

# The Damage of a Hectic Pace

# 28



**W**HEN THE PHONE RANG, HE ANSWERED IT with not a little trepidation. After months of mammoth effort, man-hour upon man-hour of building prototypes, pressing for creative solutions to technical problems, calculating costs, cajoling and negotiating with subcontractors and vendors for the best price, it all came down to this phone call. Win, and the biggest contract the company had ever seen was theirs; lose, and the lean times would continue.

He listened carefully, asked a few questions, then thanked the caller, hung up the phone, and sat back in his chair.

*Lost!*

Months of work ended with that phone call. The bids had been close, but in the end, another firm had found a way to bring the project in for less money.

Now what to do?

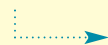
First he made a phone call to his competitor. Old friends, they often traded war stories—but this was more like the signing of a peace treaty. One the victor, struggling to be gracious; the other the vanquished, struggling to be dignified *and* gracious. That done, he picked up the stack of envelopes from his desk and headed to the conference room where he knew his

workers were waiting.

The news cast a pall over the room, and some of them worried privately about what this meant to their futures. Eventually someone asked about the difference in the bids, and the miniscule amount sent a groan through the room. A gap so small left them second-guessing themselves, and he could see the wheels turning. If only. . . .

He waited for the initial reaction to die down and thanked them for their hard work. "I know we're all disappointed with the outcome," he said as he looked down at the stack of envelopes in front of him. He looked back at them, and continued, "I am, too. Disappointed with the outcome, that is. . ." and he paused, then went on "but not with the effort."

"You'll find in these envelopes a bonus for the hard work we've all put into this project. It's that hard work I value, regardless of the results. Now, let's get back to work." And with that he left the room. A very surprised and speechless gathering of workers watched him go.



## Scripture Passages

Ephesians 5:15-17

Ecclesiastes 3:1-14

## Study

As you prepare for this study, complete the following:

List the times in the past week that you've read your Bible.

List the times this past week you've read a newspaper or other periodical.

List the times this past week you've read a book.

List the times this week you've spoken with or listened to God in prayer.

List the times this week you've talked to others about God.

If you're a parent, list the times you've spoken to your children about God.

What conclusions do you draw from your answers above?

Studies show us that the more educated we are, and the more successful we are, the less likely we are to know God's Word. Why do you think that's true?

Remembering our study of the Israelites, what's the problem with being unfamiliar with God's Word?

List some of the things and people that place demands on your time. Why do you surrender it to them?

One of the most devious and successful enemies of faithfulness is pace. Sometimes others dictate pace to us, as in tyrannical bosses, small children, extraordinary circumstances, or the consequences of wrong choices. Often, though, the reckless pace of our lives is our own fault—chasing after the windmill of plenty, prosperity, security, power, or a place of significance. A relentless pace condemns us to a focus on the moment, leaving little time for earthly, tangible relationships, let alone God. If the goal of our time management system is designed to cram more accomplishment into our day, then our focus is on tasks and not on the relationship that gives meaning to those tasks.

Now read Ecclesiastes 3:1-14. What does Solomon want us to hear in this passage?

We must each look to the pace in our lives and govern it prudently. It strengthens not only our relationship with God, but with all those God has given us: family, friends and coworkers.

We cannot think of God in the shorter journeys of our life if we fail to consider His place in the longer journeys. Those longer journeys—like “where is God working and what’s my place in His will” and “what do my children need to know about God” and “am I ready to give an answer when my coworker asks me the hard questions of faith”—require the planning and preparation done in quiet moments which refuse to yield to the world’s demand for activity.

Even as we recognize our continuing unworthiness, though, we must never stop yielding ourselves to obedience; the irony of “more fruit for the kingdom” is often that it demands we be less busy.

## *Common Sense and Eternal Principles*

- A hectic pace is the enemy of faithfulness.
- Activity does not equal value.
- It is not just the quality of time we spend on things that matter; quantity counts, too.