

Last year's movie, *The Blind Side*, is named for a term used in football to describe the side of the quarterback that is least protected. It is usually the quarterback's right side, so the defensive end has the most potential for doing damage to the quarterback ... assuming he can get past the left tackle and circle around to the right side of the quarterback ... his blind side. That's what happened to Joe Theismann the night his career was ended by Lawrence Taylor, who crushed his leg when he came up on his blind side and sacked him.

Spiritually speaking, everyone has a blind side. It's that thing ... like the habits we talked about last week ... that keep us from the kind of transformation Jesus Christ offers. Maybe we know our blind side, or maybe not. The question is, can we get healed without acknowledging our blind side? Can I really expect God to answer a prayer for healing if I am living in denial of my blind side? Last week was about laying down those habits that keep us from God's best for us. And today, I want to talk about one habit that will do more than anything else to help us both find our blind side and position us to defend it.

Every major figure in the Bible talked about this habit. Jesus himself was faithful to practice it. The Bible in both testaments claims it as the key to healthy living ... spiritually, mentally and physically. It's how we reduce the blind side and it is probably the best way to practice faith. And yet, we rarely discuss it and seldom take it seriously. It runs consistently through the Bible, but it's the one thing I've consistently and dangerously neglected in my own life.

Look with me at Deuteronomy, chapter 5. This is where God gives his people the Ten Commandments and teaches them how to practice his design for life. He prefaces the commandments with a position statement. God says (Deuteronomy 5:6-15) - "*I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.*" So before he names a

single commandment, the Lord calls his people to remember that the One who makes these commands is *for* us, not against us. He is the one who delivered us from slavery. He is the one who delivers us from the thorns ... so that's the heart we bring to these commands. No fear or judgment ... just gratitude. This is how God calls us to come ... come with a thankful heart.

The first commandment says (Deuteronomy 5:7-8) - *"You shall have no other gods before me.* That's a call to faithfulness, and the next three commandments teach us how to demonstrate that faithfulness. First, he says (Deuteronomy 5:8-11) - *"You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. 9 You shall not bow down to them or worship them ... Second ... 11 "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. And third (Deuteronomy 5:12-15) - "Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy as the LORD your God has commanded you. 13 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 14 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God (Sabbath in Hebrew means "to rest from labor"). On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant... And then he finishes where he began this section ... reminding us that we do any of this not out of some sense of "should" or "ought" but because we're just that grateful for all he's done. 15 Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.*

So in these four commandments God is saying, "Here's how I'll know your life is lined up behind me. I'll know it when I see that you're not putting anything else in front of me ... not an image or idol ... not a person or your personal ambitions ... nothing that becomes more important to your life than I am. And (second) I'll know it when I hear you speak my name

with reverence ... like I'm special to you." And third, God says, I will know it when I see that you trust me with your life. That's what Sabbath is about. It is about trust and gratitude.

Sabbath is this beautiful gift from God ... a constant opportunity to come back to the truth that we are not slaves. The daily grind is not what we were created for. There is something bigger. There are three ways we can bring that Sabbath truth into our lives ... three habits I guarantee will change your life if you will practice them faithfully. First, **take a little time every day for an inner conversation with God and yourself.** I love the way *The Message* version of Psalm 139 puts it. David writes (Psalm 139:23, *The Message*) – *Investigate my life, O God, find out everything about me; cross-examine and test me, get a clear picture of what I'm about; See for yourself whether I've done anything wrong— then guide me on the road to eternal life.* That's what the inner conversation looks like. It is about slowing down enough to look inside. And I have to tell you ... this doesn't happen behind a steering wheel on the way to work. This is about being still so we can *know God*.

This morning, you received one of the best articles I've come across on the subject of that personal conversation with God. Gordon McDonald tells the story of John Wilberforce, who was deeply involved with the social and political structure of England in the 1800's. Wilberforce had both a daily and weekly Sabbath time, and he credits that time with delivering him from the slavery of ambition. On the last page, McDonald gives us a list of questions for starting that inner conversation with God ... questions that challenge us to think more deeply about where we are free and where we are still enslaved. For the last several months, I've been spending time with these questions and they are helping me in a season when I've been needed deeper roots.

Years ago, we lived across the street from a house with a huge, beautiful evergreen in the front yard. It was a magnificent tree. One day I came home to find that huge tree laying in the middle of the street. We discovered after it fell that the roots of that enormous tree had never gone more than a couple of feet down into the soil. So when the ground got soft from too much rain and the wind kicked in, the tree had nothing to hold it in place. Its like that with our spiritual roots. If we don't take time to develop them, what will hold us when the storms hit? Take a little time every day for an inner conversation with God and yourself. The amount of time isn't as important as the habit of regularly connecting with God.

