

S.L.O.W. DOWN

Like me only has one gear and that's sixth gear. Pedal to the metal. I agreed that I needed to slow down, but didn't quite know what that looked like. Well now I do. I get it. I have not just slowed down. I am at a pit stop, getting new tires, an oil change and a tune up like never before. I don't have a choice about slowing down now. In His love, He is showing me what that looks like in reality.



The Father has a strange way of having His way in all of us when we don't quite hear His voice or know what to do when we *do* hear it. I have always wanted to do His will. I have always wanted to submit to His ways and I don't mind being wrong. After all, a first-born perfectionist thrives on discovering he is wrong as that is just one more thing we can fix to make perfect!

When I came here, the theme of slowing down that has followed me for so long was thrown in my face at every turn. I'd be walking and people would ask me where I was going so fast. One guy even said, ***"You're walking like you're late for an appointment! Bro, you're in prison now...slow down."*** I stopped and looked up as I contemplated what he said. Then I smirked because I'd been hearing that same thing for years, yet I probably continued on that day at the same pace I had been.

The next week, I joined a basketball league with great hesitation as I hadn't played in over 15 years. I knew I was out of shape. But I didn't know how badly I was out of shape until I started to play. Unfortunately for my body, I started playing right where I left off 15 years ago, quickly running up and down the court. I learned that my lungs were not saved as they started cursing at

me within the first five minutes. At half time, the coach of our team came over and said *“Preacher (that’s my prison nickname), you got to slow down. You’re faster than most of these guys out here, but if you don’t slow down you ain’t gonna make it through the second half.”* Hmm...prophetic bells were going off all over the place in my spirit.

That night, I was heading back to my dorm talking to another teammate about the game and I accidentally ran into a **VERY** large black man who pushed me and asked if I was planning to run him over. I quickly said “no,” trying to save my life from the pending doom in his eyes. He told me that I need to be more observant, watch where I’m going, and slow down. I went back to my bunk, laid down, and meditated on this moment. Here it was again. I had not even been here two weeks and God had spoken to me a half dozen times already trying to get me to me to slow down.

It was clear something needed to change. Late that evening during prayer, the Father gave me an acronym: **S.L.O.W.** *Slow down, Listen, Observe, and Wait.* It’s time I slow down my pace. I’m not 20 anymore. I need to listen more, to listen to others all the way through until they are finished. To listen to the Spirit more intently. I need to be more observant of what’s happening around me, in me, and through me. Slowing down makes that infinitely easier. Lastly, I need to Wait. This was the big one.

I am a doer. I fix things. I thrive in chaos. I run toward the battle. I am a reactor, and sometimes a “nuclear” reactor. Any of you out there like that? Waiting is not in my DNA. When a problem arises, I quickly assess it, create a plan, and move forward with that plan. All the while, the Father is sitting on the side of the road patiently waiting for me to circle back around and ask Him if He needs a ride. Yep, there He is, right where I let Him out of the car. Waiting on the Father to fix it, repair it, create a solution, repair the breach, deal with that person that is aggravating me, etc. None of these were something I was used to doing. I’m like Bob the Builder: show me a picture and I’ll build it. Plans? What plans? Blueprints? Those take too long! I got a picture! It can’t be much different than a puzzle! Here are the pieces. There is the picture. Now leave me alone and let me get this thing put together.

Psalms 127:1 says, “Unless Yahweh builds the house, they labor in vain who build it”.

I began to ask the question, *“Was I laboring in vain? Was I going so fast that I missed a turn?”* The sobering answer began to sink in. It was time to slow down. It was time to admit that He took me out of the race because I wasn’t gonna make it through the second half in the condition I was in. I was in no shape to go that fast for that long. I was neither prepared nor qualified. I had beat God to the next leg of the race and was about to put a second addition on the house that I was building according to the picture He showed me. I was making critical mistakes in my zeal to reach the nations and please my Father and I couldn’t see it. Even in the company I worked for all those years ago. In my zeal to succeed and help my clients get out of long-term products, I didn’t stop long enough to even think to do a background check on the owners or make sure the product was kosher in the state of Missouri. And once again, what I thought was a great product for my clients ended up being a disaster for all.

Wait. Wait. Wait. Wait. “Rest in Yahweh, and wait patiently for Him”-Psalms 37:7a

When we wait on Him, we are resting in His power. When we are resting in His power, we are in perfect Shalom. When we are resting in Him, we are trusting in Him. When we are trusting in Him, we are not trusting in us. The secret to winning races is to pacing yourself to go the fastest that you can go and keep that same pace through the entire race. It is to honor the Builder by studying His plans before picking up a hammer.

Do you find yourself getting ahead of the Almighty sometimes? I encourage you to Slow down, Listen, Observe and Wait on Him. Don't just do things for Him in your life. Wait on Him. Pace yourself. It's a long game. If you are in a "time-out" like me, it's okay. Sometimes sitting on the bench is the best place to be. You can catch your breath and evaluate where you went wrong. The coach is closer than ever so you can ask questions and the water jug is sitting right on the table beside you so you can quench your thirst.

Shalom!

Jim Staley

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