

## The Christmas present

On the editor's bedstand these last many weeks is *The Good and Beautiful God: Falling in Love with the God Jesus Knows*, by James Bryan Smith. Though a traditional author, Smith offers some great wisdom pertaining to loving God. In one chapter, he talks about the way we have sped up our society, becoming obsessed with efficiency, speed and productivity. This obsession creeps into everything, including our spiritual activities. When was the last time you were able to sit down to meditate, knowing it was OK to "waste time with God?" It's not the speed that's the problem, it's the ingrained impatience that we bring to everything we do. For this Christmas, when you, as congregants or ministry leaders, find yourself on the treadmill, you are invited to slow down. Here are some ideas adapted from Smith that might help:

- Begin to question the narrative that says our value is based on what we produce. Studies have shown that when we are used to multi-tasking, we lose our ability to concentrate. Pick a task and try doing it 100%, without any other distractions such as answering the phone or watching TV.
- We can't do the most important things fast. Think about loving, thinking, eating, laughing or praying in a hurry. If we try to hurry these, we cut ourselves off from the essence of these activities that makes them a true gift to us. For example, plan a meal with friends, and cook slowly, enjoy the aroma, take an hour or two eating and talking.
- Smith tells the story of the advice of the experienced minister to a new one. The new minister was poised to write down all the advice given. The first statement was, "Ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life." When asked what was next, the wise minister said, "There is no next." By eliminating hurry we become present. For example, try getting into the slowest lane in traffic. Your stomach may start to tighten, but purposely stay with it and allow relaxation.
- There is a difference in acting quickly and hurrying. Hurry is a fear-based inner condition. Pick one day to be your "slow day." Do everything, including your work, if possible, at a leisurely pace. What would your whole life look like at a slower pace?
- Spiritual growth is a process that happens in its own time. Based on his research, Malcolm Gladwell concluded that it takes ten thousand hours of practice to truly master anything. This leads to the questions, "What are we practicing the most, and what are we most likely to master first? Is it what we truly want to master?"

We wish you a true Christmas "present," where you can eat, pray, and love at a leisurely pace. Find time every day to keep the silence.