

Life Doesn't Have to Be Fast to Be Fun and Fulfilling

Getting back into the swing of things was a post-vacation ritual to which I was accustomed, but this time things were different. I felt an unusual uneasiness about resuming my regular schedule. I loved being back home with family and friends; I loved my work; I loved where we lived; what was wrong? Discontent led to confusion; confusion led to grief. What saddened me so in the summer of 1998 was the sense of a pending loss. What I feared losing was a more relaxed living pace that I had fallen into, or that had fallen into me.

I noticed it during a cruise with my wife to Alaska. I was awed by the vastness of the waterways we traveled. I had seen great bodies of water before, but for the first time in my life I was in great masses of water for days. From our large window, I marveled at all the water; it didn't seem to end, and I thought that it was as deep as it was wide. The glaciers stopped me: towering masses that were not green or brown but white. Louisiana, my home state, had not afforded me such sightings. Perhaps the most astounding vision of all for me was the streams rolling down the sides of mountains. Not just seeing them, but hearing them brought me to extended pauses and complete stops. While I expected that the trip to Alaska would be a memorable one, I did not expect that it would move me so.

As I thought about it more and more, I began to realize that my summer sadness was connected to my Alaskan vacation. It wasn't so much a missing of the special places but the extended pauses and complete stops the places had inspired.

Up to this point, I had lived most of my life as though haste was a moral virtue. It wasn't just about setting and achieving worthy goals, but it was about doing so as soon as possible. In my personal and professional life, I lived as though fast was faithful and hurry was holy. I stacked accelerated accomplishments on top of each other with no small satisfaction. That summer, a

subversive idea challenged my satisfaction and began transforming my life. The idea is this: *Life doesn't have to be fast to be fun and fulfilling.*

The Savoring Pace

Savoring Pace is an alternative to living life in a hurry. It is doing so by making an intentional effort to *see more clearly the ordinary and the extraordinary, listen more carefully to sounds and silences, and think more deeply, especially about those ideas and thoughts that stimulate new growth and positive change.*

I do not remember when I first thought and said to myself “savoring pace.” I do remember that it was in response to my feeling that what was bubbling inside of me needed to be expressed fundamentally in the positive “savor more,” as opposed to the more negative “slow down.” The difference is important. An analogy would be the more profound understanding of peace as not being merely the absence of tension but the presence of harmony and justice. Peace is not simply a negation of something; it is the active presence of something. Likewise, savoring pace is not just the negation or the minimizing of hurry in life, it is the celebration of noticing and paying attention more in life.

To savor is to taste or smell with pleasure, to relish, to delight in, to enjoy. The word has its origination in the Latin *sapere* which means both “taste” and “be wise.” The connection has never been more important. For me, the savoring is in the slowing but just as much, it is in the *showing within the slowing*. It is in the richer brighter life that opens up to us once we slow down enough to notice more. Savoring pace challenges our frenzied living of *paying attention to more* with a gentle yet persistent appeal to *pay more attention*.

A Different Rush

Living at a savoring pace is counter-culture in a world addicted to hurry. In order to do so you will have to change the way you think and behave, and keep building on small changes against outside pressure to conform to the hurried pace of those around you.

The 52 reflections in this book will support you in your new living stride of serenity. Each reflection begins with a memorable phrase that captures a powerful new perspective on eliminating hurry and encouraging savoring pace in as few words as possible. Following each phrase are words of practical advice that will give you inspiration and information on creating your unique savoring pace. Finally, each entry concludes with a simple “Pace Practice” that you can use to start you on your way to achieving the highlighted goal.

Perhaps you’ll gain the most from this book by reading it through the first time to more completely familiarize yourself with the way of Savoring Pace, and then going back and focusing on one strategy per week.

However you decide to use this book, I encourage you to follow the inspiration that led you to purchase it. Stay thirsty for the different rush of extended peace, deeper awareness, activated creativity, and sustained delight. These and more are the benefits of *The Savoring Pace*.

