



RHYTHM OF LIFE

GOING DEEPER

DISCUSSION GUIDE

November 13, 2016

Discussion Guide

Rhythm of Withdrawal

CONNECTING:

45 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A WAY OF CONNECTING WITH ONE ANOTHER SO THAT YOU MIGHT PARTNER IN THE WORK GOD IS DOING IN YOUR LIVES.)

- IN WHAT WAYS DID GOD MOVE IN YOUR LIFE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS DID YOU RESPOND TO HIM?
- WHAT WAS YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, DID YOU INVITE GOD INTO THIS CHALLENGE?
- HOW HONEST HAVE YOU BEEN WITH US? (GRACIOUSLY THANK GROUP MEMBERS FOR THEIR HONESTY IF THEY STATE THEY HAVE HELD BACK.)

GETTING STARTED:

10 MINUTES

- DO YOU FIND IT EASY OR DIFFICULT TO SIMPLY SHUT IT DOWN AND CHECK OUT OF THE NORMAL ROUTINE? COULD YOU ELABORATE?

DIVING INTO THE TEXT:

60 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A SIMPLE ROAD MAP THROUGH THE TEXT. FEEL FREE TO USE THESE QUESTIONS IN WAYS THAT BEST FIT YOUR GROUP AND THE DYNAMICS OF YOUR OWN MEETING.)

- READ LUKE 4.31-44 ALOUD. SEEK TO IMAGINE YOURSELF

IN THE TEXT. READ THE TEXT ONCE MORE, BUT THIS TIME SEEK TO IMAGINE YOURSELF EXPERIENCING IT AS JESUS.

- AS YOU EXPERIENCE THE TEXT, WHAT STANDS OUT TO YOU? COULD YOU ELABORATE?
- WHAT REASONS MIGHT JESUS HAVE FOR SEEING HIS MINISTRY AS HITTING A SWEET SPOT? FIND AS MANY AS POSSIBLE.
- WHEN PEOPLE HIT A SWEET SPOT IN LIFE, WHAT IS THEIR TYPICAL RESPONSE?
- WHAT WAS JESUS' RESPONSE TO HITTING A MINISTRY SWEET SPOT? WHAT, IF ANYTHING, ABOUT THIS RESPONSE SURPRISES YOU?
- IN LUKE 5.16, WE SEE THAT IN THESE TIMES OF WITHDRAWAL, JESUS WAS PRAYING. CONSIDERING THE RESPONSE OF THE CROWD AND JESUS' REPLY, HOW MIGHT SUCH A REPLY HAVE COME OUT OF A TIME OF PRAYER? IMAGINE HOW JESUS MIGHT HAVE RESPONDED IF HE HAD NOT WITHDRAWN TO PRAY? REMEMBER JESUS WAS TEMPTED AS WE ARE. (HEBREWS 4.15).
- WHAT WOULD YOU SAY WAS JESUS' PURPOSE FOR WITHDRAWING? DO YOU FIND A NEED FOR A SIMILAR PRACTICE IN YOUR OWN LIFE? COULD YOU ELABORATE?
- WHAT MIGHT A RHYTHM OF WITHDRAWING LOOK LIKE FOR YOU?
- WHAT, IF ANYTHING, KEEPS YOU FROM PICKING UP A RHYTHM OF WITHDRAWAL?

