

Interruptions

By Preston Pouteaux

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“Daddy, look at me right now!” I was working in my office and was deep into a project. In the midst of emails, phone calls, writing, and running to my next meeting I somehow did not really register the fact that my two and a half year old daughter had settled into a corner of my home office and was trying to get my attention. “Look at me!” I re-focused, looked over, gave her my full attention, and we played with her stuffed bunnies as she told me her story.

It was great.

Interruptions are part of the life of a parent, but they are also a common part of the life of a pastor. I can plan out my week and create a list of tasks scheduled down to the minute. However I always give precedence to people, to hearing people’s stories, to praying with others, to tears, and to morning coffee shop visits or evening pub conversations. I have learned the importance of interruptions.

In the drive to get things done and to get ahead we may avoid interruptions and huff angrily when others cross our hurried path or project. We know that life is short and in a blink we will find that our story is nearing the end, but yet we rush through each day to get to the next.

There is a secret that changes the way we view life’s interruptions. C.S. Lewis wrote that the interruptions we experience are actually the ‘real life’ we have. He said, “The truth is of course that what we call interruptions are precisely our real life - the life God is sending us day by day; what we call ‘real life’ is a phantom of our own imagination.” In other words, your life is made up of valuable interruptions that make your life uniquely your own, uniquely marvellous, and entirely worth embracing.

Our neighbourhoods are places where we can choose to welcome the interruptions that make our lives a dynamic story, or avoid them. When we see a neighbour’s sidewalk that needs shovelling, will we help? If we walk to the mailbox, will we stop to visit with others? Will we welcome others over for an impromptu meal? Author Tim Challies says that how we respond to interruptions reveals our heart. He says that when we have unhealthy postures towards interruptions we might respond either out of fear or out of pride. Fear leads us to make bad choices about our interactions, while pride make us stick to our plans without trusting God with the outcome.

When we create room in our lives, in our homes, and in our neighbourhoods for interruptions, we set ourselves up for small adventures every day. We learn to embrace that our 'real life' is not in the life we write down on a to-do-list or in our calendar, but in the actual and unexpected interactions we have as our day unfolds.

May you see your life's interruptions as the contours of a life well lived. May you look expectantly at the potential for goodness and beauty in every conversation and moment you share this week.

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