

RATTLE, RATTLE, THUNDER, CLATTER

We come to church and church activities weary, rattled, and empty from hectic, out of balance lives. We come with little left to give. We are “free to choose” in every area of our lives, but what we fail to realize is that our choices then bind us. Often our choices block meaningful participation as the church.

- With busy lives there does not seem to be enough time for church.
- With working spouses and many different family systems, individuals feel stressed for time. Work, school, sports activities, community involvement, and church commitments all pull individuals and families in different directions. Many feel overwhelmed, overcommitted, and burnt out.
- One response of the church to our stress-filled culture is to ask, “How can we get more members to do the work of the church?” This approach views the shortage of volunteers as an operational problem to be solved.
- Another response is to ask questions about the conditions that bring about hectic, frantic lives. The feeling of scarcity of time is a symptom of powerful forces at work in our society that shape expectations, drive behavior and compete with our life as church. What is God’s call to the church in such a fast-paced, demanding society?

Questions for reflection:

1. How do you see the many demands of our society affecting you? Your family?
Others in our community?
2. What are some of the forces today that block meaningful participation as church?

What this hypothesis causes me to pray for is:

- that our/my life will be lived with choices that witness to Christ.
- ways to find balance between the “I-have-to-dos,” the “I-want-to-dos,” and the “God-calls-me-to-dos.”
- Take time to be quiet and with God.
To listen to what God is saying to me.
I pray that with God I can prioritize my life in a way that is serving God, and what He

is asking of me.

Slow down, take time, and listen.

- I pray that families can find the time and make the choice to renew themselves in God's love.
- I pray that I will be able to make church and church life a priority.
- that we all can stop and take the time to look around us and see the good things that God has given us.
- I pray for everyone to review their priorities.

Are we walking the talk?

Do we live our daily lives as a reflection of these things we hold dear?

- May we stop and follow God's dream.
May we listen to God's call.
- that I may use my life in ways that help others. I have time to do many things.
to make better time of my time and talents.
To remember to always be mindful.
Thanks to a God who knows what I need and is always there.
- those with busy schedules, hope they can find time to worship the Lord our God.
For those to know there is more than being busy, and
for those who need prayers.
- as times change in the church, we, as a congregation must reevaluate our priorities
and we as individuals must do the same for our daily lives.
- the willingness and wisdom to make the best choices for myself and my family so
that we will have meaningful participation and church.
- God's healing power in direction for our lives.
Confidence to make wise and healthy choices.
- I think that friendships and bonds are what people want out of life (among other things), so if we feel bonded as a church and care about each other through God's love, more people will want to participate in church outreach projects, activities, etc., because they feel good about being here. It's a pleasant, fulfilling, calm break from our everyday chaos.
- the power to simplify surroundings, and the appreciation of what results.
- I pray that our priorities become more focused on our Lord and Savior.
- I pray to be still and quiet and listen to God's voice speak to my heart and soul.
To use this "peace that passes all understanding" along to those who touch our lives.

Help us to worship in our "sanctuary" with that peace in our hearts with love and praise.

- for God to open our eyes and realize that our stresses are nothing compared to lots of our friends and others.
- businesses to close on Sundays so that families will turn to attending Sunday School and church and to spend time together on Sundays.