

# FOCUS

A Newsletter for ABCCR Professional Church Leaders

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I grumbled and fumed as I climbed into my car and headed down the road for a meeting I did not want to attend. A couple of months prior I had blocked off a period of time to devote to some important work that needed to be completed. I jealously guarded that time, refusing to let other requests chip away at those precious days. My wonderful office staff promised to run interference, allowing me to remain cloistered away to get the work done. I would still respond to emergencies and critical needs, but the time was reserved for work that had to be done. ... But one meeting got in the way. I couldn't protect the date. The meeting couldn't be rescheduled. I couldn't get out of it. So in the middle of the week I climbed into my car for a three hour drive, a four hour meeting and three hours back home. A wasted day! .... Wrong! It was a GREAT day. I repented of my curmudgeon-like attitude by the time the day was over. It was a helpful time of conversation and exchange of ideas. It seems obvious now that God wanted me there. I wish I could have seen that going into the meeting; it would have saved me several hours of griping and complaining.

How often do we reluctantly agree to some task, quietly (or not so quietly) complaining about the waste of time or interference with "more important" plans, only to discover how valuable the time given actually was? Perhaps that is a piece of why the Bible instructs us saying, "do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment." How important it is that we step out of the way so the Spirit of God might freely, and without interference, bring about God's purposes in our lives and ministries.

Does that mean we should "fly by the seat of our pants," never planning or budgeting our time and energy? No, we are still responsible to be good stewards of the manifold grace given to us; we are still responsible to be faithful managers of the time and gifts God has given us for ministry and life. We must leave room, however, for the

Spirit of God. I employ a simple phrase to keep my life in perspective: "God Is Bigger." Sometimes it must be repeated like a mantra, just to keep me focused, but it has served me well. I need to be reminded that God is bigger than my very best plans and schemes. God is bigger than my greatest needs and problems. God is bigger than the projects and ministries God has called me to engage. God is bigger! When I keep this truth in mind I find I live in a much better place.

How about you? As we reach the midpoint in the summer and begin to realize some of the things we had planned are probably not going to get done; as we realize deadlines are approaching with increased intensity; as we try to squeeze some much-needed rest and vacation time into our schedule ... how shall we proceed? What priorities shall we rearrange? What shall we do? ...

I suggest we take a breath and repeat slowly, "God is bigger." Let us remember that God was already present when, months ago, we set our calendars and schedules. God knew where we would need to focus time, energy and rest. God knew what would be best for each of us. And when those things come up that seem inconvenient interruptions, God is still there.

Take a breath, instead of complaining about the "bumps," whisper a prayer and count the blessings; and trust the Spirit of God to be at work in your life and schedule. I often remind pastoral search committees and churches in transition about the promise of God in Jeremiah 29:11. It's a great promise of hope in times of crisis and change. It's even more relevant for the everyday pieces of our lives. God HAS a plan, for good and not evil, to give all of us a future and hope. I am so glad God is bigger. My life needs a BIG God, doesn't yours?

Blessings,

John Williams