

## ***Time Out!***

Welcome back to “Walking with Christ”. I hope you’ve all had a little snack, something to eat or drink, and you’re ready to get down to business....Actually, today we’ll examine our busy lives and receive Jesus’ prescription for stress. It should be fun.

Speaking of stress, an easy-going man was being tailgated by a stressed-out woman on a busy boulevard. Suddenly, the light turned yellow just in front of him. He did the right thing, stopping at the crosswalk even though he could have beaten the red light by accelerating through the intersection. The tailgating woman honked several times, screaming in frustration as she missed her chance to speed through the intersection. In the middle of her ranting, she heard a tap on her window and looked into the face of a very serious police officer. The officer ordered her to exit the car with her hands on her head. He then took her to the police station where she was searched, fingerprinted, photographed and placed in a cell. After a couple of hours, the policeman escorted her back to the booking desk where the arresting officer was waiting with her personal effects. He said, “I’m very sorry for this mistake. You see, I pulled up behind your car while you were blowing your horn, making obscene gestures, and cursing the guy in front of you. I noticed your ‘What would Jesus do?’ bumper sticker and the chrome-plated fish emblem on the back. Naturally, I assumed the car was stolen.”



## ***Fellowship***

1. How can you relate to the stressed out driver?
2. How has your personal time with God been going? What has He been teaching you? If you’ve had trouble getting time alone with God, what’s crowded out that time?



## ***Discipleship***

Probably all of us can relate to that irate driver. We cram as many things into our days as we can, run from appointment to appointment, upset when things de-rail our efficiency... until the pressure causes us to explode. You know, the longer I walk with Jesus the more I appreciate His wisdom. I counseled a woman struggling what she felt was “legalism” in Christianity. She had grown up with a lot of rules as a child, so wasn’t too happy when she read the commandment to take a day off during the week...a time of rest devoted to

God. Being told what to do *automatically* made her not like it, whether it was a good idea or not! It wasn't until I pointed out that the Lord loved her SO much that He wanted to give her this day of rest...as a gift...that her eyes got really big and she saw the day as it was meant to be. God, in His wisdom, has always known that we need a day to recharge. To focus on Him and not worry about producing, making money or having demands on our time. Medical studies are backing up His wisdom, as "the experts" now tell us that regular breaks from your job (even for a day) dampen stress levels so dramatically, that they: lower your risk of heart disease by 29%; reduce flare-ups of allergies, skin rashes and other chronic health problems; dampen the blues and depression; and cut your risk of high blood pressure by 30%. True, we lead busy lives! Yet even God took the 7<sup>th</sup> day "off" after creating the universe. And when Jesus was here on earth, He was busy! He had an incredible task to accomplish in just 3 years—but he wasn't rushed. He took time outs: time to get alone with God the Father; to recharge emotionally, spiritually and physically.

Turn with me to Mark chapter 1, verses 35-37, and we'll read it together.

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"

We see several keys to a stress-controlled life from Jesus' example. First of all, look at verse 35: "Very early in the morning, long before daylight." Jesus did what it took to carve out down time. If He had a busy schedule of healing, preaching, traveling by foot 10 miles followed by *more* ministry, He planned ahead and prioritized time with the Father. Jesus knew what His day had in store; do you? What are the things that you need to get done? Write down a list each night and live an ordered life. Successful people are accomplished at making to-do lists. Once you have your plan of action, you can schedule the most important factor of your day: time with the Father. Guard your appointment with the King of Kings more jealously than any other item in your list.

Secondly, "He left the house and went out of town to a lonely place." Have you ever felt like you could just not get away from people? Like when you are home, your spouse, children or even the dog require constant attention? If it's not them, maybe it's e-mails that need to be answered, work around the house, or telephone calls which break your concentration. It may feel like Satan is trying to sabotage your best laid plans to spend time with your Father. This may call for some creative planning and brainstorming in your small group. How can *you* do what Jesus did and escape from distraction? Jesus left the house! I've adopted that as *my* personal strategy. I'll get in my car and drive to an empty parking lot, where no one can find me; just me, my Bible and the Lord. The disciples didn't know where Jesus was, and verse 37 says that *everyone* was looking for Him. I think He must have seen that one coming, and picture Him sneaking away from even "good things" to do in order to prioritize the essential.

Thirdly, verse 37 says, "He prayed". He spent that down time recharging His spiritual batteries, receiving guidance and just "hanging out" with the Father. In verse 38, He may

be referring the instructions He had just received on how to order His day: “We must go on to the other villages around here. I have to preach in them also, because that is why I came.” If Jesus Himself needed to receive daily input from the Father, how much more do we? Spending time with the Father keeps our focus strong, our steps determined.

Lastly, what was the result of this time well spent? Power and effectiveness in ministry. Verse 39 says that He traveled all over Galilee, preaching in the synagogues and driving out demons. If we expect God’s power to drive our lives and work, our spiritual tanks must be filled.

It all comes down to abiding. Turn to John 15:4-5.

Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

We must “dwell” or “remain” in Him. No branch can bear fruit by itself, and we cannot be effective fruit bearers without living, dwelling and abiding with Christ. The encouraging news is, as James reminds us in chapter 3:12, a fruit tree can’t bear 2 kinds of fruit! When we are abiding, recharging and cleansing ourselves with Jesus daily, we are far less likely to experience the stress-induced meltdowns of our driver friend!

There’s a saying, “What’s in the well comes out with the water.” Daily time with the Living Water, being washed with the Water of the Word, will cleanse us and make us fit for every good work. As I reminded my friend, the Sabbath is a gift to you! Enjoy it and **every time** in between that God allows you to “come away” with Him. His yoke is easy and His burden is light, and daily time with Him lightens our load of care as He shares our burdens.

I’m reminded of a driver of a wagon on his way to market. He overtook an old man carrying a heavy load. Taking compassion on him, the driver invited the old man to ride in the wagon.

Gratefully, the old man accepted. After a few minutes, the driver turned to see how the man was doing. To his surprise, he found him still straining under the heavy weight, for he had not taken the burden off his shoulders. How like you and I! Let’s do what Jesus encourages and learn from Him, for His yoke is easy, and His burden light. It’s there we will find rest for our souls.

3. Look again at Mark 1:35-37. Brainstorm with your group: what are some strategies you could use to “slip away” for a time out with God?

4. How would you like to see your productivity for life and ministry increased from more time with Him?

5. Read John 15:4-5. What is one time you tried to do something in your own strength and the results were less than satisfactory?
6. Name some ways the vine and branches function together. What insight does this give towards your partnership with Christ?
7. Read Matthew 11:28-30. What have you learned from Jesus' example today?
8. What loads are weighing your life down and bringing stress? What will your life look like when you allow God to carry them for you?
9. We've re-defined time management today! Time working (even *for* God) does not directly correlate to effectiveness in ministry! What does the new equation look like?



## *Ministry*

10. How can you encourage each other and those in your family to have time with the Father?
11. Maybe your group would like to go away on a retreat together. It could be a half day or a weekend. Leave time to relax, play, pray and sing together. What a great time for some alone time with God as well! Talk about how you can make that happen.



## *Evangelism*

12. Jesus' time to re-charge gave Him direction and purpose in his ministry to unbelievers. What service project can your group do in the community to show the difference He has made in your lives?



## *Worship*

13. What an honor that the King of Kings is waiting for a time of rest and relaxation with YOU! Praise Him for that today and make an appointment for your next time with Him tomorrow!