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# Quest for uselessness is way off of modern treadmill



**Tim Sullivan**

*Family Life Director*

I'm trying to think if I know very many people who have the ability to relax. We all seem to live these fast-paced lives. We are so busy scurrying around that we have virtually no quiet time for ourselves and no time to spend relaxing with family members or friends.

I imagine this scene in which, on a Monday night, a big, booming voice is heard in the living room of a typical household in eastern Oklahoma. The voice, which comes from high above and seems to come right through the roof, says, "The world will come to an end this Wednesday at 6:30 p.m."

The wife in the household glances at her husband, goes to the kitchen, looks at the various messages posted on the refrigerator door, and yells to her husband, "That's impossible. Julie has gymnastics this Wednesday night."

As has been said many times, we have many time-saving devices but no time. How many people with cellular phones have created more leisure time as a result of the increased efficiency that these phones are supposed to provide? You

know the answer. Mobile phones just put pressure on us to be in even more places and do more things than we ever did before.

There was an article in the paper recently from a European magazine, commenting on the fact that Americans have become so intense and demanding in the way they spend their "leisure" time. The author pointed to the Disney theme parks as an example. Even our recreational time is spent with an intention to get the most out of every second. We have to have something to show for everything we do.

Whenever we hear a speaker at a public gathering, someone well-known in some particular field, the speaker almost always indicates at some point that he or she is a workaholic and has an incredibly busy schedule. I wonder why we should trust such people to know anything that's really important. How would the crowd respond if the speaker began the talk by stating that he spends most of his time sitting on the front porch at his home in the Ozarks, gazing at the clouds and contemplating the mysteries of life while his dog licked his feet.

I think the framers of the Declaration of Independence did our country a disservice when they coined the phrase, "pursuit of happiness." This phrase is etched into the consciousness of all Americans. We have busily been pursuing happiness ever since. Pursuing happiness is like a squirrel chasing its tail - if you think you have to pursue it, you'll never find it, never catch up to

it. But, being good Americans, we're all busy, trying to win the great American busy contest.

A few years ago, my wife and I stayed at a bed and breakfast in Madison, Kan. Our hostess invited us to join her in the living room on a Sunday afternoon. She said some folks might be coming by. We had a delightful time, making new friends, enjoying casual conversation, while the summer breeze swept in through the window. I realized life was like this in times past, when people had time for each other and there was no activity, especially on Sunday, to force them apart. It was better.

I received some good suggestions from a spiritual advisor on all this just last week. He said I was too focused on my own performance, my own sense of adequacy. He told me I needed to set aside some time each day and be useless. Be silent. Let God speak. Don't even try to respond, just try to hear Him. As our meeting ended, he told me that when I got really good at being useless, I could go back to being a lawyer.

So, I'm off, on a quest toward uselessness. It begins tomorrow, with camping on the edge of a cliff in eastern Oklahoma. I have no agenda. There is nothing I even want to think about. I plan to just be. Perhaps then, in the silence of the woods and in the silence of my own mind and heart, I will hear the Creator.

Our closing verse is from Ecclesiastes: "I have seen everything that is done under the sun- how futile it all is, mere chasing after the wind!"