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

WILDERNESS

THE WILDERNESS IS A PLACE WHICH LACKS INHABITANTS AND NOT NECESSARILY A PLACE DEVOID OF FOOD AND WATER. HOWEVER, IN SCRIPTURE, THE WILDERNESS (DESERT) TOOK ON A MEANING FAR BEYOND THAT OF A PLACE OF DESOLATION. IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, THE WILDERNESS HAD TWO PRIMARY MEANINGS: A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE MET WITH GOD AND A PLACE WHERE DEMONS, WHO THREATEN HUMANS, DWELT. THE MOST COMMON USE IS THE FIRST WITH THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL ENCOUNTERING GOD AND EXPERIENCING HIS PROVISION AND PROTECTION WHILE IN THE WILDERNESS. ELIJAH'S NOURISHMENT BY AN ANGEL IN THE WILDERNESS AND SUBSEQUENT ENCOUNTERS WITH GOD ON MOUNT HOREB IS A WONDERFUL EXAMPLE OF THIS ENCOUNTERING GOD MOTIF (1 KINGS 19.1-18). HOWEVER, THE PREDOMINANT EXAMPLE OF THE WILDERNESS IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE EXODUS. IT IS IN THE WILDERNESS THAT MOSES ENCOUNTERS GOD AND RECEIVES INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING THE DELIVERANCE OF ISRAEL (EXODUS 3.1-4.17), AND IT IS INTO THE WILDERNESS THAT GOD LEADS THE ISRAELITES WHERE THEY MEET DIRECTLY WITH HIM (EXODUS 19) AND WHERE THEY EXPERIENCE HIS PROVISION AND GUIDANCE OVER A PERIOD OF FORTY YEARS. THE PROPHETS CONSIDERED THIS WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE TO BE A TIME OF PARTICULAR CLOSENESS IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOD AND ISRAEL (HOSEA 9.10), AND SOME PROPHETS LOOKED TO THE WILDERNESS AS THE PLACE FROM WHICH ISRAEL'S FUTURE DELIVERANCE WOULD COME (EZEKIEL 34.25; HOSEA 2.14; ISAIAH 43.19).

IMAGES OF DANGER AND DEMONS ARE ASSOCIATED WITH THE WILDERNESS SPORADICALLY THROUGHOUT THE OLD TESTAMENT. DEMONS ARE ASSOCIATED WITH THE WILDERNESS RUINS OF BOTH BABYLON AND EDMOM (ISAIAH 13.21-23; 34.13-15). THE SCAPEGOAT, ASSOCIATED WITH CARRYING THE SIN OF PEOPLE, WAS CHASED INTO THE WILDERNESS (LEVITICUS 16.10, 21-22), AND SEPARATION AND DISCIPLINE FROM GOD COULD BE ASSOCIATED WITH THE WILDERNESS (NUMBERS 21.4-9). WHILE THESE AND A FEW SIMILAR EXAMPLES MIGHT BE FOUND IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, THE PREDOMINANT UNDERSTANDING OF THE ISRAELITES WAS THAT THE WILDERNESS WAS GOOD BECAUSE IT WAS THE PLACE WHERE ONE MIGHT MEET GOD.

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, THE WILDERNESS IS PORTRAYED IN SIMILAR TERMS TO THE OLD TESTAMENT. IT CAN APPEAR AS THE ABODE OF DEMONS, MADMEN, AND THE PLACE OF TRIAL (LUKE 4.1-13; MATTHEW 12.43; LUKE 8.29).

HOWEVER, THE GENERAL CONNOTATION THROUGHOUT THE NEW TESTAMENT IS THAT THE WILDERNESS IS GOOD BECAUSE IT IS A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE MEET WITH GOD AND EXPERIENCE HIS PROVISION AND PROTECTION. THROUGHOUT HIS MINISTRY, JESUS WITHDREW TO WILDERNESS PLACES FOR THE EXPRESSED PURPOSE OF MEETING WITH GOD (LUKE 5.15-16), AND HE USED THE WILDERNESS TO FIND PROTECTION FROM THE CROWDS (JOHN 5.14-15). LIKEWISE, THE APOCALYPTIC FLIGHT OF THE WOMAN (ISRAEL) FROM SATAN IS TO THE DESERT WHERE SHE FINDS HERSELF PROTECTED BY GOD (REVELATION 12.6). IN KEEPING WITH THE OLD TESTAMENT THEOPHANIES (GOD APPEARANCES) IN THE DESERT, IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, GOD REVEALS HIMSELF TO PEOPLE THROUGH VISIONS IN THE DESERT (REVELATION 17.3; ACTS 8.26; GALATIANS 1.17). ONE EVEN FINDS OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETIC ECHOES OF FUTURE SALVATION COMING FROM THE WILDERNESS IN THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST AS HE WAS HIDDEN IN THE DESERT AND THEN BEGAN HIS MINISTRY THERE (LUKE 1.80; MATTHEW 3.1).