(1)

Step Into New Freedom

There is a striking work of art at the corner of 16th and Vine in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Consisting of two major pieces, one structure is that of a person in open stride, arms outstretched, face arched upward toward the sky. The second background structure is a box of four vertical tombs. There is empty space in one of the tombs, the freed soul I just described having just emerged. Moving down the line, three more resurrected beings are at various stages of emergence from their deathly encasement. I stood back and marveled at this work for some moments, and thought to myself, "What a picture of freedom." Only after stepping forward to search for the artist's name, (Zenos Frudakas) did I see a face and an accompanying dialogue box containing the word "freedom" written backwards. The best was yet to come. As I surveyed further, I saw writing in the fully vacated tomb. Two words resided in the place where a head once rested: *Stand here*. I thought, "Wow." The artist is not stopping at *expressing* freedom; he wants viewers to *experience* freedom. I thought about it briefly, and then walked into the empty space. I stood still for a moment, allowing myself to savor fully the feeling of being stopped and stilled.

Then, I took a deliberate, delightful step forward into fresh freedom.

Pace Practice

Imagine that you are at the corner of 16th and Vine. Envision what I described. When you are ready, step into the empty space. Feel confinement. Next, step out. Note your thoughts and feelings. Finally, imagine yourself breaking out of life-threatening beliefs and fears.

(2)

Accept Your Sacred Incredible

I wonder how he is doing. I have this old newspaper article about a local baseball player who had just been drafted by a major league team. The article is filled with accolades for this young pitcher: "He's going to be [in the big leagues]"; "[He] is a tremendous talent"; "His stuff is already there." This young ace had a lot going for him; but, there was one glaring weakness: he had a control problem. At points during games, he would lose the ability to throw a strike, sometimes missing the plate by wide and wild margins. The answer given for the pitcher's problem was the reason why I kept the article. One of his coaches was sure that the solution was not a mechanical one, such as changing the pitcher's delivery or the way he held the ball. This coach was convinced that the problem was more mental than mechanical: "He's always been good, but he's never thought he was *that* good....Once he believes in all his talent, he'll be unbelievable."

How about you? Do you believe in all your God-given talent? In other words, can you humbly and gladly accept the sacred incredible in you?

Pace Practice

Reserve some moments to notice your gifts and skills. How many of them are fully realized? Create and repeat talent-affirming statements that will free you to soar through all doubt and fear.

(3)

Don't Fall to All

The New Revised Standard Version of Luke's Gospel, Chapter 8, verses 40-42, offers the following passage:

Now when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him. Just then there came a man named Jairus, a leader of the synagogue. He fell at Jesus' feet and begged him to come to his house, for he had an only daughter, about twelve years old, who was dying.

"They were all waiting for him." You bet they were. Jesus was heading back to his home region after a rather noteworthy evangelistic crusade. Along with preaching captivating sermon-stories, Jesus had allegedly, through the power of his spoken word, halted a storm and cured a man possessed by demons. Is it any wonder that Jesus would have trouble sneaking back into town unnoticed?

Chances are some in the crowd had needs of their own, none of which rivaled the great challenges that Jesus faced with the storm and the demons. Surely, Jesus would have a moment to hand out a few minor miracles. Maybe others in the welcoming party just came to watch, and perhaps shake his hand and say, "Way to go, Jesus!"

What I want you to note from the text is that though "all" waited for him for whatever reasons, Jesus responded to the request of just one, Jairus, whose daughter was deathly ill. Though confronted and surrounded with tens if not hundreds of legitimate concerns, demands, and expectations, Jesus gave himself permission to choose one matter for the moment.

Single-mindedness is an endangered practice. We are conditioned to do multiple things at a time. It has become our way of life, our oppressive obsession. What a liberating blessing of grace and space, to give ourselves permission to chose one over all, more often than not.

Pace Practice

Pay attention to moments this week when you find yourself trying to do two or three things at one time. Stop. Choose to focus on one thing rather than multiple things. After you have completed the task, notice your feelings. Do you feel tension about accomplishing just one thing when you had the chance and the energy to do more? Do you feel unusually satisfied and focused?