



NightLight

A NEWSLETTER OF McLEAN MINISTRIES

"take heed....as to a light that shines in a dark place." II Peter 1:19

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Dear Friends,

You will keep in perfect peace
him whose mind is steadfast,
because he trusts in You.

Trust in the Lord forever,
for the Lord, the Lord, is the Rock eternal.

Isaiah 26:3,4



There is a lot more to the theme of silence when related to spiritual growth than can ever be covered in a single article. I have several volumes in my library about silence, each of them helpful and important. We need to educate ourselves in what we are doing when we disregard the God-ordained need for silence. This is also true for the other spiritual disciplines, including solitude and fasting.

We are akin to the proverbial lobster: the shellfish is totally unaware that he is being slowly cooked to death as his water bath goes from cool to boiling. Likewise, many of us are slowly drowning in a sea of too much information. And not only that, we are giving too much attention to too much information...a guarantee for eventual burnout.

A friend of mine who is a highly respected doctor in a large city recently wrote me this note: *I just read an article in a medical journal about the frustrations of teachers teaching students about immunology and our immune systems. The authors pointed out that in the early 1900's it was estimated that medical knowledge was doubling every 50 years. By the end of the 20th century it was every 5 years and in 2020 it was every 73 days! Who could keep up with that? I'm a board certified "Allergy and immunology" specialist, but if I pick up a research article in pure immunology I can barely read it.*

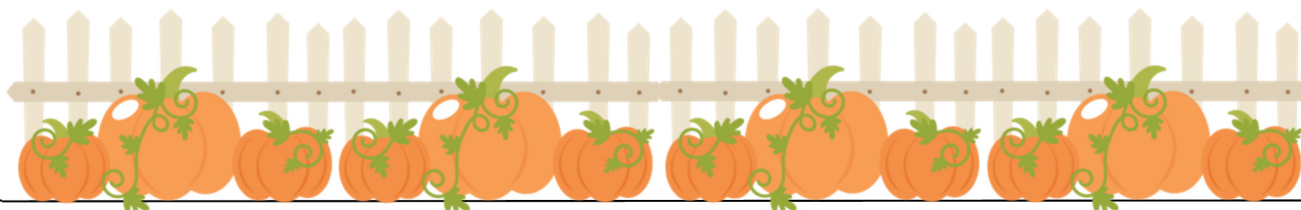
What he is saying regarding his particular field of expertise is also true in many other areas of medicine, and beyond. How can any one person stay abreast of so many updates in so many areas of expertise?

Although the information may be helpful and good, it is way beyond what we can digest before the knowledge doubles again! We are in over our heads before we even begin. And this is the good information out there! What about the pop stuff that is just as prolific that must be sorted through as well?

Then there is the constant flood of foolish general information, neither technical nor focused, just cultural meanderings. The electronic deluge of non-related snippets of information and what that does to the reasoning mind is an entire study all its own. It is bad enough when a serious minded expert feels overwhelmed by the undigestible infusion of viable information, but what about the average curious grazer of a million topics on the phone screen or computer? The brain has no time or path to discern the multi-faceted input from a daily (hourly?) sampling of disconnected items. Besides the clearly conscious problem caused by the overload, what does that overload do to the structures of processing and the emotional elements of such over stimulation? What does it do to the nervous system? How do the ongoing thought processes following such overexposure function? Can such a hyper stimulated mind find a real landing place where it can truly come to rest?

The call to holy silence was important years before this level of electronic craziness. It required purposeful centering of the heart even then. So what is it now? I want to get into the heart of what silence and solitude and the other disciplines hold for us. But sadly I am finding that before we can even approach the real central core aspects of these great aids to spiritual life, we have to tackle these excesses first. Can we take this challenge seriously enough to make it a focused effort? For if we do, and maintain this discipline of silence, it can produce life-transforming results. We may find that our search for healing is not found in some deep psychological exercise or even in some mysterious spiritual encounter (welcomed as both may be). But rather **healing can come in the seemingly little, day by day disciplines the Church has practiced for centuries. The first step is to be willing to set time aside for silence. Yet the next step for many of us (both teens and adults) will be a matter of willfully taking back the ruling ownership of our minds.** How do we do that? By refusing to allow them to be seduced into semi-insanity by the spirit of the age; that is, a spirit that finds its handiest weapon in electronics.

I recently spent time with a young adult struggling with what he deemed an overwhelming spiritual battle for his mind. He used all the common terms of spiritual warfare describing his battle. But as I continued to listen to him, I learned that this otherwise clear thinking young man stayed up every night to the wee hours of the morning flipping through the random stuff on his phone! That left him dragging to work the next morning on maybe four hours of infected sleep. It makes no sense to seek a spiritual answer to a dilemma while totally disregarding the God-ordained directive of sound healthy sleep. He told his dad about our conversation, and now turns his phone over to his dad at ten every night. He is now seeing vastly improved day-time results, with much more peace and much less struggle. What a miracle!



What's Our Goal?

Are we only seeking to provide tools that aim at behavior modification? Is that all the Christian disciplines are about? Please do not misunderstand me. Behavior modification is a good thing to some degree. But did Jesus die and rise again from the dead so we can all learn to merely act right? Is it just our performance that ultimately matters? Obviously the answer is NO. He died and rose out from death to destroy death in all its phases. Jesus comes into our very core to grow us from glory to glory in love. It is ultimately about relationship, not performance. So why focus on silence, solitude, fasting, prayer, study, or any of the other spiritual disciplines? These are all tools that equip us in how to train our bodies and minds to move and think and act from a new inner Reality, where we now live in union with Jesus. *Living in this new way grows us little by little into becoming men and women who humbly follow Jesus in our everyday lives.* Whether in times of crisis or times of mundane directionless boredom, *we can respond from a Kingdom center that has been trained by small daily obedience.* As we continue to abide with our Lord, our minds become steadfast on the Rock of Ages. Our hearts will more and more reflect the peace of the Prince of Peace. We are loved into a consistently godly life rather than remain a perpetual child in need of repeated rescue. Don't get me wrong; we all need His rescue from time to time. But as we grow in Him, the needy child becomes the obedient son. *A long obedience in the same direction.* Yes! I want to take advantage of everything that will help me know Him! The spiritual disciplines are our roadmap to our destination. And there is joy in the journey, as we choose to follow Jesus.



Closing Thoughts...



Just getting the stack of brain garbage cleaned off the mind can seem like a great spiritual progression. And it is! But this is only a beginning step in what is to come. Once the mind is not infecting itself with brain-destroying poison, a whole new way of listening to God opens up to us. And we find that He has always been there. Our Father is always speaking, loving, directing, correcting, and teaching us how to live. We find we can now focus on the abiding presence of Jesus that has always been with and in us, without the deluge of distractions, and a clear and steadfast mind. May *Practicing His Presence* become central in all we do.

For the glory of God, Clay & Mary



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