

Make it Happen!

For many people Labor Day is more like the beginning of the New Year than is January 1. School is back session, fall sports practices have begun, and best of all football has officially started!

So, as many people are approaching a time of beginnings, I thought I'd share a thought and scripture to help us orient our lives before we get too far afield into this 'New Year' and miss the opportunity to make one change in our life.

First, let me share the thought I heard recently in a sermon by Mark Batterson. Mark said, "There are two ways that people approach life: there are those who let things happen and there are those who make things happen."

People, who 'let things happen,' could be said to live life by default. Life happens around them and to them and they just go with or respond to the flow. People who 'let things happen,' tend to be reactive to whatever goes on around them.

On the other hand; people, who 'make things happen,' could be said to live life by design. While life happens around them for sure; these individuals live purposefully and with a plan. People, who 'make things happen,' are marked by a proactive stance to life.

I can see how these two ways of life manifest themselves in our family. Several of us are *make things happen* people; while a few are *let things happen* people. Since stumbling upon this way of identifying our approaches to life it has helped Rita and I to understand our children better.

So take a moment and ask yourself this: Am I the type of person who lets things happen or am I the type of person who makes things happen? Am I reactive or proactive?

Without saying that one of these approaches is right or wrong; I want to share with you a scripture passage that I think will challenge us to consider how we apply this statement to the use of our time.

So let's read Paul's statement to the church in Thessalonica.

2 Thessalonians 3:11-13 NIV <http://bible.us/2thess3.11-13.niv>

I want to highlight a few thoughts here. First, the word 'idle,' as it is used here, really means to be 'undisciplined.' This entire passage is Paul's attempt to challenge the church in Thessalonica to be disciplined in their pursuit of Jesus and how they live out their faith.

Paul then uses the term busybodies to describe their behavior. What Paul is saying is that these 'idle' people are actually engaging in useless things with their time.

Put in a context that many of us can understand, Paul was challenging the people of Thessalonica to understand the difference between the urgent and the important.

Here is where I see the statement and the scripture coming together. People who tend to let things happen are often caught in the tyranny of the urgent. They let the unimportant things in life overtake the important because they make an unconscious commitment to the unimportant things in life.

Meanwhile, people who tend to make things happen know what is most important in life and they make a conscious commitment to the most important.

We all have a thousand different voices asking for our time; and a lot of those things are good and worthy; they are even important. BUT, are they the most important way to invest our time, and can you really commit your best to all those important things and still have time and energy for the most important?

Let me offer you five solutions from which I want to challenge you to do just one thing this week.

1. Say “No” more often. We need to learn to say to no to what is important so that we can say “Yes” to what is most important.

2. Leave margin in your life. Do you know what margin is? Margin is the white space around the edge of a page. We tend to fill the whole page with what is important and suddenly that black ink on the white page becomes like a black hole that just sucks in your time and from which nothing ever emerges.

3. Redeem the time. (Ephesians 5:16 KJV) The Message translation says: Make the most of every chance you get. As parents we spend a lot of time in the car with our kids. Redeem that time; make the most of it, spend time connecting- turn off the radio, video, iPad, etc and talk with your kids.

In Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (<http://bible.us/deut6.4-9.niv> ) parents are reminded that anywhere and anytime is the time to impress the word of God on our children. So parents, that time you spend chauffeuring your kids from place to place is a time to impress your faith on your kids.

4. Take a Sabbath. Do you know the real purpose behind the Sabbath? The Sabbath is one way that we remember that we are not God! So put away the distractions and relax and reconnect.

5. Enjoy the journey. This past week I watched people post pictures of their kids heading to the first day of school. I was jealous and sort of nostalgic for those days. It has been a long time since my kids got their pictures taken on the first day of school. But this week I got to take a picture that is very special to me.

This is a picture of Philip heading off to his first day of orientation at Boston University School of Theology. Some of you are well aware that this has been a long journey; there were days, even this week in Boston, when we didn't know if it would really happen; but by the grace of God Philip begins classes on Tuesday.

Enjoy the journey. Don't ever think that there will be time later for your kids; don't ever get so caught up in your journey that you forget the journey of your family.

If you try and walk out of here thinking you'll do a lot of things to reorient your time this week I can assure you it will not happen. So all I want any of you to do is just think of one thing that you can do this week so that you can consciously commit to the most important so that you don't get caught up in the urgent/important.

There is a story that has been told in a variety of settings; but the lesson is very applicable to us today.

A group of Americans made a trip with Brazilian natives down the Amazon River. The first day they rushed. The second day they rushed. The next day they rushed. One day, anxious to continue the trek, the Americans were surprised to find the natives seated together in a circle.

When asked the reason for the delay, a guide answered, "They are waiting. They cannot move further until their souls have caught up with their bodies."

Having driven to Philly, Chicago and Boston during the last two weeks; I understand what they mean by 'waiting until their souls have caught up with their bodies.' How about you? Are there days or periods of time when you feel like you need to sit and wait for your soul to catch up with your body?

Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-29: Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Jesus offers each of us an invitation; an invitation to find rest for our weary souls, an invitation to seek first the Kingdom of God, an opportunity to put first things first and to live with purpose and design. As a first step in response to Jesus invitation I want to invite you to this table of our Lord to feast on the life that Jesus offers.