When God Addresses Your Soul

By Topher Philgreen

from the heart

TAKE 5 is . . .
Your five-minute refresher, a "quick read" for Network members focusing on spiritual growth, resources, and the mission of youth ministry.

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CALENDAR

September 18, 2005
Campus Challenge Sunday Free Church Preparation Guide is available at www.everyschool.com.

September 21, 2005
See You at the Pole SYATP resources are now available at www.syatp.com.

When was the last time you were still?

The easy answer would be to talk about church this past Sunday, when you were still for 30 minutes, or maybe discuss your quiet time this morning. But that is not what I am talking about.

When was the last time you were still? I mean, really still? I mean, really, really, really still? I mean, still for a long period of time. When was that last time you got so still that when the Holy Spirit whispered into your heart, it was like a roar? When was the last time God addressed your soul?

C.S. Lewis was once asked, "How do you hear God?" Lewis responded that he didn't have a sure-proof way to hear God, but he DID have a sure-proof way to NOT hear God: It was to stay busy, be around a lot of noise, and keep talking.

Right now, think through this past week. When were you not busy, not being deluged with information, or not around people?

Our culture has filled our days with so much noise. And I'm not talking about decibel levels at a rock concert. I'm talking about the noise of life: e-mails, phone calls, news, information from every electronic source, schedules, to-do lists, papers to file, errands, people to call, more e-mails – and the cycle continues. Usually, it's constant from the minute we wake up until our head hits the pillow – exhausted – at night. All these things equal a lot of noise.

Often, even good things add to the noise: attending a seminar on how to be a better person, getting through the latest book, or listening to a speaker while driving down the road. Good things…but noise, just the same.

It takes time to let the "noise" of our culture and busy life slowly subside away. This may take half a day, not just a few minutes.

I'm the first to say that I've had speakers, programs and books speak into my life. But for me, when God has addressed my soul, He did it in stillness. At those times, He encountered me and spoke to me in such a real way, that it didn't leave me the same. It was scary! But the peace that came was the sweetest ever.

So what does it take?

You have to be still.

Psalm 46:10 is so clear: "Be still and know that I am God, and I will be exalted in the Earth." Key words: BE STILL.

Being still is not sitting in church on a Sunday morning for a half-hour. Being still is not a few minutes observing a prayer practice or reading the Bible for your daily quiet time. These things are important, but they don't achieve stillness.

Being still, at soul level, takes time… a lot of time.

C.S. Lewis was once asked, "How do you hear God?" Lewis responded that he didn't have a sure-proof way to hear God, but he DID have a sure-proof way to NOT hear God: It was to stay busy, be around a lot of noise, and keep talking.

It takes time to let the "noise" of our culture and busy lives slowly subside away. This may take half a day, not just a few minutes. It takes several hours to let our minds wind down to the point that we can be still and hear God. Sometimes it takes me writing pages of "stuff" just to get it out of my mind. It takes time to empty my mind of the cares of the world and totally focus on Jesus.

The times when God has most clearly addressed my soul, I was still. I had sepa-

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When God Addresses Your Soul (continued)

rated myself from the noise and distractions and stilled myself. This took a long time. But when that stillness came, He met me there and addressed my soul. And I want to go back there.

If you get still enough, for long enough, God will not only be exalted in the earth, He will be exalted in your life and He will address your soul.

Of course, God wants to address the souls of the teenagers you work with, too.

I believe that effective youth ministry must involve creating space for kids to "be still and know."

We spend so much time producing program after program telling kids more information and "convincing" them to follow Jesus.

I believe that effective youth ministry must involve creating space for kids to "be still and know."

What we really need to do, though, is trust the Holy Spirit to do His most powerful work. And that most often happens in stillness.

When students get still enough, for long enough, God begins to address their souls. When that happens, they change in more radical ways then we could ever manufacture through a creative program or talk.

But it is hard to take students for times of extended solitude and silent retreat if we are not practicing it ourselves. So do it! Stop right now and schedule, at minimum, a two-day period of time to be still. If you don't schedule it, it won't happen. This is summer! It's the perfect time to grab a group of your youth pastor friends and find a Catholic convent or abbey where they'll let you stay for cheap. Or, maybe book a camp or a retreat center in your area and go on an extended silent retreat.

When God addresses your soul, it almost always happens in silence.

Be STILL!!

And let God address your soul.



Topher Philgreen is the executive vice president of YouthFront in Kansas City, a church-assisting youth ministry that specializes in creating space for students to be encountered by God.

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