

Putting the Brakes on an Accelerating Life

by Clay Clarkson

Were it in my power to name this generation, I would lean toward something like “The Age of Acceleration.” Compare any area of life now to what life was like 40 years ago. It is hard to find deceleration anywhere. Media, sports, churches, movies, shops, restaurants, books, cars, you name it every major area of our culture has accelerated, and we’re all trying to keep up.

And, yes, even home schooling is succumbing to the spirit of the age. After 20 years of slow and steady growth, fueled mostly by families choosing to home school out of spiritual conviction, it is rapidly becoming an “industry” and a “market” accelerating up the growth curve fueled by families looking for an educational and social fix. The predominant, emerging educational model seems based on the presumption that it is easier to prove that your children do a lot to learn, than it is to prove that they learn a lot from what they do. (Read that again, I think it might be profound.)

In that environment, we will all, regardless of the educational model we follow, at some time begin to feel under pressure to over commit. You’ll know it when you feel obliged to pour out a litany of tasks, goals, activities and events when your neighbor asks, “What is it you really do all day?” You’ll find yourself doing a little bit more, taking a few more lessons, scheduling more classes in the support group co-op, getting involved in one more sport activity (just one?), doing more at church, volunteering for more ministry. It’s the nature of the age, sure, but that’s just the easy explanation. The hard part is realizing that it is what happens when we lose sight of what our lives are really about from God’s perspective.

God did not design us to be Energizer bunnies who just keep going and going and going until one day the battery runs dry. Sally and I have been encouraged this year to go in a different direction, energized by Paul’s simple admonition to the Thessalonian church. He told them to “make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands.” He was telling them to slow down, to avoid getting caught up in the culture around them, and to be different. He goes on to say that it will be a part of their testimony for Christ. Burned-out, busy Christian families are not a good testimony of God’s grace and peace.

With a busy home schooling household, an expanding ministry to Christian parents, a stopping-point house for friends and family passing through Colorado, and a new church just started and growing, it feels like the throttle of our life is glued to the floor right now. If we don’t learn to decelerate like the Thessalonians, we’ll either run out of gas, or crash and burn. That is why we are “making it our ambition” this year to do whatever we need to do as a family to find the “quiet life” that Paul envisioned. After all, how can we “be still and know that I am God” if we are always moving?

There is no formula for getting to the “quiet life” just walking in the Spirit and keeping the goal in view. However, there are some familiar

principles and proverbs we try to keep in mind that might help you put the brakes on life if you are beginning to feel the acceleration of culture in your family.

“Redeem the time.” You cannot “save” one second of time; you can only redeem it. I am surgically attached to my Day-Timer, and yet I know that over-emphasis on time management can become a bondage. Every minute of your day is already in slavery to the world until you make a conscious decision to “redeem” it, to buy it out of slavery and set it free for God’s use. Trying to save or manage unredeemed time only leads me into slavery to it. I fall back often on a proverb that expresses the human-divine nature of our relationship with time: “The mind of man plans his way but the Lord directs his steps.”

“Number my days.” We are constantly stepping back from the daily immersion in the details of living to look at the bigger picture of life. Sally once had a dream in which God took her far up into space until the earth was just a ball, and He showed her how trivial many of her worries and concerns were in relation to eternity with Him. When we stop to consider how very few are the days we have on earth to build for an eternity with God, we are always motivated to use them more wisely. However, numbering our days does not come naturally. It is a practice that God needs to “teach us” because we won’t learn it from the culture or from life.

“This one thing I do.” Paul had a single purpose of mind. Through much practice, we are learning to limit our priorities in life, and trying to focus on the few things that are the most important. It was life-changing for us as parents to realize that it is not our responsibility to make our children “happy” by making sure they do everything the world says they are entitled to do as children. Rather, it is our responsibility to make them “mature” by focusing on godly priorities. That one realization helps us focus our family commitments on what God says is most important, not the world.

If you think about it, home schooling is one of the few areas in our culture that, by its nature, has the potential to provide the kind of witness that Paul envisioned. Few others in American Christian culture are able to ambitiously pursue the “quiet life” like home schooling families. Too often, though, too many find themselves in the slipstream of the rapidly accelerating Mac truck of culture. It feels nice to not have to think about driving, so they let go of the wheel, sit back, and let culture just pull them along. If that has happened to you, WAKE UP! Grab hold of the wheel of your life and steer your way back to a safer speed in the slow lane. It may be the most important spiritual decision you’ll make as a family, and a powerful witness to many others along the road. Perhaps that, and not just the education, is why God will bless Christian home schooling.



As a seasoned, seminary-trained Bible teacher, Clay’s messages are characterized by sound biblical exposition and the practical application of biblical truth to daily life. He has a heart for discipleship and training, and for communicating truth from God’s Word to encourage and equip parents, children, and families to be faithful and fruitful as Christians. Clay enjoys imparting a clear biblical vision to parents for their lives and for their children’s lives, and then showing them practically and simply how to live out that vision day-to-day within their homes.

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