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By Ken Korkow

THE TENSION BETWEEN WORKING AND WAITING

When I was growing up, my mother often said, "All good things come to he who waits – so long as he who waits, works like heck while he waits."

Yes, my mom and dad were both focused and driven. They had survived the Great Depression and did not want anyone in their own family to have those experiences. Therefore, the values and virtues of hard work – even at the cost of other things – were vigorously imparted into our mindsets.

I remember thinking as a boy, "When I grow up, I will NOT be like my dad." But I became exactly like him, not just hard-working but also driven, focused on completing the task and reaping the rewards that came with it. Fulfilling the adage, "An apple doesn't fall far from the tree," I had patterned my life after my father to the extent that I often heard someone say, "You're just like your old man."

Please understand, I inherited many positive traits and gained good lessons from my parents. And I appreciated those. However, the older I get, I have learned to rely less on the power of my own flesh and instead act upon the recognition that my real identity, purpose, and manner of living come from the Lord.

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Please consider the words of Hannah Whitall Smith in her classic daily devotional book, *Streams in the Desert*:

"A quiet spirit is of inestimable value in carrying on outward activities; and nothing so hinders the working of the hidden spiritual forces, upon which, after all, our success in everything really depends, as a spirit of unrest and anxiety.

There is immense power in stillness. A great saint once said, 'All things come to him who knows how to trust and be silent.' The words are pregnant with meaning. A knowledge of this fact would immensely change our ways of working. Instead of restless struggles, we would 'sit down' inwardly before the Lord, and would let the Divine forces of His Spirit work out in silence the ends to which we aspire."

Such a perspective, of course, runs counter to the typically urgent, must-get-it-done philosophy that governs so many of us as we undertake our daily work responsibilities. However, experience has taught me that there also is great benefit from a determined effort to cultivate a quiet spirit and practice stillness despite the chaos that may surround us. Here are a couple of principles I have learned and applied from the Bible:

Be willing to slow down and wait on God, rather than trying to make things happen ourselves. In our fast-paced, high-stress world, it takes great resolve to step off the treadmill and trust in God to guide us and resolve the difficulties and challenges we might be facing. It requires faith, but I have learned trusting in the Lord has never failed me. *"He says, 'Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth'" (Psalm 46:10).*

While slowing down, we also should present our concerns to God. Worry and anxiety are constant companions for many of us in the workplace, but

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usually they are counterproductive emotions. The more we worry, the less we accomplish. Prayer, on the other hand, can accomplish much more than we could imagine. *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (Phil 4:6).*

The Bible urges us to work – and work diligently. But it also teaches there are times when it is best to wait, be still, and watch to see what God can do.

Ken Korkow lives in Omaha, Nebraska, U.S.A., where he serves as an area director for CBMC. This is adapted from his "Fax of Life" column. Used with permission.

Reflection/Discussion Question

1. Do you agree with the statement that good things come to those who wait – as long as they are working as hard as they can while they wait? Explain your answer.
2. Why is it so difficult for us to be still and to wait, especially when we need to bring a project to completion, have a deadline to meet, or must find an answer to a pressing problem at work?
3. In the quote by Hannah Whitall Smith, she states, "There is immense power in stillness." Do you believe this? Why or why not? And if so, what would this power be?
4. Can you think of a time when you decided to "be still" and chose to wait, even if reluctantly, when everything inside you screamed that you had to keep working? If so, what was the outcome?

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:

Psalm 37:4-7; Proverbs 3:5-6, 16:3,9, 19:21, 21:21,30; Matthew 6:25-34, 7:7-12

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