

The Hamster Wheel of Life

As a child I used to have a hamster. He was so much fun to watch as he ran on his hamster wheel or tunneled in his maze. He used to work so hard to go absolutely nowhere. I hope that he was at least having fun while he exercised.

Sadly hamsters aren't the only ones wondering through mazes and playing on a hamster wheel of sorts. Many of us are actually doing the same things ourselves. We simply have not found the secret of getting through the maze and off the wheel. We keep doing things the same way and expecting different results. I have heard some call this an "insanity" of sorts.

It is easy to sit back and wonder why others are on the wheel. Sometimes they fail to realize that they have the option of getting off the wheel. Other times they simply lack the resources to stop spinning. They look silly to onlookers who simply don't understand their struggles.

It is so easy to say "If I can do it there is no reason why they cannot accomplish the same task or overcome a challenge." We have a critical nature as a society. Scripture is plain that we are all given different gifts, but we expect everyone to be just like us. It is hard to see why others do things the way that they do them. We would have certainly done them an easier way.

I hate those human hamster wheels. They are exhausting. Sometimes no matter how hard you try -you're stuck there. If you run faster and work harder as we have all been taught the wheel only spins faster. Sadly the work and problems just continue to pile up. There often seems to be no escape. It can be so scary and depressing. I know I have been there!

Instead of trying to run faster and simply exhausting ourselves more we must simply stop and regroup. Who ever heard of stopping before the work was done? As strange as it seems it is often a necessary reality. As we get older and get more responsibilities on our plate we have to set new priorities. Simplify! simplify! simplify! must become our motto. Sometimes we must learn to say "no" to good things so that we can accomplish the great things.

Sometimes a good medical examination may be needed. Sometimes it is a medical condition such a thyroid problem, diabetes, chronic fatigue or depression that is slowing us down. It could also be another condition or something related to the aging process causing this problem. Frequently it can be stress related. Stress does strange things to the body and messes with all sorts of chemicals in our bodies and especially our minds.

It is common for us to flippantly refer to " stress." We have accepted it as American as apple pie, but that is quite dangerous. Prolonged stress causes our body to be exposed to chemicals related to our thoughts. The best way I can describe this stress chemical is

to contrast that bowl of freshly picked cucumbers and onions lightly tossed with salad dressing to a pickle. Prolonged exposure does strange stuff and it keeps us spinning.

One of my favorite authors, Dr. Caroline Leaf, writes extensively about the impact of stress in her book, *Who switched off My Brain? Controlling toxic thoughts and emotions*. Her website is www.dr.leaf.com. She will be speaking the weekend of October 27th in Warren, Oh at a free conference. I would love for you to attend. I'm sure she'll offer great insight to getting off that wheel. In the mean time I encourage you to share your struggles with a trusted friend or pastor. They may have insight as well.