

Mark 6:30-32 NIV **“Dealing with Interruptions”**

“The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. ⁽³¹⁾ Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, ‘Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.’ ⁽³²⁾ So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.”

Jesus dealt with constant interruptions and taught us how to handle intrusions.

As a minister of the Hollywood Church of Christ, this matter tested me years ago.

In those days, I had to preach different sermons on Sunday AM and PM.

I set aside blocks of time to work on them.

Wanting to finish the AM lesson and at least have a rough draft of the PM sermon one morning, I got to the office early.

I also needed to prepare for a Sunday AM Bible School class.

Two daily devotional articles were due.

The church secretary was scheduled for vacation the following week.

The telephone rang.



INTERRUPTIONS

A distraught man whose wife had just left him needed counsel.

That conversation took about 45 minutes.

After the fellow hung up, the phone rang twice in three minutes.

So went the day.

In Iowa, interruptions also take place.

Once, Norma decided she wanted to place old family photos in our living room, where she had been displaying little ceramic pigs.

Norma can usually do most things for herself.

As I worked on my sermon, she asked me to help her get some picture frames out of an old trunk.

The trunk containing the frames stood in the corner of our bedroom near numerous telephone and TV jacks.

The trunk with the pictures also served as a stand for the second heaviest TV ever made.

In order to open the trunk, which stood on end, we had to move the 2nd heaviest dresser in the world.

On Tuesday morning, roughly ten minutes after starting work on my sermon, there I was.

The VCR sat precariously on the top of the world’s 2nd heaviest dresser, and the 2nd heaviest TV rested ½ on the trunk.

We could not get the trunk open far enough to open the drawer containing the picture frames.

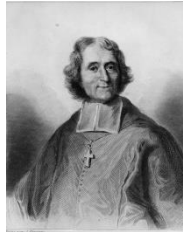
You know, of course, that’s when the phone rang.

You’ve encountered days like I’ve described.

They occurred before the invention of telephones.

In the 17th century, Fenelon lamented:

“Hardly one fool goeth away and another fool cometh.”¹



Fénelon

The cynic Ambrose Bierce defined:

“Noise: a stench in the ear. The chief product and authenticating sign of civilization.”

“Radio sets are like continuously-firing automatic pistols shooting at silence,” wrote Max Picard.²

On Coronado Island near San Diego, we saw this sign, which applied to boom-boxes and car radios.

“City ordinance: ‘If we hear it, you lose it.’”

A big reason interruptions irritate us is they represent loss of control.

We like to be in command of our lives.

So-called “time management” makes us anxious about interruptions.

We dislike having our favorite TV programs or ballgames interrupted.

We don’t like our naps interrupted, either—or to be interrupted when we are talking.

Thomas Stearns Eliot said **“You shouldn’t interrupt my interruptions. That’s really worse than interrupting.”³**

Jesus faced constant interruptions.

Mark’s gospel highlights the distractions.

Mark chapter 1, tells about Jesus amazing folks while teaching in the Capernaum synagogue.

“Just then a man . . . who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, ‘What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?

I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”⁴

Imagine giving a speech and right in the middle of it, someone starts screaming.

Once while I was at the Hollywood Church, a woman visitor began screaming during our communion service; the incident definitely disrupted the entire service.

The above synagogue incident occurred the same day Jesus went to Peter’s house and healed Peter’s mother-in-law.

Then, “that evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed.

The whole town gathered at the door.”⁵

¹ Collins Gem Dictionary of Quotes.

² Above from *The Viking Book of Aphorisms*, Auden and Kronenberger p -375

³ (1888-1965), *The Cocktail Party*

⁴ Mark 1:23, 24 NIV

⁵ Mark 1:32, 33 NIV

Ever had several hundred persons banging at your door wanting help?

Recall the Mark 2 incident from last week.

“A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them.

Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on.”⁶



Imagine teaching crowds of people in a home.

Suddenly you hear noise above you.

Four guys are up there sawing a hole in the roof so they can lower a paralyzed man on a pallet, who needs your help.

Mark’s Gospel tells of non-stop interruptions.

