

*Summer's here.* And with the dead of winter stalking us for so long – along with the chill of April – we're tempted to say "Good riddance!" to the other seasons. Bring on the sun, the fun, and the friends. Let's enjoy the bright days of picnics, vacations, softball, long walks, and cookouts and let's relish the late nights of porch-sitting and star-gazing.

And here's the cool thing – *it's not wrong to enjoy them!* This is the Lord's good creation and we're children of the God who has provided us with all things richly to enjoy (1Ti.6.17). But...as you and I well know, it is sadly too often the case that God's people fall in love with the gift and forget the Giver. We forget the Giver of Summer and all its good things until the next semester at least. We forget the Giver who's allowed us the goodness of friends. We forget the Giver who invented the joy of laughter. We forget the Giver who grants us peaceful sleep simply because we rest *assured* that our condemnation is gone, nailed with Christ to the cross. We forget the Giver who holds all breath in his hands and at a mere whim could withdraw it so that all perish (Job 12.10).

I don't know about you, but I forget. This is the time – summer - where I am most tempted not only to take off from duty, but also from Deity. It's now that I lose my routine of seeking God first when I awake, making love for my neighbor the prime obligation, and first of all to my family. It's now that sleeping in is so much easier and devotion is so much easier to forget.

When we put God on the back burner, that's when spiritual death begins to settle in. John Piper words it so much better than me, so here's his take on it: "...Christless leisure makes the soul parched. At first it may feel like freedom and fun to skimp on prayer and neglect the Word, but then we pay: shallowness, powerlessness, vulnerability to sin, preoccupation with trifles, superficial relationships, and a frightening loss of interest in worship and the things of the Spirit." Amen. When I give into the temptation to neglect God for the ease of summertime leisure, I breakdown spiritually. What I mean is, I find worship less fulfilling, I'm increasingly impatient, I'm completely unavailable to God and neighbor, and I'm emotionally absent to my wife and children. Worse: this is hard and tiring to make up for every August when it's time to get serious again.

In the end, we don't want this – we don't want to back track. For all the gain we think we have in all the surplus of summertime activities, when we neglect God, *we lose*. We're the losers.

So, let me challenge you. This summer let's remember the Giver. Let's resolve that we're not going to put God on the backburner and neglect our family devotions, we're going to participate in the church, and we're going to actively remember that each gift is only meant to increase our joy in the great Giver himself. Aurelius Augustine once wrote a piece of wisdom: "He loves Thee too little, who loves anything together with Thee, which he loves not for Thy sake." Some of us, if we're honest, love God too little, don't we? So, taking his advice then, let's

love summer for Christ's sake since it is his gift and but a foretaste of the everlasting joy that he promises to his children.

Remember the words of the apostle, "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on the things that are on the earth" (Co.3.1-2). Remember God's promise delivered by the prophet, "You will seek me and find me; when you seek me with all your heart" (Je.29.13).

Maybe you've been in the habit of neglecting God and you know you're struggling to find him again, and man, wouldn't it be great to be granted a new slate, a re-do, to start over? Well, you can. The Bible fully recognizes that we're going to trip up from time to time, lose our footing, and that we'll need help to come back, so if you need refreshing I want you to rejoice in Peter's words, "repent and turn, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (Ac.3.19).