

WHEN LIFE FORCES YOU INTO 'PAUSE' MODE – Monday Manna - By Jim Langley

You know the “Pause” button you have on your TV, or the video you are watching on your computer or smartphone? Sometimes life presses the “Pause” button, whether we like it or not. Often we don’t. But I have learned when that happens, it creates a unique opportunity to step back and assess where we have been, where we are at present, and where we are going – or at least, where we think we are going.

Even unplanned, inconvenient pauses can serve a worthwhile purpose if we pay attention. We can easily get caught up in the “busyness” of this world and lose sight of what is truly relevant. This is not to say much of life is irrelevant, but it is often less important than we thought as we look at the bigger picture.

Perhaps the most significant pause in my life came many years ago when I spent four days in an intensive care unit after contracting double pneumonia. Fortunately, my doctor persuaded me to admit myself into the hospital before I became a statistic. With both lungs partly filled with fluid, I had been a walking time bomb. That short hospital stay not only gave me time to heal and recover, but also allowed me to pause, reflect on my priorities, and adjust them accordingly.

Throughout the Book of Psalms, the word “Selah” often appears. This Hebrew word seems to be used as a musical mark used by the musician/lyricist, causing readers or singers to stop and reflect on what was previously presented. This musical mark is also found three times in the book of Habakkuk, which speaks of God’s greatness since the earliest days of humankind. The prophet challenges us to dwell on the goodness of the God of the universe and learn to trust Him implicitly.

Another of my pause moments was spending 18 months in a combat zone. Even though I was not close to God at the time, in retrospect I have since come to realize how that time served to mold and strengthen me. Looking back, I can see how God was always present, always watching over me, even when I was not paying attention.

Just as our electronic devices and software packages include pause features for controlling our pace for watching and listening, God often uses a divine “pause button” on this world in which we live. Perhaps for you, COVID-19 restrictions have served in that role. As we continue to deal with the current pandemic, we can find great solace in knowing our Almighty God is sovereign, not at all surprised or worried. Even if we may not recognize it, He uses circumstances to navigate us through uncharted waters.

I have found Psalm 46 to be instructive. The first four verses read: “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. Selah.” Following this pause, we read, “Come and see the works of the Lord, the desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire. ‘Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in all the earth.’ The Lord almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress” (Psalm 46:8-11).

This says we can count on God not only to bring pauses into our lives, but also to be there during times of need. Whatever challenges you are facing today, draw on these words for strength and encouragement.

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. How often do you use the pause button on your electronics – your TV, smartphone, computer, video devices? What do you accomplish when you use it?
2. Can you relate to the concept of “life pauses” as described in this Monday Manna? If so, what has that experience been like for you? Are you going through one right now?
3. What is your usual reaction when you encounter one of these pauses, especially if it seems to disrupt your carefully crafted, well thought out plans?
4. If we truly believe God not only allows these pauses in our lives, but also uses them to guide us through life and help us in our spiritual growth, how should this affect how we respond when God raises the “stop sign” or tells us it is time to wait?

NOTE: For more about what the Bible says about this topic, consider the following passages:
Psalm 31:19-22, 37:4-7,34, 46:10; Habakkuk 3:16-18; Luke 11:9-10; John 10:25-29