

Cybercolumn by Brett Younger: Do you dare to wait?_101804

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CYBERCOLUMN: Do you dare to wait?

By Brett Younger

Stephen O'Brien, an investigative reporter who's always on the lookout for breaking news, published a thought-provoking piece on how to pick the right checkout line. His article in the Waco Tribune-Herald is a compelling look at, and this is a quote, "the pain of waiting longer than necessary—even if it's just a few seconds."

The author offers tips on how to avoid the anguish of extra seconds in line:

On the way into the grocery store, look for efficient cashiers.

- ◆ Avoid checkers with blinking lights or name tags that say things like "Hi, I'm Mike. This is my first day."
- ◆ If you hear the words "price check," move quickly in the opposite direction.
- ◆ In addition to evaluating cashiers, don't forget that sackers play a critical role. If bag-boy help looks thin, consider a longer line that has customers with fewer groceries.



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- ◆ Don't look just at the length of lines, but also at who's in the line. Stay away from distracted shoppers who are less likely to fill out checks ahead of time. The article is mercilessly critical of those who wait until the transaction is complete to swipe their credit card through the machine. Everyone knows that they should do that as soon as the cashier starts ringing them up!

- ◆ Steer clear of customers with coupons or an abundance of produce.

- ◆ Once you've processed all the variables, pick a line and don't look back. The article quotes one embarrassed shopper saying: "I don't put a lot of thought into the checker or exactly what the customers in line are buying. Maybe I should." The implied response is: "Of course, you should. What's wrong with you? You don't deserve a place in the express line."

Is it just me, or is it scary that newspapers assume that we worry about "the pain of waiting longer than necessary—even if it's just a few seconds"? If journalists are investigating how to pick the quickest checkout line, shouldn't we all be asking whether we're in too much of a hurry? The problem isn't the speed of the cashiers. We are the problem.

We complain that we don't have enough time. There's so much to do—earn a living, explore a vocation, nurture relationships, care for dependents, get exercise, schlep over-programmed children from one activity to another, clean the house. Time abhors a vacuum.

Modern technology promises to make our lives easier, but in the end, computers and cell phones increase the pace of work. We can no longer say that a proposal is in the mail; they'll tell us to fax it. Prior to cell phones, we relaxed when we were driving. Now, even if we don't have a cellular phone, it's hard to relax knowing that other drivers do.

We want everything fast—fast food, eyeglasses in an hour, drive-through banking. Like the white rabbit in “Alice in Wonderland,” we're always in a hurry. There's never a moment when there's not something else we should be doing. We carry a list of errands in our head. We fill every minute.

How many times have you thought, “I wish there were a few more hours in the day”? The assumption is that given more hours we would accomplish more of what we want to get done. What's more likely is that it would only mean more hectic hours to live through each day. Maybe we should wish for a shorter day, so that the crazy pace of our lives would be limited to fewer hours.

When we believe that busyness is noble, we measure our days by how much we get done, stop measuring things that matter more and hardly recognize the gifts we've been given. We lose our ability to play. We lose our passion. We forget our priorities. The psychiatrist Carl Jung said: “Hurry is not of the devil. Hurry is the devil.”

So here's what we should do: We should take a break. We should stop working, thinking about work, or talking about work. We should rest. Relax. Breathe. Sleep. Dream. Hope. Think. Contemplate. Read. Reflect. Pray. Play. Walk. Talk. Listen. Sing. Dance. Love. Celebrate.

We should stop long enough to look at the world, see that much of it is good, and give thanks. We should stand back and view our lives the way that an artist stands back from the canvas to get a broader perspective. We should take our lives off the easel to get a better look. Attaining some

degree of independence from our routine can be the difference between feeling like a gerbil on a spinning wheel and giving thanks for the gift of life.

We should slow down by finding a nice long line in which to stand.

Brett Younger is pastor of Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth and the author of "Who Moved My Pulpit? A Hilarious Look at Ministerial Life," available from Smyth & Helwys (800) 747-3016.

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