

Livin' by a different doctrine! (A brief look at Psalm 46)

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Published by *Journal of Student Ministry* September 2006.

The other day I was talking with a young man in my church and I asked him, "How's your week been?" He said to me, "Ok, but I've been very busy!" I looked at him for a second and then blurted out, "But you're only five years old!" This kid was barely out of diapers and already his world view is set into a motion of frenzy and the spinning hands of the clock. Unfortunately this now seems to be the world we live in. "Hey, how ya doin'?" "Good, but I'm sooo busy!" is the conversation we all repeat like a mantra each day. In fact, the picture of my city is two people having a cup of coffee at Starbucks- both of them talking on their cell phones! The sad thing is, they are no doubt making a time with their friends to meet at the same coffee shop in a few days to 'catch up'.

Well, not me-I'm livin' by a different doctrine. I have found a new way. One that may seem to be radical but in fact it is almost as old as the hills. Here is what I've decided to do:

I have decided to join the guy who wrote Psalm 46. Do you remember this Psalm? You might even have the tune of a hymn go through head.

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 heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts. The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Here is a world in tumult and uproar. It appears to be a chaotic, out of control world. However, it is a world where the Lord God reigns. Do you remember how this magnificent song ends? It is with the words, *'Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.'* *The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.'*

Wow. Be still...you are not in charge of your world, God is! Be still. Even though this world rages around like a river out of control I am to be calm and let God be God.

This Psalm has had a profound effect on me personally and my youth ministry as well. I have resolved that I will not be marked by how many things I can accomplish in a given calendar year. Nor will I continue to juggle so many things each week. I want to live out verse 10 and be still. This is my new doctrine. My knowledge that God is in control will force me to slow down, 'still down' if you will.

So, what does my new doctrine look like?

Well, first of all, I have removed the word 'busy' from my personal vocabulary. The fact is, I've never really been that busy to begin with. I was never too busy to watch my favorite TV show each Tuesday night. Nor was I too busy to see the latest blockbuster when it come to the local cinema. When I was single and met my soon to be wife was I too busy to go out with her at the drop of a hat? Nooo, I wasn't!

Second, I have had to undergo serious personal reflection and I now see that my 'busyness' was nothing more than a cover-up. I used it as a wall to surround me and say, "Hey, don't get too close to me." This meant that I kept conversations short and often left the phone machine to screen calls that I didn't want to take. Being busy meant that after church each week I could keep conversations to a minimum, unless of course, they were the people I really wanted to speak with. This was shameful and needed wholehearted repentance.

Third, I must adamantly, unequivocally, steadfastly, unswervingly keep a personal Sabbath. I must not be too busy to not have a day off. Frankly, I'm just not that important. In fact, sometimes I even join the rest of the world and actually have two days off in a row! This has gone a great way to maintain my sanity.

Four, Hebrews 13:7 tells us that those young people we minister to who must, 'Consider the outcome of (our) way of life and imitate (our) faith.' Hmm, what do they see when they look at me? Is it someone who is so busy that I don't look them in the eye, listen to their words and take the time to really try and connect? Or, do they see the same old worn out stress-head that fills their schools and homes? I must set an example for these young believers in all facets of life- including my scheduling.

(Now please don't hear all this as an excuse for laziness. But really, that rarely seems to be the problem for most youth leaders that I know. We tend to be a focused, overworked, "both ends burning" crowd.)

Well, that is my new doctrine. And, you know what is really amazing? I have found the last few years to be the most productive of over 20 years in ministry. It seems the less I do the more I accomplish- go figure. The 'stiller' I am the more God seems to do. Maybe that is because I focus more on the important things and let the fringe stay on the fringe. Or maybe it is because I have had to learn that this is the way God works. In other words, it is God who works. I guess the Psalmist had it right all along. He knew that if he would only be still, he would not get in the way of seeing God be exalted.

So if you see me make sure you ask 'How are ya doing? Been busy?' 'Busy? Nah, no way.'