Later, “a crowd gathered, so that he (Jesus) and his disciples were not even able to eat.”⁷

We might not have crowds of people at our doors at mealtime but “gangs” of telemarketers specialize in catching us at mealtimes.

“How do we keep interruptions from becoming full-time distractions?”

Here are three suggestions from Scripture and Jesus’ example.

1. We minimize agitations from interruptions by making good use of our time.

Winston Churchill said,

“Never pass up an opportunity to put up your feet or to go to the bathroom.”

Interruptions especially frustrate us when we’re trying to make up for wasted time. We’ve watched too much TV and didn’t get our projects done.

The Bible gives invaluable advice.

“Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.”

“Making the most of every opportunity,” means, “buying up the time.”⁸

Because the Lord isn’t making any more land, some claim that real estate is a good investment.

Seeing houses built all over the hills of Southern California and into the desert reminds us of real estate’s value.

Compare time’s value with real estate’s.

⁶ Ibid, 2:1-4 NIV

⁷ Mark 3:20 NIV

⁸ Ephesians 5:15, 16 NIV

Every day we live, we have 1,440 fewer minutes.



Every year we reduce our total by 525,600 minutes.

When we follow the LORD'S advice and wisely "buy up our time," we decrease our frustration.

2. Here's the 2nd way to deal with interruptions. Take Sabbaths.

Sabbath means, "to rest."

The Lord designed these bodies for rests.

We don't observe Sabbath laws anymore.

But we'd be much healthier physically and mentally if we did.

As Jesus said, "The Sabbath was made for man."

Compare it to changing your vehicle's oil, filter, and air filter every so many thousand miles.

You might get away with not changing them for a time, but you'll eventually pay a big price.

In today's text, Jesus tells the Apostles,

"Guys, it's time to take a break."

"Because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.'

"So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place."

Many people think that you need to get away from the Lord or His church, for a while, too.

"I need a break."

Going without the Lord costs more than trying to drive your car without oil and water in it.

Consider the implications of *Lord's Day* as found in *Revelation 1:10*.

Lord's Day almost certainly referred to the first day of the week, the day we know as Sunday.

One summer when I was a teen, I worked for a building contractor, who wanted me to clean brush from his yard one day.

A friend stopped by, and we chatted at length.

The boss's wife rightly excoriated me for yakking on company time.

The fact that Sunday is the *Lord's Day* should make us think soberly about our priorities.

We do need breaks from work and our normal activities.

"Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."

Our bodies and minds need rest.

After rest, we can better deal with interruptions.

- We wisely spend our time.
- We take Sabbaths

3. Note Jesus' important advice:

"Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

"If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic.

"Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back."⁹

If we are turning the other cheek;
Helping the needy;
Telling Jesus' good news;

That's a lot of interruptions, isn't it?

"A man complained to his wife of problems in his work. She seemed to lack sympathy.

Is that husband-wife exchange unusual?

"Finally, the husband said, **'I wish you could see that pile of letters and go through some of them.'**

She looked at him and said, **'You wanted that job, didn't you? Well, those trials are part of it.'**"¹⁰

Henri Nouwen wrote:

"While visiting the University of Notre Dame, where I had been a teacher for a few years, I met an older experienced professor who had spent most of his life there. And while we strolled

over the beautiful campus, he said with a certain melancholy in his voice, 'You know . . . my whole life I have been complaining that my work was constantly interrupted, until I discovered that my interruptions were my work.'¹¹

If I understand Jesus correctly, for us Christians interruptions are our work.

We prepare for intrusions by:

- **Making good use of our time;**
- **Regularly resting and refreshing ourselves;**
- **We start and end our days praising and honoring God and listening to His word. This includes seeking God's wisdom and praying for His guidance.**

We'll be better prepared for the interruptions the Lord sends our way.

Of course, **"Love is patient and kind."**

Praise God for His eternal wisdom!

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⁹ Luke 6:27-30 NIV

¹⁰ Raymond Keley, Glad Tidings, bulletin of East Wilshire Church of Christ, Oklahoma City, 5-9-79

¹¹ NOUWEN, HENRI J. M. *REACHING OUT* P. 36