

Stop Speeding Up and Start Slowing Down



Deb McCormick
Experience: Executive Director of
TEAMedUP

The first way to make a connection is to stop speeding up and to start slowing down. In Philippians 2:4 it says “do not merely look out for your own personal interests but also for the interests of others.” Wouldn’t it just be so much easier if people wore signs around their necks that said exactly what they’re thinking? You know, with our frenzied pace the sign might kind of appear blurred, but I bet it would say something like this: “Do I matter to you?”

When they come into our small group, people are weighed down with these signs from the fast-paced, dizzying, scheduled, crazy lives we lead. Having so many preparations and details to manage as a small-group leader can really distract you, and as a result sometimes people may enter your group and really not know if they matter. You haven’t taken time to really connect with them personally. It’s a little difficult in our times because of certain advancements that have moved us into a very frenzied pace. And let me share with you what Richard Swenson wrote in Margin. I love what he has to say about this: “True, we get to places faster—but we have to go more places.” It’s a net loss. “We have devices to help us clean—but we have more things stuffed into more square footage to clean.” It’s a net loss. “Hasn’t the lightbulb given us more time because now we can plan activities during the evening that were previously limited to daylight hours?” Yeah, we can do that, but “The lightbulb has given us more capacity to be busy, to produce, and to fill up schedules in the evening—when before all we could do was sit around the table and read or sit around the fire and read or sit with family and friends and visit until it was time to go to bed.” How long has it been since we’ve done that? That’s a net loss as well. “Our God exalts in faithfulness over productivity, rest over speed, availability over a tightly wound schedule even when we’re doing good things.” Do you hear that—even when we’re doing good things? God never intended for time to be oppressive. He goes on to define that “margin” is “the gap between rest and exhaustion, the space of breathing freely and

not suffocating.”

Do you have enough margin in your life at the moment? The busier we get, it seems the first thing that we eliminate is the thing we need the most, and that’s quiet time alone with the Lord. Time to pray, write in our journal, study His Word, time to take a nice long walk, time to just listen and to have God prompt our hearts with what message He wants to send our way. Going back to your daily quiet time is such a critical thing as a small group leader whether you’ve had them before and just lost sight of them, or maybe never established a discipline of a daily quiet time, that is what I would like to urge you to do. Take time daily to hear from the Lord. What He’s going to tell you are the things that you need to know to affect those people in your small group. He knows exactly what they need to feel encouraged, to feel challenged, to feel as if they matter like we talked about earlier. He says in Jeremiah 33:3, “Call to me and I will answer you. I will tell you great and mighty things which you do not know.” Call to Him and let Him direct you in what needs to happen with your group. I assure you that your dedication and discipline behind the scenes of that small group to spend time having God fill you up with exactly what He needs of you as a leader will definitely affect that small group in the most positive and powerful way. I think of it like if you’re walking along a major airport, take DFW, and here you are lugging your bags in the airport and walking down a tarmac and then there you see it— the conveyor belt—so you get on with your bags and all and you begin down the conveyor belt. Now you’re moving at a faster than average clip, no heavy bags, nothing to weigh you down, and you’re getting in the direction you need to get faster. So what I’d say to you is if you’d take that time with the Lord, what’s going to happen is you’ll have that time made up and doubled. You’re going to be not only doing things but doing the right things as it pertains to your small group, and the rest of your life for that matter.

I once heard my dad tell a story that I thought was . . . it really hit my heart in terms of plugging into the power source. There was an older gentleman who had lost his wife, and he really wanted to give back to the church. He was a retired man and didn’t have a real good heart, and so what he felt he could do was to vacuum the sanctuary on a Wednesday evening; and so, because his wife had been very involved in Sunday school and he supported her, he really wanted to continue in giving back in honor of her. And so my dad somewhat reluctantly agreed, just worried about him getting too physical in any way (he had had quite a number of

heart attacks). But he did welcome him in and said we'd love it, it would be a great help to us.

So one evening after the service on Wednesday night, my dad said he was in his office finalizing some things and he knew the gentleman was there but he didn't hear any noise. And so he went into the sanctuary and looked around, and there he was, sure enough, just vacuuming away, sweating, really working it, and he did pick some things up with the vacuum. Now, at home, what had happened is they mainly had hardwood floors, so they didn't have a lot of floor space to vacuum. So his wife had an instrument that simply you would just roll along the floor and it would pick up whatever was remaining. Obviously, the sanctuary was much larger and needed the power of a vacuum cleaner. He never realized the need to plug in the cord so he was doing all that work on his own power. And it served for a great analogy for dad in the future with a sermon related to plugging into the power source and how you can certainly get things done in your life and you can make things happen as a leader of a small group, but will you really make the powerful impact? Will it really reach as far as it needs to go in the lives of those people entrusted to your care if you don't plug into the power source? Don't confuse a full life with a fulfilling life. Stop speeding up and start slowing down.