THE TEXT

CHECKING OUT WHEN EVERYONE ELSE CHECKS IN

ONE OF THE INTRIGUING ASPECTS OF JESUS' LIFE AND MINISTRY WAS HIS TENDENCY TO WITHDRAW, AND THIS AT THE MOST INOPPORTUNE TIMES. ONE MOMENT JESUS WAS THERE AND THE NEXT, WHEN EVERYONE FELT THEY NEEDED HIM THE MOST, HE WAS GONE HAVING WITHDRAWN TO A PLACE WHERE THERE WERE NO PEOPLE. EVERY GOSPEL WRITER NOTES JESUS' PRACTICE OF WITHDRAWING (MATTHEW 14.13; MARK 1.35, 45; 6.31; LUKE 5.16; JOHN 11.54). HOWEVER, ONLY JOHN AND LUKE PROVIDE INSIGHT INTO JESUS' REASONS FOR WITHDRAWING. WHEN WE CONSIDER WHAT THESE TWO GOSPEL WRITERS HAVE TO SAY ABOUT WHY JESUS WITHDREW, IT BECOMES EVIDENT THAT JESUS' PENCHANT FOR WITHDRAWING WAS MORE THAN A QUIRK OF HIS PERSONALITY. RATHER, WITHDRAWING AT KEY MOMENTS OF HEIGHTEENED ACTIVITY WAS A SPIRITUAL RHYTHM BY WHICH JESUS LIVED HIS LIFE, A RHYTHM WHICH ALLOWED HIM TO RESIST THE TEMPTING CALLS OF THE CROWDS TO GET OFF TRACK FROM THAT WHICH HIS FATHER HAD CALLED HIM TO DO.

Luke 4.42-44

THE SETTING FOR THIS EPISODE OF WITHDRAWING IS THAT OF JESUS' FIRST MINISTRY ENDEAVORS IN THE TOWN OF CAPERNAUM. THIS CITY WAS A MAJOR JEWISH CENTER FOR TRADE AND AGRICULTURE LOCATED ON THE NORTHWEST SIDE OF THE SEA OF GALILEE. JOSEPHUS, A FIRST-CENTURY JEWISH HISTORIAN, NOTES THAT THE AREA WAS BEAUTIFUL WITH WONDERFUL SOIL AND A CLIMATE SUITED FOR GROWING WALNUTS, FIGS,

OLIVES, AND GRAPES TEN MONTHS OUT OF THE YEAR (WAR 3.10.8.516-519). JESUS HAS JUST BEEN CAST OUT OF HIS HOMETOWN OF NAZARETH AND HAS TRAVELED ABOUT A DAY'S WALK TO CAPERNAUM, THE NEAREST MAJOR CITY. THERE HE TEACHES IN THE SYNAGOGUE AND RECEIVES A VASTLY DIFFERENT WELCOME AS PEOPLE ARE AMAZED WITH HIS TEACHING AND HIS ABILITY TO CAST OUT DEMONS (LUKE 4.31-37). THE GOSSIP NETWORK KICKS INTO GEAR SO THAT BY SUNSET OF THE SAME DAY A CROWD IS GATHERING OUTSIDE OF SIMON'S HOUSE CLAMORING FOR HEALING. JESUS HEALS THOSE WHO HAVE COME TO HIM AND CASTS OUT THE DEMONS THAT HAVE POSSESSED OTHERS (LUKE 4.38-40). AS JESUS CASTS OUT THE DEMONS, THOSE WHO ARE POSSESSED CRY OUT JESUS' TRUE IDENTITY AS THE SON OF GOD THEREBY IMPLYING JESUS IS THE MESSIAH (LUKE 4.34, 41). YET, IN EACH INSTANCE, JESUS SILENCES THE CRIES OF THE DEMONS. SCHOLARS HAVE CALLED THIS ACT OF SILENCING THOSE WHO PROCLAIM HIS IDENTITY THE MESSIANIC SECRET. WHILE VARIOUS REASONS HAVE BEEN GIVEN FOR JESUS CHOOSING TO KEEP HIS IDENTITY HIDDEN, AT THIS EARLY POINT, IT APPEARS THAT JESUS IS NOT READY TO REVEAL WHO HE IS BECAUSE HE INTENDS TO REDEFINE THE CONCEPT OF MESSIAH, SOMETHING HE WILL DO LATER IN HIS MINISTRY (MARK 10.45).

