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*Dear Lord, I give you permission to slow me down. Too often I am unwilling to edge you into my busy life, as if being busy makes me more important or purposeful. Teach me how to hear your invitation to draw near to you today. Override my agenda, to-do lists and pursuit to be enough and fill them with your presence Lord. Forgive me for every declined invitation I have sent back to you. Forgive me for putting things above my relationship with you and the people I love. I know your word does not return to you void but accomplishes the purpose for which it’s sent. If I am too busy you will use someone else to accomplish your will on earth. Wake me up to remember what I have learned during the storms in my life. Lord, where else do I need to go, for in you and with you I lack nothing. No more excuses, I choose you. Move me to draw closer to you today than yesterday.*

**Edge God In Podcast Week 25: 3 Excuses That Edge God Out**

In Podcast 23 and 24: *A 3 Step Prison Break, Part 1 and 2* you learned a 3 – Step Experience and Process of Breaking out of behavior that compromises the person God is calling your to be. In today’s Podcast we will explore 3 Excuses that Edge God Out in the midst of our busy lives. Too often we make up excuses when it comes to drawing near to God throughout our day. Similar to Martha who was so busy she could not pause and sit at the feet of Jesus as her sister Mary did, we find ourselves enmeshed with what we do rather than anchored in *whose* we are. The gentle presence of God whispers between each breath and each heartbeat yet we run around so busy we miss out on the refreshment He continually offers us throughout the day. I have said before: “What it’s not all about all about me? What I think, want and need?”

Learn:

A Modern-Day Parable:

“Come and sit with me by the warm fire and refresh your soul, the Lord beckoned me as I ran down the stairs of my house and out the door being busy proving to the world that I was enough. As the door was closing I yelled over my shoulder, “tomorrow I will sit with you.” Day after day, the invitation was extended and day after day I continually ran out the door early in the morning, being busy proving my worth to the world, until one day when I received news from the doctor that I would be fighting for my life and may have a short time to live. The next morning, I slowly made my way down the stairs. Sheepishly I stumbled towards the warm fire and collapsed at the feet of my Lord. We sat for a while in silence as I felt the weight of the world disappear and then with profound compassion and love in His eyes He posed a simple question: My beautiful child, what have you learned? Through my tears, I replied: *Lord, I learned that when I come to the end of myself it is then that I encounter you and in this sacred space, I lack nothing.”*

“Draw near to God and He will Draw near to you.” James 4:8

Read Luke 14: 15-24: The parable of the Rich man inviting people to attend his banquet.

Notice three types excuses:

* Material (non-living) things (Luke 14:18)
* Living things (Luke 14:19)
* Relationships (Luke 14:21)

What does the Holy Spirit reveal to you in this reading? Do you see yourself in one of the characters?

Reflect:

So often God is whispering to us and inviting us to draw near to Him, to remain in Him, like the branch in the Vine, like the deer quenching its’ thirst in the cool river yet because of identity theft that often occurs as we drive ourselves to exhaustion in a busy pursuit for power, possessions, popularity and position, we decline His invitation to draw near. Too busy to sit and refresh ourselves in the One who calls us to our mission as we rush around proving our worth, value and capability to the world around us.

This is a behavioral pattern that has been running us into overwhelm for a long time. Jesus addressed this as He reminds Martha that Mary has chosen what is better.

When we put first things first (remember our purpose: to bring Glory to God) the result is a heart filled with peace. It is then that we can allow the refreshment that comes from lingering with the Lord to spill out into the work of our hands. You can’t give out what you don’t take time to nurture within.

Let the presence of the Lord strengthen you. Let the love of the Lord engulf you and restore your identity. Let the word of the Lord refresh your mind and the work of your hands will be blessed.

The Lord is inviting you closer today than yesterday. It is through humility and obedience that one responds to the Lord’s invitation for refreshment. Pride and disobedience Edge God Out (EGO) of our lives.

Re-Read Luke 14:15-24 the parable of the rich man inviting people to his banquet.

Reflect on the 3 excuses again as described by Luke and notice any similarities or differences in your own excuses when it comes to attending the Lord’s invitation to draw near:

* Material (non-living things) (Luke 14:18)
* Living things (Luke 14:19)
* Relationships (Luke 14:21)

Identify & Adjust:

Reflect on the following questions:

* + Why did the people in the allies and streets say yes to the invitation to enter the banquet?
  + What character traits do you imagine the poor, the crippled and lame possessed that fueled the “YES” to the Lord’s invitation? How specifically do you relate to them? What do they have to teach you today?
  + What commonalities do you imagine the landowner, oxen owner and recently married man have in common? How do you relate to them?
  + How does pride lead to excuses that block your ability to respond to the Lord’s invitation to draw near?
  + When has the Lord invited you to His banquet and you were too busy to attend?
  + When have you been willing to draw near to God this week? When have you been unwilling?

Maintain: Journal Reflections:

* + *When I came to the end of myself it was then that I encountered the Lord and realized I lack nothing in Him.* Read: “God is close to the broken hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” Psalm 34:18. How does this verse fit in with the parable of the Banquet? Re-read the modern-day parable at the beginning of this study and reflect on a time in your life when humility led you to obedience which led you to the cross.
  + What character has emerged for you as a result of broken hearted, crushed in spirit experiences in your life? What did you learn? What behaviors shifted as a result of what you learned and how did that impact your relationship with the Lord?
  + How specifically is the Lord inviting you into His banquet today? Notice any areas of pride or disobedience to His calling on your life that create excuses and keep you “busy going nowhere” (Joyce Meyer).
  + What are you so busy doing? Is it producing good fruit? Does it draw you closer to a surrendered life in Christ? Does your being busy inspire obedience and humility in your life? Give you the opportunity to know that the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love, to trust God and do good, remain in the vine and give glory to God?

*Dear God, slow me down. Interrupt my pursuit of worldly gain over your invitation to draw near. Remind my mind of what my soul always knows: when I come to the end of myself: my positionalities, pursuits, passions, attachments, it is then that I find you and resurrect the peace that passes all human understanding. I don’t want to miss your invitation today…bump me awake to your calling on my life.*

**Surround yourself with people who make you a better person in life**