

Refresh Your Soul

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Summer Soul Connection

Summer days invite simplicity, a chance to slow down our pace, to temporarily disengage from some of the demands and responsibilities we carry. Simplicity offers a way to move from being over-stretched to becoming refreshed.

Simplicity: uncluttered, uncomplicated. Sound appealing? Let's apply that to our spiritual lives for a moment. If we were to give attention to just *1 thing* in our spiritual lives, what might it be?

My suggestion is this: focus on staying connected with God. Do that and everything else will follow. When I'm well-connected with God my life reflects it. A heart at peace, faith that's alive, my identity rooted firmly in Christ, letting go easily, the power to forgive, fruit that flows naturally from its Source. Get disconnected and that's also quickly reflected in my life.

I encourage you toward a simple focus this summer. Adopt a pattern — one which fits well within real-life practicalities — which will help you to stay connected with God. Here are a few ideas to stimulate your own:



Start your day outside. Enjoy the quiet of the early morning hours and be intentional about conversing with God there. Or close your day with a time for reflection in a piece of creation.



Capture the long evenings for your soul's benefit. Head out to watch the sun set, go for a bike ride, take a walk with a soul friend. Tune into God's presence and to what he's saying to you.



Before heading on vacation, think about what your soul really needs, and then tweak your plans a bit so they'll serve you well.



Attend to connections between your activities and inner life. Metaphors are all around you, waiting to be applied. Grab onto a few to apply parable-like colour and wisdom to your life.



Adopt (just) 1 spiritual discipline to serve you. Use it intentionally as a way to displace a worn-out habit with a new one, or to submit a bothersome trait to Christ's pruning.

Summer Reading:

I'll read Richard Rohr's *From Wild Man to Wise Man*, Gerald Sittser's *Water from a Deep Well*, and a novel or two for fun. I'll also be doing a lot of listening since I've found a goldmine of classes from Willow: <http://classes.willowcreek.org>

Here's a list of summer reading suggestions from various leaders:

http://lci.typepad.com/leaders_resourcing_leader/2009/05/summer-reading-recommendations.html

Recent Happenings ...

I've written a **course for new Christians**, prompted by the need experienced by last fall's Alpha Course participants. It's been beautiful guiding this group of 18 in becoming grounded in their faith. A 2nd group is ready to begin, and we're looking to how we can multiply the use of this material.

I delivered a strong challenge in the areas of longing and holiness in a sermon titled **Young, Free and Single**. It has stimulated many conversations—a testimony to God being at work—and has generated several new appointments with people seeking spiritual direction. You can access it here if you'd like: <http://downloads.xrds.nl> (May 10/09)

Holy Land Study Tour - May 17-June 7 held 3 rigorous weeks of learning which will bear fruit for years to come. Experiencing the land of Israel, visiting ancient sites, walking in the footsteps of Jesus and our forefathers, coming to understand the connection between the land and its people, on and on I could go....

The picture below is on the shore of Galilee, taken as the sun rose above the mountains behind me. I reflected upon Jesus frequenting this shore which lapped against Capernaum, his adopted hometown. When he rose early to meet with the Father away from the crowds, was this a place of choice for Jesus? Did he, like me, take an early morning dip and allow the cool water to become a symbol (a metaphor) lending readiness for the day ahead? Did he also come here at the end of the day to find refreshment from the heat and the rigours of walking the hills? I think so, and I'm grateful I've had the chance to do it too.

Enjoy your summer!

Elizabeth

