

Time Outs Can Make Us Better Team Players; Jesus Takes a Needed TIME OUT

Mark 1:29-39: Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law of fever; cures the sick and casts out demons; takes a time out in a deserted place; the crowds are hunting him but he says we must go to neighboring towns to PROCLAIM THE MESSAGE.

Isaiah 40:29-32: *"But those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."*

Theme: Time outs are part of the rhythm of life: rest/work; breathe/run; Sabbath time/complete a task. If Jesus takes a time out to a deserted place, could not we also need to do the same?

I. Introduction: Two kinds of time outs: One is punishing a child, the second is a needed rest, break, taking a deep breath

If a toddler is misbehaving, out of control, screaming, etc., a parent may put the young girl/boy in "time out" in a chair for 5 to 10 minutes. This is their consequence for bad behavior.

Another time out comes when I need a stretch from the computer, a rest to regain my energy, a time to have a walk or go sit by the cliff or waterside.

If you are watching two NFL teams play this afternoon or a basketball game (UAB Wednesday night), the scoreboard will show the number of time outs left.

In the Gospel lesson today from Mark, we have a typical day in the life of Jesus. In verse 21, Jesus goes to the synagogue on a Sabbath. There a possessed man with a demon comes shouting. Jesus rebukes the evil spirit and says BE QUIET. Then in the evening he goes to the home of Peter in Capernaum where Peter's mother-in-law is ill with a fever. He takes her by the hand and the fever leaves her.

Then on that Sabbath evening, the whole town gathers around the door. Jesus cured many who were sick and cast out demons. So we assume he slept there. Then he gets out in the darkness of dawn to take a time out in a deserted, lonely place where he prays. Apparently his healings have caused many in Capernaum to seek him out. The disciples tell him many are in the town hunting for him. Jesus says let us get away into some neighboring towns where I CAN PROCLAIM THE MESSAGE. Then, I will be doing what I was sent to do.

So Jesus has a need to withdraw from the crowds of folks in Capernaum. This has been a busy day, starting with teaching in the local synagogue, healing Peter's mother-in-law, curing all sort of sick folks.

II. Now, let's look at how TIME OUTS make us better TEAM PLAYERS

1. Some time just to get your breath! If you have ever walked fast or gone for a run, you get winded so you stop or start walking. For example, playing tennis at 7:30 a.m. with 8 men over 80, at times I will get winded, breathe hard, so I say give me a minute to get my breath. Or I sit down between games to rest a while and get my energy back. I can be a better player on this team if I can take a minute to get some oxygen in my lungs. If you see

a running back return a kickoff 90 yards for a touchdown, often the camera shows him leaning on a fellow player on the bench.

2. When we are engaged in a project requiring heavy concentration or making mental decisions. I need a coffee break or break at the water fountain, or as Dr. Rand said last Sunday, I need a bite of radish, fruit, or celery. Offer up an ARROW prayer, "Lord, send your Holy Spirit into my mind and body...give me your presence." My breath prayer is "Lord Jesus, guide my path with power." Or "Lord Jesus, guide my path with peace." This is called a "Breath Prayer." An article in *Newsweek* on making the brain work faster and better listed one of 31 practices as ZONE OUT: To stop to let your brain wonder...thinking of the big picture.
3. Another TIME OUT occurs during nighttime. Child psychologists recommend quiet reading to children before bedtime. They need a time out from intense active games, time to quiet down. Have a time out to offer thanksgiving to God for the day. This congregation uses the Compline from the BoCP. There is a prayer that can be memorized: "*Guide us waking, O Lord, and guard us sleeping; that awake we may watch with Christ, and asleep we may rest in peace.*" While awake we are guided by Christ and we watch; while asleep he guards us and gives us peace.
4. Finding a few minutes a day with a 12-minute quiet time. When I take a few minutes each day to make contact with Christ, let him love me. Let him shower me with grace for the day. In a football metaphor, we are all to be "wide receivers." "Wide" does not refer to our waistline but to one who receives the forward pass. In the metaphor Jesus is the quarterback who is throwing us a pass every moment of the day. Our job is to open our arms to receive the passes he is throwing us. (Visual Aid--footballs)
5. If we are going to be a team player with our family and with fellow members of the Body of Christ, we need a few hours for planning. For instance, in doing some marriage counseling I would ask the couple if they had any weekly blocks of time for goal setting or planning. I recall when we had older children in the home, we had calendar coordination on Saturday a.m. or after Sunday Lunch. Even today empty nest couples need to have a time out for planning and prioritizing activities, such as when to babysit or travel for birthdays for grandchildren. We are at the age where we can forget to drive to Memphis, Mobile, or Jackson MS for a birthday party, or to attend a conference, lecture, or a performance. When are you going to take time to nurture your relationship with Christ?
6. All writings on time management and Christian discipleship recommend a full day once a month or overnight each quarter in the year. Any football team--high school through professional--has "Skull Practices" where the team is learning the plays, designing a plan to score on the opponent, taking time out to plan. In the scene in the Gospel, Jesus has had a busy day. Then in the morning he gets up to pray, receives strength from the Father God, sets his priorities--to return to Capernaum where he was being very effective in healing many. But now his response is not to return to those searching after Him, but to go to another town so he can proclaim the message of the Good News. In the metaphor of the football teams, it seems to me Jesus is saying I am being called by the Father to teach, proclaim the nature of the Kingdom, i.e., be a coach who will demonstrate how followers are to play the game of life. In that the coach is a teacher, instructor, then we can say Jesus is saying do the preaching, the teaching about the nature of the Kingdom of God. As I was doing all the healing and casting out demons...that is the work of the TEAM TRAINER.

