

# Along the track

## Lessons from Chooks

I recently watched six bantam silky hens being gently herded around a back lawn. It was a novel and very calming experience. The owner of the hens told me that she does it every day for half an hour or so. "This is how the hens know I love them", she told me, "so they give me an egg every day".

It reminded me of that beautiful image Jesus conveyed as he looked down over Jerusalem: *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those sent to her, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were unwilling!*  
Mtt 23. 37

I suppose it says something about me that I had the time to watch this gentle spectacle! But it was also a reminder that we do not measure the value of our lives by how busy we are. There are all sorts of reasons why we are busy: sometimes we choose to be busy at this particular time, others times it just happens. Work or family demands can keep us occupied, even preoccupied. Being busy is not a failing, or something that is always to be condemned. But even machines wear out if they are not serviced, if they are not 'rested'. Sadly, excessive busyness can be a product of chasing self-importance, of the need to be 'seen'. Don't we greet each other sometimes with the expression: 'Keeping you busy?' As if that is the epitome of success, the thing we must strive for! We contribute to our work, our profession not by busyness but the quality of our input, our contribution.

We don't derive our sense of worth simply from being busy, but rather how we take time to build friendships and community, to build family, how we take time to be of service. What we bring to our work is who we are as a person with all our gifts and talents, our dedication and commitment sure but also our humour, our ability to listen, to empathise, to encourage, to... ..well, it is about being a well rounded person.

When we are fixated on work, on one dimension of our lives, balance is gone; our sense of self is lost. That usually suggests instead a real spiritual poverty, an inability to take discover the real priorities in life that bring satisfaction and happiness, the occasions or things that bring delight, the occasions where we find love and acceptance, the occasions so often overlooked, those small and lovely things that should bring us joy. They too are important.

Sometimes it is timely to ask ourselves a few questions:

1. What makes me smile? (Activities, people, events, hobbies, projects, etc.)
2. What activities make me lose track of time?
3. What makes me feel that I am doing something worthwhile?
4. Who inspires me most? (Anyone I know personally or do not know. Family, friends, authors, artists, leaders, etc.) Which qualities inspire me in each person?
5. What am I naturally good at? (Skills, abilities, gifts etc.)
6. What do people typically ask me for help in?
7. If I were asked to teach something I love, what would I teach?
8. What do I regret not fully doing, being or having in my life?

Being in Jerusalem for the Sabbath is an extraordinary experience. The city stops but it also comes alive. No traffic to speak of but families walking around, people in parks reading, listening to music. Busy-ness ceases. The Sabbath is designed to make us present to God, not God present to us. God is already here. Part of making God present is making ourselves more present, more aware of the joys and beauty of creation, more aware of those around us because it is in them that we come to discover God. Busy-ness can destroy this spirit of rest, the spirit of awareness and sensitivity and celebration that the Sabbath is meant to foster within us. Watching people enjoy the Sabbath makes us ask, have we forgotten what it means to be light-hearted, to have fun, to be playful, to give ourselves space and time to rest and simply enjoy the gifts of life? Where are they in my life?

Busyness doesn't build quality relationships. Busyness doesn't guarantee great work. Busyness can mean hearing but not listening, seeing but not understanding. Busyness building the life we want can mean missing the life we already have. Busyness usually means we are being reactive rather than proactive.

Regards  
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