

8 Inverness Drive East, Suite 102
Englewood, CO 80112-5624 USA
Phone: 303-792-0152
Fax: 303-792-0146
Web: www.renovare.org
E-mail: contact@renovare.org

Heart-to-Heart

A Pastoral Letter from Richard Foster

Bringing the Church to the churches
RENOVARE

NOVEMBER 2007

Dear Friends,

Waiting! It is among the most universal of human experiences.

- Waiting to begin school.
- Waiting to get our braces off.
- Waiting for our first date.
- Waiting to graduate.
- Waiting to marry.
- Waiting for our first job.
- Waiting for our first baby.
- Waiting for our first house.
- Waiting to retire.
- Waiting . . . waiting to die.

Waiting is among the most common ventures in human life, and the more Christian spirituality touches common life redemptively the more it deepens in meaning.

Right at the Heart

Waiting is right at the heart of Christian spirituality. Think of Moses waiting in the desert for silent year after silent year. Think of Elijah, sequestered in his cave, keeping a lonely vigil over earthquake, wind, and fire. Think of Mary waiting patiently for the fulfillment of the word of the Angel Gabriel. Think of Saul—Saul who became Paul—being instructed by the Spirit in the deserts of Arabia for three solitary years.

Waiting is the hidden preparation through which God puts his ministers. We neglect it to our peril. I remember as a young, brash pastor waxing eloquent about Moses in the wilderness and telling the people that we need to learn all these lessons so that it won't take us forty years like it did Moses. Just then a wise and respected member of our fellowship spoke up calmly; "I doubt it!" he said. Those three words took all the pompous air out of my sermon that day and taught us a valuable lesson. Especially me. Waiting is not something to be avoided at all costs. In waiting we learn things that we learn in no other way.

The Lord, speaking through the good prophet Isaiah, reminds us, "My ways are not your ways" (55:8). Our ways, you see, are the ways of noise and hurry and crowds. Our ways are the ways of climb and push and shove. Our ways are the ways of instant-knowledge and instant-solutions and instant-gratification. These, my friends, are not God's ways. God's ways are like the rain and the snow that come down disappearing into the earth. No rush. No fanfare. No manipulation. Then when the time is right up comes the life, "giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater" (Isa. 55:10). That is God's way.



The Cosmic Patience of God

In waiting we enter into the cosmic patience of God. At least in part. We begin picking up the deep rhythms of the Spirit, the heartbeat of God. We begin thinking in terms of years and decades rather than minutes and hours. Oh, we accomplish our tasks, to be sure, but it is not with the frantic, nervous energy of the anxious-ridden. Thomas Kelly writes, “I find God never guides us into an intolerable scramble of panting feverishness.”

What we are learning is how to work not in *independence* but in *cooperation*. God, after all, is at work in our world. We are not doing this on our own. We are entering a cooperative, interactive relationship with the Creator of the universe. We are learning to take up the “easy yoke” and the “light burden” of Jesus. So, as we are yoked to Jesus all our thrashing and rushing begins to ebb away under the steady pace of the Master of life.

The four years that our Team has just gone through as we have been waiting on God to give us clarity about our new President has been so very instructive to us. In many ways the process was even more important than the outcome . . . though we are most pleased with the outcome. It is quite a story of ups and downs, of restlessness and stillness, and of going where we did not know. Through it all we were learning to work in *cooperation* and not in *independence*. It is a lesson we continue to learn.

Stillness, A Close Cousin

Stillness is a close cousin to waiting. Remember the wisdom of God through the psalmist, “Be still, and know that I am God!” (Ps. 46:10). It is indeed so. As we wait in stillness we are given a greater capacity to discern the *kol Yahweh*, the voice of God, in his wondrous, terrible, loving, all-embracing silence.

We begin to recognize a **tone** to the voice of God. Satan pushes and condemns, God draws and encourages, and with time and experience we learn the difference. The Divine tone carries with it the weight of authority; a calm, steady, inward “yes.” E. Stanley Jones put it this way, “The voice of the subconscious argues with you, tries to convince you; but the inner voice of God does not argue, does not try to convince you. It just speaks, and it is self-authenticating. It has the feel of the voice of God within it.”

Then too we begin to discover a **spirit** to the voice of God. You remember that it was said of Messiah that he would not break a bruised reed nor quench a smoldering wick. Jesus, you see, would never crush the needy, never snuff out the smallest hope. The Divine spirit carries with it a sense of sublime peacefulness, of overwhelming joy, of universal good will toward all. It is, in fact, the spirit of Jesus.

Finally, over time and experience we begin to discover a **content** to the voice of God. Dallas Willard writes, “The content of a word that is truly from God will always conform to and be consistent with the truths about God’s nature and kingdom that are made clear in the Bible. Any content or claim that does *not* conform to biblical content is not a word from God. Period!” This, of course, draws us into the vast literature in both Old and New Testaments. We are not here looking at incidentals but principles, the fundamental truths of Scripture. We begin, for example, to understand the Christlikeness of God and come to see that God’s greatness is seen precisely in his goodness. And more. This, of course, is a very large subject and I could do no better than guide you to Dallas Willard’s book, *Hearing God* if you want to explore the matter further.

