a rigorous day. Several years ago, Hinson was a guest in our home and as we retired for the evening, Betty and I forgot to tell him where we placed the key to the outside doors. An early riser, as he prepared for his brisk four-mile walk, he discovered that he could not get out of the house. He waited patiently for an hour or more for us to get out of bed, but he did not let the delay deprive him of one of the most beneficial hours of his day. I learned from him that the ability to relax and focus on God's creation goes a long way in keeping all

other aspects of life in proper perspective. And ironically, he feels that a byproduct has been increased effectiveness. I'm inclined to agree. In addition to his demanding schedule as a professor and guest lecturer, he has found time to write over 30 books, many of which are graduate school textbooks.

I learned early in my adult life that being around water or in the mountains were environments that foster an atmosphere of peace and tranquility in my soul. Even though I am an extrovert and that I am energized by being with people, there are times when I need to head for a river, lake, ocean, or the mountains for solitude and reflection. The chirping of the birds, the roar of the ocean or the sight and sound of "ole man river" helps get everything in perspective and thus helps to restore my soul. It's the best medicine I know for "hurry sickness."

Change happens. It must. But the Psalmist's admonition is still the same, "Be still and know..." "Hurry sickness" becomes a mindset that robs us of the joy of life and is a major factor in developing "burn out," or at least "brown out." Learning to "Be still..." can be an antidote.

---

*'Tadlock, John, When It's Rush Hour All Day Long, (Birmingham, Alabama: New Hope Publisher, 2003)*