

Sitting Still in the Speedy Express Lane

Bruce A. Howell,

General Director of Foreign Missions

My sufficient share of deputation taught me scores of things. Some were good and some fell a little short of being placed in the “good” category. Deputation taught me a lot about sitting still. Okay: let’s begin with a disclaimer. If you’ve ever watched me, you know it is extremely excruciating for me to accomplish that. I’m not necessarily testifying via the printed page that I learned to sit still; like as in actually doing it with grace. But, deputation did attempt to teach me. I may have sporadically fallen short of being the best, idyllic student. So, no need to double-check with my wife or my three fellow sit-stiller kids. I admit I likely will never win the Pulitzer Prize for Sitting Still; not in the natural realm anyway. And, yes, I know there isn’t a Pulitzer Prize for Sitting Still. It has a nice sound to it, though. Just, you know, relax (that is an ancient word for “chill”) and read bro! I was about to tell you about sitting still in the fast lane of deputation. Read well. This has real-life, real-time application.

Countless hours, and unspeakable miles were spent sitting still as we raced across North America. I sometimes chuckle at reports where missionaries mention the number of months spent on deputation, the sum total of thousands of miles traveled, and the number of services attended. Sometimes I chuckle. Sometimes I shudder. Sometimes I try to forget. There are just so many radio stations to tune into, so many road games to play. I’ll stop there. I get the jitters thinking about it. Thank God for the contemporary conveniences of iPods, wireless internet, and computer games. They make sitting still sufferable; perhaps?

Learning to spiritually sit still definitely has its upside in the speedy express lanes of our lives. "Be still, and know that I am God! I will be honored by every nation. I will be honored throughout the world" (Psalms 46:10, NLT). I know you are not surprised that I have brought “every nation” and “throughout the world” into the picture. After all, that is just part of being the General Director of Foreign Missions. But, let me major on “Be still, and know that I am God!” That is not an easy exploit. I tried looking for a up-to-the-minute rendition of that. Didn’t find anything I particularly liked. So, let’s go with the BAH Paraphrase, “Relax, and know that I am God!”

“Be still...” In the hustle and bustle of deputation, and in life, we can pull out of traffic, slide to the side of the road, and sit still. Drown out the hullabaloo of life. Just stop and listen. I tried it earlier this morning. I heard the tweeting of a bird (not Twitter). I tried it again right now. I hear the clicking sound of the keys on my trusty keyboard, and the twirling hum of the overhead fan. My heart rate calms a few beats. My mind rests. I start wondering what and how you are doing in your little corner of the world.

The hurricane wanes. Winds quiet. Storms hear, “Peace be still” (Mark 4:39). The earthquakes of life cease to rumble. The raging fires calm their blaze. And God speaks through the silence, in a “still small voice” (1 Kings 19:12); “a gentle and quiet whisper” (MSG) but it comes through loud and clear.

No wonder Jesus said, "...you're fussing far too much and getting yourself worked up over nothing. One thing only is essential, and Mary has chosen it — it's the main course..." (Luke 10:41-42, MSG). Take a little time to sit at Jesus' feet. There is so much about life He wants to teach; so many answers He longs to provide. There is so much sweet fellowship He wants to share.

"...And know that I am God!" Deputation taught me that no matter how much money needs to be raised, whatever the seemingly oversized obstacle is, that the most important thing to remember is, "I am God." God is in control. He will see us through to the other side. You can hang on to His promises. He will be with us throughout the entire deputation of life. He is with us for the journey; the whole trip.

So, as I sit, in the stillness of this office, clicking away at computer keys, I feel the compelling urge to remind some missionary kid out there, wherever you are; whoever you are, "Sit still on the speedy express lane." Life may seem out of control. Stress may have become your address. God knows. He understands. He is there to help. Rest. Relax. Know that He is God. He comes to you in that gentle, loving whisper, "Peace, be still!" That's good news for you. In fact, that's great news for me.