As we learn to wait and to work in a posture of stillness we are being changed. We begin living in the steady peace of God, a peace that goes down to the very depths of our soul. We begin experiencing

an unhurried conquest; an inward conquest over ourselves, and an outward conquest over the world. We grow less and less impressed by the religion of the “big deal,” and instead find joy in simple acts of goodness. We begin letting go of the need to manage and control life and instead find delight in God working to will and to do his good pleasure. Toward others, we begin to experience something vastly deeper than pity or even empathy; we begin experiencing a rock-solid, heart-felt, well-reasoned love toward all. This is, in fact, the *agape* love of the Bible, and it astonishes us when we see this inward life flowing outward toward our neighbors and co-workers and friends. And enemies even.

Two Descriptions of Life Abundant

There are two descriptions of this life abundant that penetrate me in ever deeper ways every time I hear them.

The first comes from the pen of our trusted friend, the prophet Isaiah. It is his now famous counsel about waiting upon the Lord, and it stands in direct contrast to all those at his time who were fixated upon current events. Isaiah’s world was reeling under the military campaigns of Cyrus, the Persian emperor who founded the Achaemenid Dynasty, and the people were anxiously wondering, “What next?” Isaiah’s calm response was the simple counsel to turn away from the malaise of current events and instead learn to lean upon Yahweh. His words are pregnant with the spiritual formation themes of waiting and renewing and running and walking. Listen: “They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint” (Isa. 40:31).

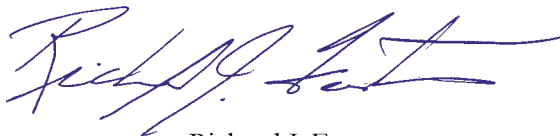
The second description comes from the final paragraph in Thomas Kelly’s marvelous book, *A Testament of Devotion*. This is a book that Kelly never knew he wrote. After his death others took his speeches and writings, especially material from that flaming last fourth of his life, and compiled them into book form. His writings and spoken messages during this period had taken on a deep note of experimental authority. A strained period in Kelly’s life was over and he had moved into a new

OUR FINANCIAL GUIDELINES

- We urge everyone to give first to their local church (or wherever they are being nurtured spiritually) and to the poor before ever giving to RENOVARÉ.
- An accountant oversees our financial records in accord with accepted accounting procedures and the highest professionalism.
- We will live within our means. One thing we refuse to do is overextend and overspend ourselves and then beg for God’s people to bail us out. We believe that God will give us the money to do what we are being called to do. We feel it involves just as much faith to trust God for the money before a purchase as after a purchase. In fact, one way we discern God’s will for the ministry of RENOVARÉ is through the financial support of his people.
- We believe in full disclosure at all times. Our financial reports are available to anyone upon request.
- We will receipt all donations.
- If we offer books, tapes, or other materials for a suggested contribution, we will receipt the amount given above the retail price of the product plus shipping and handling costs.
- When we make a purchase, we will pay the bill within thirty days. We refuse to subsidize this ministry on the backs of vendors.
- We will never sell or rent our mailing list.
- We are primarily a voluntary organization and as such we depend in large measure upon the sacrificial labors of many. If, however, we employ paid staff, they will receive equal pay for equal work.
- We will communicate our financial needs to our constituency as clearly and as truthfully as possible. We will not inflate or overstate our situation, nor create a crisis to boost income.
- We believe RENOVARÉ was initiated and continues to be sustained by God. While we are eager to follow the Divine whisper at every turn and work with all our might, it is God’s business and not ours to prosper or end the work of RENOVARÉ. We rejoice either way.

wholeness and adequacy. Listen: "Life from the Center is a life of unhurried peace and power. It is simple. It is serene. It is amazing. It is triumphant. It is radiant. It takes no time, but it occupies all our time. And it makes our life programs new and overcoming. We need not get frantic. He is at the Helm. And when our little day is done we lie down quietly in peace, for all is well."

Peace and joy,



Richard J. Foster

P.S. Enclosed with this pastoral letter is "A Service of Commitment" which is tied to our RENOVARÉ Covenant. I hope that during the Advent season or on New Year's Day you will affirm and re-affirm this commitment to follow Jesus Christ in all things and in all ways. May God bless you as you do so, whether individually or in a group setting. Remember, even when we are alone, we are together in our Covenant commitment and together always in the glorious fellowship of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. RJF

Permission is granted to duplicate this letter for free distribution. Any quotations or references to it should give proper credit to RENOVARÉ, 8 Inverness Drive East, Suite 102, Englewood, CO 80112-5624 USA.

Cut the sections apart and keep this portion as a reminder. All gifts are tax deductible.

My Commitment to RENOVARÉ:

- Financial Support.**
 Single Gift.....\$ _____
 Monthly Gift.....\$ _____
 Quarterly Gift.....\$ _____
- Regular Prayer Support.**

Make checks payable to RENOVARÉ and mail to RENOVARÉ, 8 Inverness Drive East, Suite 102, Englewood, CO 80112-5624 USA, or complete and fax the contribution form to 303-792-0146, or call Marian at 303-792-0152 to contribute by credit/bank card.

Send to RENOVARÉ in the enclosed self-addressed envelope.

My Commitment to RENOVARÉ:

- Financial Support.** Check
- Single Gift.....\$ _____ Credit Card: (Circle Type) AmEx MC Visa Disc
- Monthly Gift.....\$ _____
- Quarterly Gift.....\$ _____ Card # _____

Expiration *mm/yy*

- Regular Prayer Support.**

Authorized Signature _____

- Please send me a RENOVARÉ Covenant Card so I can read, consider, and sign it.**
- Please be sure to fill out all personal information.**

Name *(Please print clearly)* _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____