

THE IDLE AMERICAN

A Welcome Pause...

Commentary by Dr. Don Newbury

Column #863 for Release Thursday, November 28, 2019, or Later

It is a simple request, embodied in a one-syllable, five-letter word. Yet, it is potentially “punch-packing,” whether perused by an individual, or considered by an entire nation, or even the world.

Whoever penned it likely had no clue that its message should be implemented beyond the walls of Chick-fil-A by a world spinning insanely fast, with little thought to abrupt stops that could occur at any moment.

Maybe, just maybe, the word on a sign posted before one reaches the counter for ordering could have far-reaching results. Posted atop a stanchion for patrons next in line to order is the modest request: “PAUSE.”...

At Thanksgiving--and certainly at other times as well--this is a welcome prospect. We can use such time to breathe, to be considerate and to reflect on our lives, as well as the zany goings-on around us.

It isn't threatening like many signs are. We are not told we can't cross the line, if per chance our hunger is dulling our judgment if not our senses. There is no mention of punishment or penalties should we ignore the request.

I think of it as reinforcement of the biblical admonition of Psalm 46:10: “Be still and know that I am God.” As the season for ultimate “rushing” looms, the request is a healthy tonic. It is good for us to simply pause, reflecting on our belief that the same God who has intervened in human affairs throughout the centuries is still in charge....

If we are lucky, we'll reach times when there'll be unavoidable pauses, whether we choose to do so or not.

Serving in senior adult ministry at our church, I see folks who are pausing regularly.

One 90-something lady I visited recently in the hospital said, “I am so ready to go to my heavenly home.” She paused before adding, “But that's not my call, is it?” I was moved by her response, and shifted into “pause mode” as I walked slowly toward my car....

A wonderful friend I don't see nearly often enough is in Redstone Park Assisted Living Facility in Brownwood.

Her name is Ethelyn Smith, now in her 95th year on the planet. Her gait is slowed and movement hither and yon depends on considerable effort and reliance on a walker.

She has accepted encroaching limitations with grace, determination and optimism, forever flashing smiles of faith, contentment and resolve....

She pauses regularly now. Yet, she does what she can for others, including her son, Robert Smith, Jr., who lives down the hall. And, she still makes her way regularly to the lobby to play hymns on the piano.

Ethelyn admits that much of her cheerfulness is a carry-over from her 70-year marriage to the late Dr. Robert Smith, who passed five years ago at age 90. A longtime professor of preaching at Howard Payne University, he was pastor at First Baptist Churches of Houston, then Pompano Beach, FL, before he started “teaching young preachers.”

He, too, was a valued friend, as well as confidant....

Robert's mother, “Granny Judy,” lived to be 98. She credited another care center resident for providing encouragement during her final years.

The encourager--who lived to be 107 and had reached the time when she could do little for

others--continued to recite the refrain of a simple 1956 song written by Rev. A. H. Ackley (1887-1960), a Presbyterian minister who wrote more than 1,500 hymns.

“You can smile when you can’t say a word. You can smile when you cannot be heard. You can smile when it’s cloudy or fair. You can smile anytime, anywhere.”...

This “fits” my friend.

She insists on “taking the high road,” saddened, though, that apple juice is no longer on the menu. She finds orange juice to have too much acidity.

Her friends got wind of this, and Ethelyn may soon have enough apple juice to set up a drink stand in the hallway....

***Dr. Newbury is a former educator who “commits speeches” round about.
Comments or inquiries to: newbury@speakerdoc.com. Ph.: 817-447-3872. Web:
www.speakerdoc.com. Twitter: @donnewbury. Facebook: don newbury.***