



August 2021

Dear Friends,

DO NOTHING TO CHANGE YOUR LIFE!

Have you had a holiday this summer? Do you have a holiday planned for later in the year? Many of us are craving a chance to get away. Holidays are great times and important occasions; a chance to recharge the batteries and take time to rest and relax. Someone asked me the other day what I like to do on holiday to which I replied, '*loads of nothing!*' which to me is about right!

This reminds me of a small but wonderful little book written a few years ago by the Bishop of Reading entitled '*Do nothing to change your life*', a book I highly recommend. It is only a small book but it's about the joy of discovering what happens when you stop. Let's be honest, we don't stop very often do we? We've lost the art of stillness, silence and simply being in the moment – we've become '*human doings*' rather than '*human beings*.'

One of the chapters in the book is entitled '*Plumbing the depths of a single moment*'. It invites and encourages us to enjoy the '*moment*' rather than dwelling in the past or worrying and fretting about the future. The moment - the here and now - is a gift from God that we would all do well to rediscover. We are so easily preoccupied and stressed out with stuff we've got to do, the deadlines we have to meet, the people we need to see, the world around us etc. that we can miss the present moment for what it is. The more I talk with people the more I see a longing just simply to be and find this sense of stillness within.

Over the centuries, one of the key ways that Christians have sought to know God in a more intimate way was through contemplative prayer. In recent years this practice has come to be known as 'Soaking Prayer'. To 'soak' in God's presence is to rest in His love rather than to 'strive' in prayer. It's just 'being' and not 'doing'. Through soaking prayer we can take time alone with the Father, not asking for anything, but merely enjoying our time with Him.

Let's just think about summer for a second, shall we? Relaxing in the sun, taking a dip in the pool, marinated steaks grilling on the barbecue... Those are the days we dream about through a cold winter. All of these activities are a picture of what soaking in the presence of God is like.

- When we sit out in the sunshine we're resting, taking the goodness of the sun into our bodies, soaking, resting and receiving the goodness of the Holy Spirit.
- When you're in a pool, you're covered all over in water, soaking wet. As soon as you get out, you get everything you touch wet. In the same way, when you spend time immersed in God's presence, it affects your whole life and everything around you.
- When you marinate a steak, the marinade gets right into the fibres of the meat, tenderising and flavouring it. Resting in God's presence softens your heart, it makes you more like Jesus, and it changes you in a way that you can't un-change.

Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28). When we spend time with him, we find a place of rest.

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