

Vacation Time!

Joe Slater

Some schools are out and others will be out soon. Summer is just around the corner; it's vacation time! (NOTE: A vacation is what you take if you can't take what you've been taking.) One particularly hectic day, Jesus said to His disciples, "*Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest awhile*" (Mark 6:31). He recognized the need to "get away from it all," if only for a short break.

Concerned Christians dread the "Summer Slump" that many churches experience. Decreases in attendance, contribution, and enthusiasm are typical during vacation season. But it doesn't have to be that way. More to the point, **it ought not to be that way!** Here are a few suggestions for vacationers:

ASSEMBLE WITH THE SAINTS WHEREVER YOU ARE (Hebrews 10:25). Being away from home doesn't mean you are away from God. "*Where can I go from Your spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?*" (Psalm 139:7). King David knew that whether he climbed the highest peak or descended to the lowest depth, God would still be there. When you vacation out of town, out of the state, or even out of the nation, God is still there!

Aren't you encouraged when visitors attend our services? I am! You can encourage God's people in other communities by worshiping with them when you are in their vicinity.

TAKE YOUR BIBLE WITH YOU. You won't stop eating while on vacation. In fact, if you're like most of us, you'll eat entirely too much! Your soul needs nourishment while you're vacationing, too. God's word is the original soul food (1 Peter 2:2). Bon appetit!

LEAVE YOUR CONTRIBUTION WITH THE HOME CONGREGATION, OR MAKE IT UP WHEN YOU RETURN. You will not neglect other obligations while you are away (house payment, car payment, utilities, etc.). Why should your obligation to God be any different? The expenses of the local church go on even while you are away.

COME BACK FROM VACATION WITH A RENEWED ZEAL AND DEDICATION FOR THE LORD'S WORK. Sometimes vacationing wears us out so that we need another vacation! Let your vacation be a time of rest and relaxation so you can return refreshed and revitalized!

Have a great vacation!

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More Effective Evangelism

Wouldn't everyone consider the gospel of Christ good news? Unfortunately, no. There's a glass of water just sitting on my desk. I'm supposed to drink so many per day, but I haven't taken a drink in quite a while. So it just sits there, almost an annoyance. But send me on a five-mile walk at noon in July here in West Tennessee and I guarantee that water will be welcome!

Good news is a matter of perspective. Jesus puts it like this: the healthy folks don't need a doctor, only the sick ones (Matthew 9:12). May I suggest that to become more effective in evangelism, we have to focus on finding sick people . . . thirsty people? Not everyone is ready, willing, and interested in responding to the gospel.

The next time you become frustrated because someone you know, love, and care for is not responsive to the gospel, realize that they simply may not have a desire for it . . . yet. Work to cultivate influence with them so that perhaps . . . one day . . . the need is realized, and you can be there to hand them a cup of cold water. In the meantime, find someone who is really, really thirsty.

--Jared Jackson (Jackson, TN) via *Fortify Your Faith*

AGAINST ALL ODDS

What are the odds of surviving two atomic bomb blasts and living to be 93 years old? Well, Tsutomu Yamaguchi beat the odds, and did just that. The survivor was in Hiroshima on a business trip when the US, on August 6, 1945, dropped the first atomic bomb. Having survived, he returned home – to Nagasaki, and a few days later, August 9, the second bomb was dropped. He survived that as well. There were 165 twice-bombed people, although Yamaguchi was the only person to be officially acknowledged as surviving both bombings. One might think that he would have died shortly thereafter of radiation exposure, but such was the not case. He died almost 65 years later in 2010.

Jesus said, "*Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But narrow is the gate and difficult the road that leads to life, and only a few find it*" (Matthew 7:13-14). For Yamaguchi, numerous conditions had to be in place for him to survive. He really had nothing to do with the outcome. On the other hand, salvation is not the result of chance. Granted, being born in a Christian family, or a nation where Christianity has flourished, helps. But the odds are against us! The evil environment, and our own weakened constitution widens the gate leading to destruction, and only few find the narrow way that leads to eternal life. Few, only a few, find it.

Recognizing the seriousness of the odds against us, we must be vigilant and overcome the odds by an act of the will. Let Jesus show us the way since He is the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6). We won't reach heaven from just a number of positive coincidences. Eternal life is a choice; not the outcome of chance.

--Rob Redden (Arroyo Grande, CA)