

RUT-BUSTERS

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QUESTION: What creeps up on you and attacks quickly before you have time to even suspect it's there? What sucks the energy out of you and turns life into the endless routine of going to work, coming home, watching TV, and going to bed? What is more dangerous to your Christian life than most things satan can think up?

ANSWER: Allowing life to get into a rut. What's the only difference between a rut and a grave? Depth. God has instilled in us characteristics that help keep our Christian walk full of the adventure it is meant to be. Look at the characteristics below and see how you can use them to help keep you alive and living life with zest!

Creative—It is in us to be creative. Whatever your life is like, there are ways you can be creative, whether it's entertaining grandchildren, gardening, journaling, or making a birthday card. Maybe it's figuring out how to make your home more self-sufficient or better organized, or maybe it's finding a new way to drive to work, but we can all daily find ways to use the creativity God has put in us. Being creative satisfies a need in us that few things can fill.

Innovative—While this is related to being creative, this focuses more on solving problems, or coming up with a better way to do something. Christians should be in the forefront solving problems and tapping into God's wealth of knowledge that He has available to us. Like creativity, being innovative keeps us on the edge of life, keeping our minds sharp and focused.

The Thrill of A Challenge—Have you noticed how competitive humans are? That competitiveness keep us from stagnating. It challenges us to be bigger, better, and stronger. Several times Paul uses the analogy of Christians running a race and doing our best to win. Man was created to push the limits, to never settle for the mundane and boring. What are the challenges in your life, other than the basic one

of surviving? We should have challenges that keep us stimulated to solve them, whether it's a crossword puzzle, building a room addition, or figuring out how to make life more satisfying.

Dreaming and Imagining—The ability to dream and imagine is huge, and it starts early. Our granddaughter Kinsey is less than fifteen months old, and yet she's already learned how to pretend to stir a cup of coffee or eat play food. God can use our dreams and imagination to draw us close to Him and to show us deep and wonderful things. He tells us in Ephesians 3:20-21, *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, ...* . Wow, and I can imagine an awful lot to ask for! Dreaming and imagining bring hope, and can almost instantly change our attitude, our stress level, and our emotions. Emotions don't know reality from fantasy, and they follow where our minds lead. So use your imagination to change your attitudes, give you hope, and focus you on God.

Curious—We have a need to understand not only the world around us but the spiritual realm, through Holy Spirit. We need to know who, what, where, when, how and why. A mind in the image of God is always seeking for deeper knowledge and understanding. Proverbs 25:2 tells us *It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings.* Without curiosity we'd never seek for more. Be curious about everything. Scientists have discovered that curious people have a lower rate of Alzheimer's Disease, because curiosity stimulates the mind.

Adventurous—We love to be challenged, whether it's by working puzzles or figuring out how to solve a problem or climbing Mt. Everest. We were not created to live life in a rut, slowly being suffocated by the mundaneness of life. We were made for adventure, and the Christian life is a huge adventure, walking and living supernaturally by Holy Spirit. Find ways to put adventure into your life, to stimulate your mind and challenge your spirit.

Pleasure-oriented—The world has given this word a negative meaning, but God created us with the ability to experience pleasure, and then created things to

bring us pleasure. For example, in *Genesis 2:9* it says, *And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground-- trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food.* How much pleasure is there in your life? Do you make time for the small things? Doing small things for ourselves that bring pleasure actually lowers cortisol, the stress hormone that is so damaging to our health. Is your health not worth making time to stop and taste the chocolate?

A Sense of Humor—I saw a great example of God's sense of humor earlier this week at the Cincinnati Zoo. He really got into the spirit of fun when he created animals. New research has proven that laughter does incredible things for our health: reduces stress, lowers blood pressure, elevates our mood, boosts our immune system, improves brain functioning, protects the heart, connects us to others, fosters instant relaxation, is a natural painkiller, and makes us feel good. Everything good combined in one pleasurable package of laughter! *Proverbs 31:25* tells us, in reference to the perfect wife, that *she is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come.* Besides the ability, through our confidence in Jesus, to laugh at the days to come, look for ways to laugh in your daily life.

Passionate—We are created to be a passionate people. We are to passionately seek after God. That means that we don't just want to, but to be passionate is to pursue something with strong emotion. What, in your normal life, are you passionate about? What do you find you talk animatedly about to others? We should have things in our lives that fire us up. There's a quote by Gil Baile I like that says, **"Don't ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive, and go do that, because what the world needs is people who have come alive."** You'll not live a healthy, satisfied life unless you find things that fire you up. And make sure some of them bring pleasure, for while politics may fire you up, I'm talking about things that cause a *positive* adrenaline rush.

These characteristics of God are hard-wired into us. How are you using them? Do they have a place in your life? They are a testimony of our Creator, and allowing

them to work successfully in our lives will change a long, dull life into an adventure, the kind the Christian life is supposed to be.

If you don't see these things operating positively in your life then you're not living life to its potential, nor are you fully utilizing the resources God has given us to live life on earth as a whole and healthy person.

Step back, look at your life, and find ways to incorporate these things into your daily routines and choices. You'll be surprised what a refreshing difference they can make as they lift you out of your rut.