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Interruptions

Interruptions are a fact of life. They are both constant and inevitable. They can start with your alarm or the early morning summer sun waking you up when you want to sleep longer, and continue until the end of the day when noise or heat thwart your attempts to fall asleep.

Interruptions can derail our train of thought and bring our drive to a screeching stop. By definition they do not come at times when you have nothing to do, they *interrupt* what you are doing. Sometimes what you are doing is very important. Sometimes the interruption is to do what God wants us to do, while at others it can take us away from doing what God wants us to do.



Research shows that the average worker is interrupted 15 times every hour they work, and that five hours of productive time are lost each week from interruptions.

With this being said, interruptions are not always bad. In fact, they can be good, can lead to learning and growth, being productive for God.

We need sound perspective. That includes taking cliches with a generous amount of salt. For example, “interruptions are divine appointments.” There is some truth here, but it does not help us discern whether the interruption is to be embraced or discarded.

Jesus experienced interruptions.

Sometimes, even frequently, He embraced them. For example, Mark’s gospel tells us,

“in the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and prayed there for a time. Simon and his companions eagerly searched for Him; and they found Him and said to Him, ‘Everyone is looking for You.’ He said to them, ‘Let’s go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may also preach there; for this is why I came’” (1:35-38).

At other times He did not embrace them. Luke tells us,

“the news about Him [Jesus] was spreading even farther, and large crowds were gathering to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray” (Luke 5:15-16).

So what do we do? How do we know how to respond to interruptions?

We might wish that God had given us a detailed list, or at least a clear, surefire formula. God gives us principles and examples. Let's consider just a few.

One principle is to recognize that while your plan and schedule can be good, God's plans are better, are perfect. We read in Proverbs, “The mind of a person plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps” (16:9). One of the implications of this is that we need to allow, and even expect God to redirect us, to interrupt us for the work He wants us to do. As well, even when interruptions decimate your plans, remember that God is the One who gets His work accomplished regardless of the time you have available.

Jesus taught us that people are more important than our plans. When He accepted interruptions it frequently was to meet the needs of people, and always for their best.

Another is to evaluate whether the interruption lines up with God's revealed will and purposes in the Bible. For example, if someone comes to you with a real need for counsel, prayer, or to be listened to, we know that lines up with our call to encourage, support and bear with one another.

As well, it is good to ask yourself, “Why do I want to embrace or reject this interruption?” “What are my real motives?” Rejecting it because I don't feel comfortable is not sufficient. Neither is embracing it because it makes me feel better about myself.

Then too, how important is it to respond immediately? Does this need to be dealt with now, or can it be later?

While not the primary motivation, recognize that the interruption might bless you.

Interruptions are part of God's ordained way of life for each one of us, for every day. Let's determine to frame them, to respond to them as Jesus did.

Pastor Lyle