

# Weekly Encouragement

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Incorporated non-profit in New Jersey, USA

## Less is More

By Rev. Peter Eng

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*And he charged him to tell no one, but "to go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to them." But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities. But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray (Luke 5: 14-16)*

Jesus heals a leper and charged him not to tell anyone. He is to see the priest, the only named person to whom he will explain that he is now healed from his skin disease, and to offer the sacrifices associated with this healing ([Lev 14:2-32](#)). We can easily understand why he should have himself declared cleansed from the skin disease, but why does Jesus

not want this man to bear witness for him that Jesus is the healer?

This is not the only time Jesus does not want publicity ([Lk 4:35,41](#); [8:56](#); [Matt 8:4](#); [9:30](#); [12:16](#); [Mk 1:34](#); [3:12](#); [5:43](#); [7:36](#); [8:26](#)). In Mark's Gospel, the tone is very clear and resolute, for these who have received grace from Jesus, not to tell others.

Why?

One reason can be seen in when these prohibitions are said. They are all said in the earlier part of Jesus' ministry, before the Transfiguration (when the disciples saw Jesus in glory). This reason has to do with timing. When it was time for Jesus to head for the cross to die for our sins, Jesus no longer prohibited people from talking about him.

Modern day celebrities want publicity. "Any publicity is good publicity" so some declare. Jesus seems to think there are times when less is better than more.

If we recall the charge against Jesus that leads to his crucifixion, it is the charge of sedition against Rome. It is the accusation that Jesus claims to be the king of the Jews. Jesus the Healer is also Jesus the Messiah, the Deliverer, the Savior. Everyone then expected a political and probably

military person to deliver them from Roman occupation.

Wrong publicity could lead to a premature end to Jesus' ministry. But as the time got closer for Jesus to be crucified under a false political charge, he no longer tried to stop what amounts to a correct identification of Jesus as Messiah, but a wrong association of what Messiah means.

There is another reason why Jesus is publicity shy at this time. His healing ministry takes away from his teaching ministry. To the sick, the need for healing is always more urgent and necessary than teaching. But in the grand scheme, the healed will get sick again and eventually all will die.

The benefit from healing is very transient. But the benefit of the forgiveness of sin is eternal.

It would be counter-productive to draw people to himself for healing and miss out on the teaching. In fact, the crowd became so demanding that Jesus "would withdraw to desolate places and pray" ([Lk 5:16](#)).

Jesus needs ministry down time so he can have personal time with the Father. The healing ministry is probably the most time consuming as teaching can be done to a crowd but healing requires individual attention.

Sometimes less is more. Jesus sees it clearly and lives it.

We can acknowledge the need for down time, for time alone with God, for times to do less so we can enjoy God more. But I know my own penchant to keep filling my time with activity rather than to spend time with God.

I wish I have the type of clarity I see in Jesus. It is hard not to fill my time with activity but to fill it with God instead. It is hard to turn down the allure of being known so I can know God better. It is easy to justify service and neglect worship. It is easy to enjoy the approval of people and forget to realign my life with God.

Perhaps you too may see some aspect in your life when less is more. It may be having less activity, less possessions, less busyness, less talk, less sex, less power, less striving after attention, or whatever that takes away from your time with God. And perhaps, (gasp!) even less money!

Less is more when it is more of God's will in our life and more time with him...

**Note: The ESV is used unless indicated otherwise.**

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**Rev. Peter Eng** is an ordained minister from the Reformed Tradition, but he is truly global in perspective. He served the Lord in various capacities starting from his teenage years in the 70s. His undergrad studies were done in Singapore, his grad studies in the USA, and post-grad studies in the United Kingdom, with additional post-grad research in Germany.