III. What else in the Lessons can help us in being a TEAM PLAYER?

1. We are to hold hands with those in the Body of Christ and lift them up. Jesus performs a very gentle and tender caring action for Peter's mother-in-law: "He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up." Some scholars point out that the verb Mark uses for "lift her up" is the same verb used for resurrection. If Jesus is our example, then we are to be in the business of lifting others up. When another member of the Body of Christ is having a hard time, recovering from surgery, having a difficult time relationally, we are to lift them up! If any congregation is to be a CARING group of members, then everyone on the team has to be involved in lifting up those in need. For example, there was a men's group where the wife of a member was having complicated breast cancer surgery. The group ministered to that family: Food was stocked in the freezer for the four teens; flowers were delivered from the Altar; arrangements were made so children were transported to their school events; some of the men mowed the large lawn and washed the cars and cleaned the house; many folks in the church prayed for healing. You and I are the hands and feet of Christ to each other. (Read The Servant Song, page 59.)

"We are pilgrims on a journey, we are travelers on the road; we are here to help each other walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ-light for you in the nighttime of your fear; I will hold my hand out to you, speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping, when you laugh I'll laugh with you, I will share your joy and sorrow, 'Til we've seen this journey through."

2. Another attribute of being a team member is sustainability. Can we help sustain and encourage each other under adverse circumstances? Listen to the last verses in the 40th Chapter of Isaiah:

"The youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted: BUT those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength,

They shall mount up with wings of eagles, (they will soar on wings like eagles,)

They shall run and not be weary,

They shall walk and not faint."

One of the factors in aging is that we have less energy; we cannot run as fast, walk as long, work long hours, or recall as much detailed information.

Let me introduce you to someone I visited a few weeks ago. I will call him Michael. He had just had his 80th Birthday. I am here to listen. Michael begins to list all his physical problems: *weak knee (used to run every day); I haven't walked around the block in months; can't hear well.* Have you been anywhere to visit friends? *No, I gave up driving a few months ago. I am afraid that I will have an accident.* Do you do any work around the house? Mow the lawn or rake the leaves? *No, I just hire someone to come, don't wash the car.* Do you go to your grandchildren's games, basketball, baseball, football, cheerleading? *No, not in a long time.* What about church? *No, I have not gone in a long time.* Can someone pick you up on Sunday? *My son takes over the small rentals I have.*

Now let me contrast Michael with some of the eight men I play tennis with at Mountain Brook High School at 7:30 a.m. Two come early and walk around the courts exercising, two have spouses with MS and Parkinson's disease, all of them drive at least 10 miles in Birmingham morning traffic, all are active in their churches serving on teams such as Habitat, counting the offering, and traveling by car to see friends and relatives. Most of them have had bypass heart surgery.

Isaiah 40:38-39

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They shall mount up with wings of eagles, (they will soar on wings like eagles,)
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In knowing these tennis buddies at Mountain Brook, I think they wait upon the LORD, and they know how to renew their strength. They have a mental alertness; they are busy helping others, going to church and civic meetings. They know how to take TIME OUTS by worshipping on Sunday in Christian churches. They ask how our spouses are doing; they visit their grandchildren and great grandchildren. They share about the last funeral they attended.

If compared to Michael...He is not in a TIME OUT with a purpose to anticipate the next week. He is in an I-quit-living-mode, I have resigned from playing the game of life. My prayer for him is he will open his arms and soul to the many passes that Jesus is throwing him in the last decade of his life.

Prayer: Lord teach us to take TIME OUTS like you did. We thank you for the times you have held our hand and lifted us up. May we all know we are on a TEAM that is here to serve each other on this journey. Help us to start this week.