WHAT IS APPARENT IN THIS SCENE IS THAT JESUS IS WELL RECEIVED IN CAPERNAUM AND THAT HE HAS THE POTENTIAL TO DEVELOP A THRIVING MINISTRY IN THIS MAJOR CITY. HOWEVER, JUST AS PEOPLE ARE CLAMORING FOR MORE OF JESUS, HE WITHDRAWS INTO A PLACE WITHOUT THE CROWDS. THE PEOPLE OF CAPERNAUM ARE CONFUSED AND GO SEARCHING FOR HIM. WHEN THEY FIND HIM, THEY BEG HIM TO STAY WITH THEM. THE TEMPTATIONS TO STAY ARE OBVIOUS. BY STAYING IN CAPERNAUM JESUS HAS A FAVORABLE AUDIENCE AND A CONTEXT WITHIN WHICH HE COULD BUILD A THRIVING MINISTRY QUITE EASILY AND QUICKLY. HOWEVER, JESUS STATES THAT HE UNDERSTANDS HIS IDENTITY AND THE PURPOSE GOD HAS FOR HIM, A PURPOSE AND IDENTITY WHICH REQUIRED HIM TO PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL TO OTHERS. WE CANNOT MISS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN JESUS' WITHDRAWAL AND HIS RESPONSE TO THE TEMPTATIONS POSED BY THE GROWING CROWDS. IT APPEARS THAT SOMEHOW IN HIS WITHDRAWING, JESUS WAS ABLE TO CONNECT WITH WHO HE WAS AND WHAT HE WAS SENT TO DO, SO THAT HE DID NOT LOSE HIS WAY BY SUCCUMBING TO THE TEMPTATION TO REMAIN IN CAPERNAUM AND BUILD A "SUCCESSFUL" MINISTRY.

Luke 5.15-16

THE SETTING FOR THIS EPISODE IS CONNECTED WITH JESUS'

CHOICE TO LEAVE CAPERNAUM. WE NOW FIND JESUS MOVING AMONG OTHER TOWNS AND PREACHING. IN ONE UNSPECIFIED TOWN, JESUS HEALS A LEPER BY TOUCHING HIM, SOMETHING UNHEARD OF IN THAT TIME. PURITY LAWS REQUIRED THAT THOSE WHO CAME INTO CONTACT WITH LEPERS WERE TO BE CONSIDERED AS DEFILED (LEVITICUS 15.31). HOWEVER, RATHER THAN DEFILING JESUS, THE LEPER IS MADE WHOLE. NEWS OF THIS AMAZING AND UNORTHODOX EVENT QUICKLY SPREADS WHICH RESULTS IN CROWDS GATHERING AROUND JESUS TO HEAR HIS GOSPEL MESSAGE AND EXPERIENCE HIS HEALING. AS IN CAPERNAUM, JESUS FINDS A WELCOMING AUDIENCE AND THE POTENTIAL TO SETTLE AND BUILD A MINISTRY, BUT HE DOES NOT. LUKE NOTES THAT JESUS WITHDREW, NOT ONLY IN THIS CASE, BUT IT WAS HIS PRACTICE TO WITHDRAW IN THESE SITUATIONS. WHEN JESUS CAME TO A TOWN WHERE HE WAS OPENLY RECEIVED AND HIS MINISTRY FLOURISHED, HIS RESPONSE WAS TO WITHDRAW. LUKE STATES THAT HIS PURPOSE FOR WITHDRAWING WAS TO PRAY. THIS MAY GIVE INSIGHT INTO THE EVENTS AT CAPERNAUM. JESUS' WITHDRAWING ENABLED HIM TO SAY "No" TO THE TEMPTATIONS OF THE CROWD BECAUSE IN HIS WITHDRAWING JESUS WAS ENGAGING WITH HIS FATHER. IT IS IMPORTANT TO ALSO NOTE THAT THE PLACE OF THIS PRAYER WAS THE WILDERNESS, A PLACE WITH A RICH HISTORY FOR ISRAEL MEETING WITH AND EXPERIENCING GOD.

