

Reply Anxiety: Find the Ignore Button

Along the way of progress, we've developed the delusion that reading and responding to email is productive work. We spin through our day in a doom loop of checking.

- Checking email
- Checking Facebook
- Checking Twitter
- Checking text messages
- Checking that other email
- Checking voice mail

By the time the loop has closed, a new loop begs to be opened.

During breakfast this morning, in a hotel-lobby-imitation-breakfast-with-something-that-looked-like-eggs, I watched as the doom settled in on loopers. I noted one hotel guest who stirred her coffee, checked something on her phone, typed some response on her iPad and flipped open her laptop. She appeared to eat oatmeal, but she won't remember a single bite.

Before she could sip a second drink of additive-enhanced coffee, she had begun her second loop. There were 20 other loopers in the lobby, nary a one spoke, engaged or even acknowledged the presence of others.

The defense to this circa 2015 lifestyle is the claim that "I'm a good multitasker." Unfortunately, many recent research studies report, multitasking is a pipedream. Tasks aren't being juggled; work is crashing to the floor. We are busy majoring on minors. Don't bother me with that deadline ... email threads await my needle.

Workers are too busy checking stuff to work. Work is checking. We are compelled to respond. "Absolutely, positively

overnight” is an old-school expectation. The current reality is that some toe-tapper is waiting for a response across the digital divide. Exhaustion comes with the steady bombardment of responding to what comes at us.

In ministry, we must unplug to open the opportunity to receive divine appointments. When I close my door to check things, perhaps I’ve closed the door to minister in the moment. The Holy Spirit rarely says, “Come, when you a got a minute.”

I offer three quick tips to add margin to your calendar:

1. Don’t check anything first thing in the morning. The first voice I hear should be the Lord’s. The first email may be the end of peace for the day.

2. Be aware of the loops. Do one cycle per half-day. Avoid the deep thread. Find the ignore button.

3. Condition others to your best response times. Fast response, conditions fast response and builds expectations for a quick loop.

It’s amazing how much time we have to do kingdom work: if we set kingdom priorities.

Please don’t feel burdened to reply.

“In the morning, rising up a great while before sunrise, He went out and departed to a solitary place. And there He prayed” (Mark 1:35).