

### Reflections on Our Busy Lives

It's the beginning of another school year. Even if we slowed the fast pace of life this summer, something in you says its about to rev up again. You know it. "Frenzied, frantic, and fried" are words that will re-enter our vocabularies by mid-fall. These words describe what we're likely to feel, within weeks from the starting of school, long before we notice that nightfall gets here sooner.

Perhaps nothing defines more accurately who we are than our busyness. Most of us are harried and hassled by life's demands and pressures. Busyness we love. As we say in the south, "We're busier than a nine-tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs."

I knew a season, years ago, when nothing defined more accurately who I was than busyness. Looking back in my journal I find these words that describe how my life was being lived.

"I was filled with longings I could not name, yearnings I could not express, and an emptiness that seemed to be expanding. My whole life was filled with doing things for God, rather than simply being alone and quiet with God. I had practiced busyness to perfection, but failed miserably at stillness. Although I knew many facts and ideas about Jesus, I didn't know what it meant to simply be friends with Jesus. I had confidence in my ability to do the work of God; but I was clueless when it came to letting God work in me. With relative ease, I could talk with others about Jesus, but I knew nothing about how to sit still long enough to give Jesus time to talk with me. I understood the concepts and language of soul winning, but I was oblivious when it came to soul making. I was

comfortable with others who knew God, but the very thought of being alone with God was enough to make me uncomfortable. In my deepest parts, I knew that, although I could not see Him, that God was everywhere, yet often I wondered and at times doubted whether God was in my heart, in my soul, and in my being. I had become so driven by and consumed with busyness that my very soul was hemorrhaging. The pace of my life had dulled my senses and numbed me to God's touch. My life was simply out of control.

The warning label, "*Caution: This is harmful to your health*", should have been stamped on my forehead. The cadence of my life had become harmful and was, in fact, killing me. When asked how I was doing, I would often respond, "So busy, I don't know if I'm coming or going." What a pity, I was deaf to the truth in my own responses.

I had become like a child playing on a merry-go-round, laughing, smiling and having the best of times. But occasionally, the constant spinning would take its toll. Just like a child, I would become queasy, dizzy, and cry to get off. "I've had all I can take," was what I would say when I couldn't take any more. And when I finally did stop, my head was left spinning, and I would wonder, "How did I ever get this way?"

This marked the beginning of my awareness that the problem was deeper than my busyness. Had I stopped to ask Jesus about my constant activity, I don't believe He would have said I shouldn't be busy. I don't think he would have tried to pull me away from all the activities, events, and people that summed up my life. I don't imagine Jesus would have said that the things I was doing were unimportant, or useless. Nor would he have suggested that I

withdraw from these involvements and live a secluded, quiet, contemplative life, far away from the struggles with which I was so deeply involved.

Instead, Jesus would have nudged me to shift the center of effort in my life, to refocus the center of my attention, to adjust, not abandon, my life's values. I believe Jesus would have urged me to narrow my focus from "many things" to the "one necessary thing". Jesus was saying to me through my frustration and disappointment that it was his desire for me to live in the world, but to live differently. Jesus had been calling me to live firmly rooted in the Center of all things. The change Jesus was calling forth was not a change in activities, contacts, or even pace. Rather, Jesus was calling for a change in my heart. What he had said to others before, now he was saying to me: "Set your heart on the kingdom first...and all of these other things will be given you as well." (Luke 12:31) Jesus was helping me understand that when my heart is set on many things, my heart is divided.

For most of my earlier life, I had allowed myself to be overwhelmed by busyness, noise, and hurry, a multitude of distractions. Now I was beginning to discover this was not God's purpose for my life. Jesus had been asking me a question repeatedly, and I was finally beginning to get it, "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion?" "You bet," was my response. Now, I was really beginning to *hear* the invitation Jesus extended as his invitation to me: "Come to me, Fil. Get away and work with me—watch me, Fil, watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace." (Matthew 11:28-30 The Message)



Fall, 2002

## A Few Words From Journey's [Chairman](#)

I wanted to give you an update on Journey Resources and the significant impact our initiatives are having on so many people. Fil continues meeting with individuals to provide spiritual direction and support as they proceed on their individual faith journeys. His involvement at [Westminster Church](#) has provided many opportunities to interact with senior high students, to teach and to preach. Fil also continues providing guided retreats of solitude to various individuals and groups.

Now, I want you to know some really exciting news. Fil has just completed the draft of his first book, of which I have had the privilege of reading. Fil has done an incredible job of sharing his life, struggles, and himself in this effort to lead all of us in the life we all desire...the life lived in closer relationship with Jesus Christ.

We ask that you continue to pray for Fil, his dear family, and for Journey Resources. I wish I could say to each person how truly grateful Fil is for your investments of time, talent, and treasure, and it is our heartfelt desire that you will continue investing in Fil, with your generous and sacrificial contributions to Journey Resources, but most of all your prayers. May God bless each and every one of you, and your families.

## Fil's Fall Ministry Schedule:

### September

7-8 Directing retreat for Center For Student Missions staff, Myrtle Beach, SC

\*Beginning September 11 through October 9, Fil will be teaching a class entitled, "Discovering How to Walk With Those Who Walk With God" on Wednesday evenings at [Westminster Presbyterian Church](#), Greensboro, NC

### October

3-5 Directing Solitude Retreat and leading seminars at [Youth Specialties National Youth Workers Convention](#), Sacramento, CA

11-13 Speaking at [Cedar Springs Senior High](#) Retreat, Knoxville, TN

28-30 Speaking at Senior High Retreat for a private school from Knoxville, TN

### November

1-3 Directing private silent retreat at Avila Retreat Center, Durham, NC

7-10 Directing Solitude Retreat and leading seminars at [Youth Specialties National Youth Workers Convention](#), Pittsburgh, PA

21-23 Directing Solitude Retreat and leading seminars at [Youth Specialties National Youth Workers Convention](#), Nashville, TN

## A Note From Fil

I hope you look forward to hearing from us and find our [newsletters](#) helpful as you continue your own journey with God. [We love hearing from you: give us a call, send us a note](#), or drop us an [email](#).

The work on my first book has been one of the most challenging and enriching experiences of my life, thus far. Please pray as we enter the next phase and search for a publisher.

On a more personal note, may I ask you to please pray for my family, this ministry, and me? In addition, would you be willing to make [Journey Resources](#) known to your church and others who might benefit from our ministry? And finally, please pray for our funding needs.

## Your Partnership Matters

We are deeply grateful and wish to express our appreciation to those who have supported us financially this year.

We, like other ministries, are still seeking additional gifts and pledges to meet our 2002 financial obligations. If you have not yet made a pledge, would you consider investing your time, talents, or treasures in the ongoing work of Journey Resources? No level of support could be too small to matter. We want very much for you to feel a part of this work called Journey.

Gifts of cash or property, such as appreciated stocks, are tax deductible. We welcome your inquiries.