John 6.14-15

THE SETTING FOR THIS SCENARIO OF WITHDRAWING IS JESUS' FEEDING OF OVER 5,000 PEOPLE (JOHN 6.1-14). IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTICE THAT THIS SCENE BEGINS WITH JESUS ATTEMPTING TO WITHDRAW WITH HIS DISCIPLES (JOHN 6.1, 3). IT APPEARS THAT JESUS SOUGHT TO INVOLVE HIS DISCIPLES IN THIS SAME PRACTICE OF WITHDRAWING AT MOMENTS OF MINISTRY SUCCESS AND EXPANSION. THIS SPECIFIC ACT OF WITHDRAWING COMES AS JESUS' RESPONSE TO THE COMPLETION OF THE DISCIPLES' FIRST SOLO-MINISTRY ENDEAVOR THROUGHOUT THE TOWNS OF ISRAEL (LUKE 9.1-10). IN THIS CASE, THE CROWDS FOLLOW JESUS. THEY HAVE CAUGHT ONTO HIS PRACTICE OF WITHDRAWING AND ARE WATCHING IN ORDER TO PURSUE HIM. BECAUSE THE CROWD HAS PURSUED JESUS TO A WILDERNESS PLACE, THEY FIND THEMSELVES WITHOUT FOOD, BUT IN KEEPING WITH THE THEME OF THE WILDERNESS, THEY EXPERIENCE BOUNTIFUL PROVISION AND ALL ARE FED BY GOD (JOHN 6.10-13). EXPERIENCING THIS, THE CROWD DECIDES THAT THEY WILL MAKE JESUS KING, BY FORCE IF NECESSARY. IN ALL LIKELIHOOD, WHAT WE SEE HERE IS THE BEGINNING OF A REVOLT, A PHYSICAL RESISTANCE TO THE EMPIRE OF ROME. KNOWING THAT THE CROWD WAS PURSUING THIS COURSE AND KNOWING THAT IT INVOLVED FORCE

AND VIOLENCE, JESUS WITHDRAWS ONCE MORE, THIS TIME TO A MOUNTAIN. THE MENTION OF THE MOUNTAIN MAY BE AN OLD TESTAMENT ECHO OF GOD'S PEOPLE EXPERIENCING GOD MOST FULLY AT MOUNTAINS (EXODUS 19; 1 KINGS 19). SUCH A SCENARIO IS POSSIBLE BECAUSE THIS IS THE GREATEST TEMPTATION JESUS HAS FACED FROM THE CROWDS, AND HIS RESPONSE IS THE SAME. WHEN TEMPTED TO DEPART FROM WHO HE WAS AND WHAT HE WAS SENT TO DO, JESUS WITHDREW TO ENGAGE WITH HIS FATHER.

