

Shhh! God Is Calling

My wife gave me an iPod for my birthday last July but I waited until Christmas to open it. Of course I appreciated the gift. But I avoided opening the box because I didn't want to tinker with another new form of technology.

I have reached my limit. And I am not the only one suffering from high-tech fatigue.

I see this condition everywhere. People talk on cell phones while driving. Some use their phones while e-mailing from their laptops. I see guys chatting in airport restrooms using their remote earphones. (No thanks. I'll call from the gate area.)

I've even watched two people sit together in a restaurant while they phone other people at the same time. What we've lost in real connection with human beings we've made up for in increased broadband speed, sound quality and added video features. After all, who needs the lost art of conversation when we have TiVo, BlackBerry devices, Bluetooth headsets and smaller, sleeker MP3 players?

I am not against progress. But I have decided to seek a quieter life in 2007. I don't need satellite radio, a new ring tone or a 42-inch plasma-screen television with Surround Sound. And I don't want to watch TV shows on my phone. In fact, I'm keeping it on vibrate mode.

I am craving silence.

When the prophet Elijah was desperate to hear from God he had to tune out all the noise pollution. God was not in the violent storm, the earthquake or the fire. The divine message came in the form of a "gentle blowing" (1 Kin. 19:11-13, NASB). How long has it been since you heard that still, small voice?

My first mentor, Barry, taught me when I was a teenager about the importance of personal devotions. He called it “quiet time.” Far from being a dry, religious exercise, the habit of seeking God daily became a vital spiritual discipline for me. Thirty years later, I still carve out time each morning to pray and read the Bible. In that hour, I try to tune out the blaring noise of this crazy world so I can hear a word from heaven.

If you are starving for some quiet time,

I would offer the following suggestions:

1. Find your peaceful harbor. Even Jesus went to a lonely place to pray. He had to escape the demands of the crowd. Your quiet place might be a park bench, a back porch or your living room at midnight. Make sure it is a place where you can read, pray and worship without distraction.

2. Learn to listen again. Our nerves have been frazzled by the incessant sounds of pagers, newscasts, answering machines and infomercials. All this electronic clatter can increase stress and drain energy. How long has it been since you enjoyed the chirping of birds, the gurgling of a brook or the faint rustling of leaves in the wind? God can calm your spirit through nature.

3. Schedule a prayer retreat. You can find a fresh word from God when you vacate the familiar. Whether you go alone or with your spouse or a few friends, consider taking several days to seek the Lord at a lakeside cabin, guesthouse or anyplace that is off the beaten path. And when you get there, avoid the temptation to check e-mail!

4. Go on a media fast. In this world of 24-hour shopping channels and video-on-demand, we are headed quickly toward burnout. Your body needs a sabbath—and that includes your ears. Turn off your computer, silence your phone and mute the TV. Let Jesus lead you beside still waters where you can find

true peace.

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