Take a little more time every week to restore your factory settings. When your computer freezes up and you don't know why, what do you do? Reboot. Think of a weekly Sabbath as a day when you turn everything off so you can reboot. Jesus said (Mark 2:21-24, 27-28) - *"No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If they do, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. 22 And people do not pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins."* (this is about separating the old from the new, and Mark links this idea with Sabbath ... listen to the very next verse) 23 *One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. 24 The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?" ... 27 Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for people, not people for the Sabbath. 28 So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."*

Taking a day every week to let God be God helps us to restore our factory settings ... to get us back in line with God's design for life. Here's the thing. In our culture, we place a high priority on productivity and efficiency. We wear watches with second hands and we read books

about making every moment count. And there's nothing wrong with that, but that's not what the Kingdom of God is about. I found this and want to share it with you ... **Five Lies That Efficiency and Productivity Tell:**

- *You are too busy and too important to take a vacation.* We believe the lie that the world won't go on without us if we take time off. The Sabbath, on the other hand, reminds us every week that God runs the world, not us.
- *Getting things done is more important than helping people.* Jesus tells a pretty powerful story about this, and he even uses religious people to make his point. Sabbath reminds us to be fully present to the people in our lives.
- *You are defined by what you accomplish.* Which is so completely counter to what Jesus is all about. Jesus is our proof that before we've done anything good, we're God's beloved.
- *Doing something trumps being someone.* In the eternal realm, character is important. Resumes aren't. Character is revealed in crisis. And we won't respond well to crisis if we're living on fumes. That's the last lie that productivity and efficiency tell ... that ...
- *Stress, burden, and pressure are good.* When we are exhausted, at the edge of our limits, lacking sleep, miserable ... who is helped by that? Take a little more time every week to restore your factory settings. This is how we are designed to work.

My Sabbath is Saturday. In theory. I've always taken some secret pleasure in the thought that I work even when I am not supposed to. It is one of those efficiency and productivity lies. It didn't occur to me that I might be working against God's plan for my life. Somehow I guess I expected God to cover for me and for all my significant relationships while I played the efficiency and productivity game. It turns out, there is not biblical about that. Sabbath is not just about getting a day off. It is about getting our lives back in line with God's design. It is

about faithfulness. It is about relationship. So I'm learning ... again ... how to take a little time every day, and a little more time every week ... **and a lot of time every once in a while.**

Early in the life of the Israelite people, God gave them some advice. He told them that every seven years, they ought to give the land a rest for a season. The point was to replenish the soil before it got completely depleted. I can think of all kinds of reasons why we need a whole season every once in a while. We need it because sometimes it takes more than a day to readjust our speed. We need it because sometimes it takes more than a week to change a habit. I'll tell you why I need it. I need a season to remember how big God is.

There's a story in the Bible of a time when Jesus meets up with a centurion who (Matthew 8:5-8, 10, 13) *came to him, asking for help. 6"Lord," he said, "my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering." 7Jesus said to him, "I will go and heal him." 8The centurion replied (this is huge right here ... listen to this), "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. ... 10When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. ... 13 Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go! It will be done just as you believed it would." And his servant was healed at that very hour.*

Now, contrast this guy's faith with something that happens just a few paragraphs down in the same chapter of Matthew. They've been healing people and casting out demons and now Jesus has crawled in a boat to take some time apart. So they are crossing a lake when this furious storm crops up and scares the beeebies out of his disciples. Jesus is sleeping, so they wake him and that's when he says, "Oh, you of little faith, why are you so afraid?" So on one hand we've got a handful of guys who make their living evangelizing and they are scared to death

and faithless ... and on the other hand we've got your average Joe Centurion who actually knows nothing for sure, except ... his need ... and the power of God.

And I totally see how that happens. Because I'm there about every other week. I can get so focused on the issues and the personalities and before I even know it's happened, I've forgotten what Jesus is capable of and why He filled me with the Holy Spirit and what He's called me to. Somehow ... and I don't know if this is theologically right or not ... but it sure seems like the Spirit leaks out. Maybe we push Him out. I don't know exactly how it happens, but you know it's happened when ... you find yourself telling God how big your storm is ... instead of telling your storm how big your God is.

Claire Marie says I can trace every sermon point back to a scene from *Joe Vs. the Volcano*. I don't know if that's true, but there is this scene in *Joe vs. the Volcano*. It comes after they've survived a typhoon and a shipwreck and they are stranded on a raft in the middle of the Pacific. They've been through so much, and now Joe is as close to death as it gets ... and that's ... when ... he ... remembers. Watch this: SHOW CLIP.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H1EOnVSSJYs>

I don't know your life, but I'm guessing a lot of us have been in that place where the storms are coming too close together and the pace of life keeps increasing and before you know it, you've forgotten ... how ... big. Maybe you can relate? I can tell you that right now, the only thing standing between me and complete burn-out is not success ... but the power of God. It is the power of God that saves me from myself. And yet, I can get so narrowly focused on me and my stuff that I forget ... how ... big. I don't want to go any further down this road without taking

time to remember the bigness of God. I want to be here for the long haul, so I need a season to restore my factory settings ... to remember that God is the one in charge, not me. I plan to take some time in July to meet with the Lord and to grow my roots and find my blind side and make sure it is being defended. That's a choice I'm making for the sake of my faith. What choice are you going to make today for the sake of your faith?

Take a little time every day. Take a little more time every week. Take a lot of time every once in a while ... to remember the God who has delivered you from slavery.

Will you stand? Some of you are good, faithful people who are working hard to keep it all together. You're going paycheck to paycheck or loan check to loan check and you're putting in the hours and doing what's right ... but somehow your faith has gotten so tangled up in the details and you've forgotten how big. Your invitation today is to begin with confession. Come to altar, throw your hands in the air and confess, "God, I've forgotten how big." Some of you are just tired. The Holy Spirit has leaked out and you need Him back in a big way. I'm asking you today to come and be filled again with the Holy Spirit. Some of you need to make a new commitment to living biblically and honoring the Sabbath. Right now, as the music begins to play, I want to ask you to respond to God's Word over your life. Will you come?