

Rock Solid Renewable Rhythm – Solitude

BLOG

July 2011 – ...we are in the middle of the movie, so to speak...

Over the last two months, we've been chasing down an important question: Is it possible to be more passionate, more energized, and more productive for the Kingdom...*a year from now?* “,”

In tracking down this question, we have come to grips with the reality that in God's economy of life and leadership the game plan is not simply to survive or to find a modicum of sustainability, but rather to embrace and live in a rhythm that is RENEWABLE.

From there, I introduced you to three spiritual practices that God is using in my life to move me closer to this renewable rhythm. (BTW, a spiritual practice is any endeavor that is pursued with the expressed purpose of creating space to commune more intimately with God).

Last month, we talked about Sabbath. Today we talk about SOLITUDE.

To get us going, let me tee up a working definition: solitude is the practice of being absent from people and things for an extended time so that I can be present with God.

Stating the obvious, we live in a world of noise—noise that comes at us from all directions. Some of it unpreventable. Some of it self-imposed. A vast majority of it distracting. And so much of it soul-numbing. Traffic horns that announce impatience. Flat-screens that decorate the walls of public spaces with never-ending news feeds. Podcasts that echo endlessly in our ears. You get the point.

And in the middle of all these moving parts, God's gift, His antidote to the buzz and chaos of life, is solitude.

Solitude well practiced will break the power of busyness, haste, isolation, and loneliness. You will see that the world is not on your shoulders after all.

–Dallas Willard

Of the many things that I am learning about solitude, perhaps none is as important as this: In solitude I find it extremely hard to be dishonest with God. That is, any serious attempt to spend extended time with God is ultimately going to lead down the pathway of deep personal reflection—getting down to the issues in my heart that most of the time I opt to avoid.

Let's take that a step further. I hadn't been to the Los Angeles Zoo for years (make that decades!), but now that I have grandkids, I'm a regular—as evidenced by my annual pass! Upon arriving at the zoo, my grandson will begin calling out what animals he wants to see.

After hearing his requests, I quickly find the ‘campus map’ that identifies the location of the Asian elephants, the Masai giraffes, or the Sumatran tigers. And thankfully and most importantly, the map notifies me of one vital slice of info: “YOU ARE HERE”.

You are here. That’s exactly what happens in solitude. You discover where you are. You get your spiritual bearings. I like to think about it as ‘game film’ time. Time to study the nooks and nuances. Why did I react with such intense anger in that situation? Why did that seemingly small circumstance illicit such deep sadness? Why do I find it so important to always have my ideas prevail when participating in a leadership setting?

Solitude gently lifts the lid on the stuff below the water line. Henri Nouwen in his must-read book, *The Way of the Heart*, puts it this way: *In solitude I get rid of my scaffolding: no friends to talk with, no telephone calls to make, no meetings to attend, no music to entertain, no books to distract, just me—naked, vulnerable, weak, sinful, deprived, broken—nothing.*

In this current season of solitude, I am finding a question that seems to anchor my conversation with God. It goes like this: “What do You want to say to me about me?” And then I lean in and listen.

And I listen some more—for that still small Voice.

Last month, I made you a guarantee about Sabbath-keeping. Today I make you a guarantee about the practice of solitude. Here it is: if you want to make serious strides in allowing God to transform your life, then solitude must find its way into the matrix of your life. It simply is an essential part of building a renewable rhythm to life and leadership.

Lord, I want to thank You for drawing me into solitude—sacred spaces and places where I meet with You. The more I experience solitude, the more I crave it—for in it I am finding a renewed transformation of my heart and a deeper walk with You.