

Doing the Counterintuitive

When I first started road racing I kept getting mixed up on the difference between understeer and oversteer. A friend explained it in a humorous way saying, Understeer is when your car crashes through the guard rail with the nose. Oversteer is when you crash through the guard rail going backwards. Now I was always fortunate that my cars seemed to be pretty neutral or have slight understeer characteristics which made them easy to control because if you got into trouble you would just back off a bit on the gas and save the car. However, a few of my Porsche friends shared that their cars had a tricky condition called trailing throttle oversteer. They explained that when your car has this trait you have to be really careful because the rear of the car will step sideways as you back off the gas going into a corner. When it does that you have to overcome all your instincts to brake or let off the gas further because that will only make things worse. In spite of everything that logic tells as a driver, you must immediately pick back up on the throttle and apply power to save the car from a spin.

Another example of doing the opposite of what comes naturally came from my first race driving instructor. He was asked what the best way was to avoid another racecar spinning in front of you. His suggestion was that when he had initially tried to analyze where the other car was going to end up and to steer away from there he ended up crashing too or being hit from behind when he checked up. Over the years he had determined that the best thing to do was actually aim for the car that was spinning because by the time he got there the invisible forces on the spinning car (like centrifugal force or gravity, if it was a banked turn) had moved the car elsewhere. Again instincts had to be ignored because if you did what was natural you would end up as part of the accident scene instead of slipping cleanly past the melee of spinning cars.

These are examples of doing what is counterintuitive – the exact opposite of what comes naturally and I guess that I'm beginning to realize that spiritual things are very often that way too. Doing what is counterintuitive is often the best way – the way of faith and blessing.

As an example, we are all familiar that it was on the third day after Jesus was buried when the women decided to go out to the tomb. Visiting the tomb was completely illogical. There was a big stone over the tomb doorway that they could not possibly move. There are guards that would probably not let them even get close to the area anyway. In addition, it was probably not a really great idea to be marked as a follower of Jesus right then. Some of the authorities might want identify Jesus' friends and punish them as well. So the men stayed safely locked in a room. It was clearly the logical, intuitive and safe thing to do. The women went to the tomb in simple faith. Their reward was some of them got to see angels and even Jesus himself. Even after the women came back with the good news of what they had seen, the men only sent out a committee of two to see if things were as the ladies had reported. Unfortunately, all that Peter and John got to see was an empty tomb. They would have to wait until later to see their resurrected Lord.

It is a lot like getting ready to go to work on a day that you know is going to be a very busy. You weigh what you should do. The intuitive thing is to skip over your time of prayer and bible reading and get to work as soon as possible. The counterintuitive thing is to spend the time pray and read God's Word and commit the day to Him. When we do the latter we find that the day goes better and we accomplish more than if we have shortchanged our spiritual life in order to get 30-60 more minutes of work in. I guess I can think of a lot of situations where doing that which is illogical makes spiritual sense: Giving when things are tight, going to Retreats when we really should be working, etc.

So I guess the lesson I'm just beginning to learn is that I need to sometimes put aside my logic and go to the tomb – that is - do the counterintuitive thing.

I think Paul put it so well when he encouraged us in 2 Corinthians 5:7 to "Walk by faith and not by sight". Sometimes we have to put the logic that serves us so well in this world aside because we don't see the spiritual realities clearly. We need to trust God to take care of our finances, our time and everything else and do the right things that He leads us to do.

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