REAL LIFE WITH BLAKE:

WORK. WE ALL ENGAGE IN ONE FORM OF IT OR ANOTHER. SOMETIMES OUR WORK IS BUSY. SOMETIMES IT IS SLOW, AND SOMETIMES IT GOES GANGBUSTERS. EVERY NOW AND THEN WE FEEL LIKE WE ARE ON A ROLL. WE ARE DOING GREAT. PEOPLE LOVE WHAT WE ARE DOING. WE ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE. WE ARE IN OUR SWEET SPOT. EVER HAD ONE OF THOSE MOMENTS? I HAVE. I THINK MY MOST MEMORABLE MOMENTS WERE WHEN I WAS IN SEMINARY WORKING ON MY PHD. I THRIVED UNDER THE PRESSURE AND STRAIN OF THE WORK AND HAD GLIMPSES WHERE I FELT I WAS "ON FIRE." WHEN I HAD THOSE EXPERIENCES, WHAT I FELT WAS JOY. . . AND THE DESIRE TO DO MORE. PERHAPS I SHOULD SAY COMPULSION RATHER THAN DESIRE. I WAS IN MY SWEET SPOT SO IT ONLY MADE SENSE TO POUR MORE OF MYSELF INTO WHAT I WAS DOING. SO. I POURED MORE AND MORE OF MYSELF IN UNTIL I HAD NOTHING ELSE TO GIVE AND ONE MOMENT I FOUND MYSELF ON THE KITCHEN FLOOR OF OUR APARTMENT WITH CHEST PAINS AND THE NEXT I WAS IN THE ER HOOKED UP TO MONITORS AND GIVING BLOOD TO CHECK FOR THE ENZYMES WHICH INDICATE A HEART ATTACK. THANKFULLY I DIDN'T HAVE A HEART ATTACK, THOUGH RACHEL ALMOST DID. HOWEVER, THE DOCTOR DID COME IN AND ASK ABOUT HOW I WAS LIVING MY LIFE. I RATTLED OFF THE WORK I WAS DOING AND HE LOOKED AT ME AND SAID, "YOU NEED TO SLOW DOWN." HIS TALK WAS BRIEF, BUT THE POINT WAS OBVIOUS. I NEEDED TO TAKE A BREAK, BUT THAT SEEMED SO ANTI-THETICAL TO WHAT I WAS EXPERIENCING. I WAS "ON FIRE."

OVER THE YEARS, I HAVE HAD A TIME HERE AND THERE WHEN I WAS TEMPTED TO POUR ALL OF MYSELF INTO WHAT I WAS DOING. OK. THIS IS A CONSTANT TEMPTATION FOR ME. HOWEVER, WHAT I HAVE LEARNED IS THAT WHEN I FEEL THAT TEMPTATION, WHAT I REALLY NEED TO DO IS THE OPPOSITE. I NEED TO CHECK OUT. IN FACT, I HAVE LEARNED THAT ONE OF THE HEALTHIEST THINGS I CAN DO IS REGULARLY CHECK OUT AND TO INTENTIONALLY PLAN TO CHECK OUT WHEN LIFE AND WORK IS BUSIEST. I KNOW. IT SOUNDS CRAZY, BUT I LEARNED IT FROM JESUS. JUST ABOUT EVERY TIME JESUS HIT HIS SWEET SPOT, HE CHECKED OUT. HE WANDERED OFF INTO THE WILDERNESS. IT SEEMS SO UNPRODUCTIVE. WHAT COULD JESUS HAVE DONE IF HE HAD JUST HUNG IN THERE A FEW MORE DAYS AND GUTTED IT OUT? BUT JESUS WASN'T INTERESTED IN GUTTING IT OUT AND HE DOESN'T APPEAR INTERESTED IN SEEING WHAT MORE HE COULD DO. WHAT SEEMED TO INTEREST HIM THE MOST WAS SPENDING TIME WITH HIS FATHER AND TO DO THAT HE NEEDED TO STEP

