Jan. 21, 2018 a.m.

LEARN TO BE STILL

Reading: **Psalm 37:1-9**

*“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**)

**We need to be able to have “still” minds.**

* We need to be able to do nothing and be able to think/meditate/contemplate.
* We need to be able to think about these things. (**Phil. 4:8**)
* Can we meditate on the law of the Lord day and night like the blessed man of **Psalm 1**?
* God is not asking us to be mountain top gurus or monks in monasteries but he’s asking us to be still – to think about what our activities should be, what we should be doing.
* This affects our ability to worship for any length of time both publicly and privately.

**Are we trying to know too much about too many things?**

* “In the always-connected world of social media, smartphones and hyperlinks in the middle of everything you read, it can feel that much harder to stay focused.”[[1]](#footnote-1)
* Technology is “pushing even more distractions and interruptions on us.”[[2]](#footnote-2)
* T.S. Eliot – We are “distracted from distraction by distraction.”[[3]](#footnote-3) (1936) Even then?!
* “Public life in the United States is a mass of distraction.” (Saul Bellow)[[4]](#footnote-4)

**Studies (not the basis of all truth) but sometimes are worth considering**

* Our minds are not made to handle all the bad news in the world at one time.
* Our forgetfulness has less to do with age and more to do with how much we are trying to store in our brains. I don’t know how many gigabytes we have but storage space is limited.
* Our ability to focus and pay attention for any length of time is affected by how much time we spend watching TV, playing video games, etc. at a young age. (John Rosemond)
* Watching a three-four year old watch TV or play a video game on a phone, we think, wow, they’re really paying attention when actually their little brains are being trained to do the very opposite.
* Too many toys – 150 in their rooms (70 new ones every year) (This is us?!!)
* We’ve gone from 12 seconds in 2000 to 8 seconds – but not so fast some say.
* Attention span is “very much task-dependent. How much attention we apply to a task will vary depending on what the task demand is. … How we apply our attention to different tasks depends very much about what the individual brings to that situation.” (Dr. Gemma Briggs, psychology lecturer)[[5]](#footnote-5)
* “There is no evidence human attention spans are shrinking.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

**Our character/attitudes are tied to our ability to be still – to think, to meditate.**

* **Psalm 4:4** *“Be angry, and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still (damam).”*
* **Psalm 37:7** *“Rest (damam) in the Lord….”* (see ***v. 8*** also)
* Anxiety, worry, fretting, frantic spirit and lifestyle, being easily provoked or agitated, anger - how easily any of our emotions can be stirred, when they are stirred, over what they are stirred, patience, thoughtfulness of others (unselfishness)
* Being still gives me time to think about what I worry about – things I have absolutely no control over. It allows me to “let go and let God.”
* We will need to be able to handle life’s stresses with calmness, peace, grace, tranquility, quietness. (stillness) There is such a thing as quiet strength.

**What are some solutions? What can we do to be better at being still?**

* We need solutions – not sermons that make us feel guilty about our short attention spans.
* There are times we have to be thinking about our jobs/our work/our responsibilities.
* This is the will of God.
* We need to stop and think about what we think about.
* We need to be able to read. Consider reading out loud. Read to our children.
* We can decide to be more single-minded.
* One article that I read said our attention span is connected to being single-minded.[[7]](#footnote-7) (Does that sound biblical?)
* These are times when we can realign priorities, clean out the clutter.
* We can limit our interests. (music, sports, entertainment, etc.) We may need to eliminate some things or at least cut back on the amount of time we spend in them.
* Our choices (about what we pay attention to) may have more to do with the “content of (the) activities.”[[8]](#footnote-8)
* Do we pay attention to the things that interest us the most? (our hearts - our treasures)
* Do we love the Lord’s word and obeying His word? Do we love Jesus?
* *“That you also aspire to lead a quiet life* (“to keep still,” Strong’s)*, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you.”* (**1 Thess. 4:11**)
* Being still is the opposite of trying to mind everybody else’s business. Are we minding the business (sexual misconduct) of entertainers, athletes, politicians, friends on Facebook, etc.? We DO NOT have to know what everybody is up to!
* We would all do well to think about what our own business is and how well we are minding it.

*“He leads me beside the still waters”* **(Psalm 23:2)**

* Niagara Falls moments are good (even literally) but we need *still waters*.
* Smoky Mountain streams moments are good but we need *still waters*.
* We need reflective times – only in *still waters* can I see my reflection.
* We need *quiet* times so we can have *quiet* spirits and live *quiet* lives.
* This does not mean a life of inactivity.
* It means learning what we really need to be actively doing.

1. “Busting the attention span myth” (BBC News, Simon Maybin, March 10, 2017) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “The Attention-Span Myth” (The New York Times, Virginia Heffernan, Nov. 19, 2010) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. “Busting the attention span myth” (BBC News, Simon Maybin, March 10, 2017) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. “The Attention-Span Myth” (The New York Times, Virginia Heffernan, Nov. 19, 2010) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-8)