

Dickens

Digest

August 2022

Is It a Rut or a Channel?

I can remember wise men making this statement: "A rut is just a grave with both ends kicked out." Many times in our routines of life we can begin to think that we are in a rut, but before we get anxious and start running ahead of God it might just be wise to ask the question: "Is it a rut or a channel?" What makes the difference? The difference is what is flowing through it. Abraham was a channel of blessing. Elijah got refreshed sitting beside a channel of blessing. Jesus said, "He that believeth in me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." As a missionary, not every day is super exciting with many saved or great accomplishments. In fact, some of the greatest victories happen in the mundane routines of our lives. I have been doing quite a bit of Bible institute teaching in the interior having made two week long trips since May. These trips can be exhausting, but it is satisfying to know that two churches deep in the interior are having their young people better prepared to carry on the ministry. I always worry while I am gone about the church here in Belo Jardim, but while I am away the men here always step up and fill in making sure that things are running

smoothly. This led us to realize that our men needed to have a class on homiletics (the art of preaching). In July we began the class on Thursday nights with a national pastor. Please pray for these men as at least one of them, Benivaldo, preached for his very first time recently. The end of July allowed us to celebrate the first anniversary of the new church plant that we have been helping. This was an exciting weekend which allowed us to evangelize with the new congregation and although no professions were made, many doors for future evangelism were opened. August is always exciting as Father's Day in Brazil is celebrated. This year we had a full house for the Sunday service and many fathers participated. Please pray for the salvation of Sandoval. His wife has trusted Christ as Savior, and he attends church occasionally with his family. He understands the gospel, but has not come to Christ. At the end of this month, my "routine" was interrupted by being called on to teach Creationism in the Bible institute to the 45 students with whom Morgan and Aydan study. Investing in the future of ministry here in Brazil is never just routine, it is the channel for many future blessings.

Prayer Requests

- ◆ Family Health
- ◆ Bible Conference September
- ◆ Morgan future ministry
- ◆ Evangelism, discipleship in changing dynamics
- ◆ Church families/couples
- ◆ Lucas and family
- ◆ Smothers Family



In Other News

June through August is rainy season "winter" for us. This year has been exceptionally rainy and cold (low to mid 60's). This is always challenging for ministry, but has been wonderful for living. It reminds us that there are always changing seasons in ministry and life. Morgan is seeking where the Lord would have him serve in the future and this has led him to spend some time with James Nash in Petrolina (a city about 300 miles from us). He will be traveling with me to the Bible conference this week and then returning to Petrolina with Bro. Nash to spend a good portion of his vacation time from work seeking the Lord about his next steps. This will lead to new opportunities and responsibilities for Aydan and other men in the church. The children's ministry comes to mind first as this has been the principle area of ministry for Morgan. Lucas has agreed to take on this ministry so we are praying for the Lord to lead and bless. Keep Morgan in your prayers as he continues to follow the Lord.

In Her Words - Cynthia Dickens - **10 ways to neither lose nor allow anything to steal your peace**



3. To listen more than I talk ...

Ministry is about pointing others to the solution for their needs (principally, the need of every person for salvation through Jesus Christ). When I am not following my Lord's example in meeting the needs of others, my peace is in jeopardy. I will not, at this point, dive deeply into the popular self-care talking points but will, instead, say that ... when I'm meeting others' needs, God will provide ways, quiet moments in the midst of the busy-ness, and even people who, also in their ministry, meet my needs. It is not wrong to take time for myself, but it IS wrong when that time takes precedence

over what God has called me to do in the lives of those to whom I'm called to minister.

So what is it that most people in emotional, mental, or even physical distress desire? I think that "relief" and "removal of the triggers" probably top the list. Sometimes those things are not attainable in the immediate. So how do we deal with the anxiety? Although I know this is only one form of relief, many people need to talk things out. No, it doesn't take away the problem, but being truly listened to can ease a turbulent situation. It can help us to share our burden with someone else, can lighten the load (and lead to other healing processes) just to verbalize what is happening or what we feel, can bring a certain release to cry on another's shoulder.

As introverted as I am and as much as my tendency is to be quiet, listening still poses a problem for me at times. It's not intentional and, as such, has a hand in reducing my peace, when I realize I've made this mistake; because I tend to humanly and sinfully mull over my error, rather than receiving correction, making it right to the best of my ability, and working to obey the Lord. Still I find myself unwittingly setting aside what someone else is saying in favor of relating my own experiences in the same vein or of sharing my own thoughts on the matter. Is this to say that I should never share experiences or give Biblical counsel? Of course not! But ... Jesus frequently asked questions of those who came to Him and, then, quietly and attentively listened to their responses. I must remember that my own voice (no matter the truth of my words) may not be what pleases the Lord throughout a particular encounter. Some verses to remind me of this are Proverbs 18:13 and James 1:19.

Of course, the most effective and important listening exercise in my life is that of listening to the Lord. My last article here in the prayer letter was on prayer. Prayer is essential. However, if I am always running to the Lord and talking a-mile-a-minute BUT never stopping to listen to His Word, I'm going to miss the solution to my problems. Among the many verses that remind me how God made me for listening are Proverbs 2:2, Proverbs 20:12, Matthew 11:15, and Romans 10:17. My ministry can be blessed by my silence, just as my peace can be strengthened. I love what Isaiah 30:15b has to say about this subject - "...in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not." The word quietness here indicates a state of peace - some Bible dictionaries include "to be at peace" as part of the Hebrew word's definition - and how convicting is that last phrase?! "And ye would not." Under Isaiah's ministry, Israel refused to listen and quietly trust that their God could save them even though it may not have always looked like they thought it should. How many times does my own "voice of reason" drown out that which God wants me to hear and obey, thereby undermining my peace? May I hear and follow Him, rather than fleshly logic; for the security and contentedness that true listening brings is immeasurable.

*** Please, do read the next article which will complete the original list's phrase - "to listen more than I talk, and at the same time" It seems like it might be good to look at the other side and how it can also contribute to our peace, right? ;)

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