AWAY. I HAVE SOUGHT (IMPERFECTLY) TO DO THE SAME. I REGULARLY CHECK OUT BECAUSE I AM LEARNING TO VALUE TIME WITH THE FATHER OVER EVERYTHING ELSE. CAN'T I SPEAK WITH GOD IN THE BUSYNESS? YES. I CAN AND DO. HOWEVER, THE BUSYNESS HAS A WAY OF MAKING GOD'S VOICE HARD TO HEAR AND WHEN I DON'T HEAR GOD'S VOICE I FIND THAT I BEGIN TO FORGET WHO I AM AND WHAT I AM MEANT TO DO. LIES AND ACCUSATIONS FIND THEIR WAY INTO MY HEART AND MIND AND I SPIRAL DOWN, FAST. BUT WHEN I GET AWAY, I FIND THE REDUCTION OF THE NOISE MAKES HEARING GOD MUCH EASIER. HE REMINDS ME OF WHO I AM. HE REPLACES THE LIES WITH HIS LOVING TRUTH AND I AM READY ONCE MORE TO ENGAGE IN MY SWEET SPOT.

REAL LIFE WITH YOU:

WE LIVE IN A CULTURE WHEN CHECKING OUT IS FROWNED UPON. WE SAY WE VALUE TAKING TIME OFF BUT WE RARELY DO IT. WHEN WE PACK OUR SUITCASES, WE MAKE SURE WE PACK OUR EMAIL READY DEVICE AS WELL. WE ARE A PEOPLE WHO ARE ALWAYS ON. WE VALUE BEING ON BECAUSE WE CAN ACCOMPLISH SO MUCH AND THERE IS VALUE IN PRODUCING. HOWEVER, WHEN WE LOOK AT THE LIFE OF JESUS, AT HIS MOMENTS OF HIGHEST PRODUCTION, HE SHUT IT DOWN AND WENT AWAY. IN FACT, THIS WAS A RHYTHM IN HIS LIFE. WHEN THINGS CRANKED UP HE TURNED IT OFF. HE DID THIS BECAUSE WHAT HE VALUED MOST WAS NOT PRODUCING BUT CONNECTING, CONNECTING WITH HIS FATHER. WHY? HE COULD HAVE DONE SO MUCH MORE. PERHAPS. PERHAPS NOT. YOU SEE, WHEN JESUS'S MINISTRY CRANKED UP SO TOO DID THE TEMPTATIONS TO GET OFF TRACK, TO BEHAVE AS AND BE A PERSON HE WAS NOT CREATED TO BE. IN SHUTTING IT DOWN AND CONNECTING, JESUS REMINDED HIMSELF OF WHO HE WAS AND WHAT HE WAS SENT TO DO. IN SHUTTING IT DOWN JESUS FOUND THE BEDROCK UPON WHICH HE COULD ONCE AGAIN ENGAGE. HE SOUGHT TO ENCOURAGE HIS DISCIPLES TO DO THE SAME. WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE TO SHUT IT DOWN? FOR ME IT LOOKS LIKE TAKING ONE DAY A MONTH WHICH I CALL MY "HERMIT DAY." ON THIS DAY, MY WORK IS TO DO NOTHING OTHER THAN ENGAGE WITH GOD, TO LISTEN TO HIS VOICE SO I REMEMBER WHO I AM AND WHAT I AM MEANT TO DO. I DO THINGS AND GO TO PLACES WHERE I EASILY CONNECT WITH GOD AND LET HIM SET THE AGENDA. IF THIS IS A BIG STEP FOR YOU OR YOU HAVE A JOB WHERE THIS IS NOT POSSIBLE, I ENCOURAGE YOU TO CONSIDER TAKING A SATURDAY MORNING ONCE A MONTH TO WITHDRAW IN THIS WAY. OR PERHAPS, EVEN A SUNDAY! GASP! THE POINT IS TO DEVELOP A RHYTHM OF WITHDRAWING AND CONNECTING SO THAT WE CAN EXPERIENCE A REORIENTATION WHICH ENABLES US TO ENGAGE ONCE MORE.



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