



SKIMMING and SPEEDING

A few weeks past I had the privilege of being in a meeting with renowned church leader Bill Hybels of Willowcreek church. I was with a group of 22 mega-church pastors who invited Bill to spend a day informally dialoguing about leadership. The morning group time focused upon best practices while the afternoon was on how a leader manages his/her own life for success.

I was intrigued when Bill introduced the dual concepts of ‘skimming and speeding’. As with many high-capacity leaders, there are always more things to do and more opportunities beckoning than any balanced lifestyle can sustain. This is where skimming and speeding are important. **When leaders speed – maintain an unhealthy, unsustainable pace - they skim over and ignore important life issues.** Burnout or failure usually ensue. Burnout occurs when personal output outweighs rest, renewal, and downtime. Failure often follows because the toasty leader can easily give into temptation when in such a vulnerable state.

My good friends Mark Buckley of Living Streams Church and Dan Steffen of Pure Heart Christian Fellowship recently spoke on this issue. Following is an outline of key points on skimming and speeding that I summarized from that meeting.

1. Why do we speed? On a deeper level than there is just so much to do, we often speed because of pride, insecurity, and poor boundaries, needing appreciation or feeling guilty when we relax.

2. What are indicators of speeding and also skimming?

- a. **Avoiding** relationships, losing contact with friends and family, too busy to spend routine quality time with spouse, children and extended family, being superficial. Do others complain about not seeing you enough?
- b. **Overindulging:** food, sports, alcohol, spending, self-medicating, mind numbing repetitive behaviors (TV), increased porn attraction, over attention to sex, over sleeping, withdrawing.
- c. **Not being emotionally appropriate.** \Not mourning a loss, excessive worrying, often angry impatient or irritable. Not listening, easily bored, raging on the inside, self-pity.
- d. **Blaming and blame shifting.** Mad at other drivers, defensive with others, “I can’t do any different”, “it’s all their fault”.
- e. **Spiritual decline.** Not reading the Bible, diminished prayer life, less conscious contact with God, blaming God.

3. What can we do to change?

- a. **Recognition (Awareness)** is always the first step. We can't fix something we don't fully recognize in ourselves. Ask others what they see. Does your family and those who know you best, think you are skimming and speeding?
- b. Are you **Owning** the problem? Are you blaming the problem on your job or others? You won't change until you understand and accept that it is you that needs to change, not the job or anyone else.
- c. Look at the **Deeper Issues – the secondary payoffs**. We overwork and over-function because of deeper unresolved heart issues. Is it your pride that keeps you from change? Do you need to learn to say “no” and overcome people-pleasing in your life? Does speeding gain attention, admiration or praise from others?
- d. **Learn new skills**. Schedule management and priority planning are two essentials for dealing with multiple demands and busyness. There is always more to do than can be done. Learn how to sift, prioritize, schedule and delegate.
- e. **Accountability** always helps. Asking someone to pray with you and for you helps greatly. Especially when coupled with honest ongoing transparency. Risk inviting a trusted other to walk with you in embracing your needed change.

It is necessary for all of us to learn a sustainable pace. One wherein we can lay down our lives for a worthy cause in a healthy way. May we all apprehend that for which we were apprehended (Philippians 3:12)