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Time-in

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Time-in

Parents and teachers sometimes have children take a timeout from whatever they are doing, especially if their behavior is inappropriate or disruptive of their own or others' well-being. Coaches can ask for a timeout for certain athletic teams in order to make adjustments. And anyone who watches sports events on TV is familiar with timeouts that are taken for the sake of presenting commercials. We do not usually refer to a time-in with any of our normal activities. But we could profitably imagine some possibilities where a time-in would be quite helpful for ourselves and for others to whom we might commend the idea.

When we know in our hearts that we need to act, but fear is an obstacle, a time-in would be appropriate: a conscious movement to go ahead with the sound and reasonable plan that is ours to enact. We might need to take some time for reflection, clarification of our motives, and giving focus to our intent, but nothing will happen until we declare our personal time-in and speak and act in accord with the objective to which our minds and hearts direct us, in spite of any form of anxiety that might arise.

Anger, or a simple desire to be finished with an issue, can push us to act in ways that we later regret. Many of us have learned the value of taking even a momentary timeout so that we can respond appropriately rather than react improperly. But such a timeout is best followed expeditiously with a time-in, so that we make good use of the energy already present that urges us to action. We might reflect on experiences that we have had, such as firing off a hasty email after suffering some injustice, and afterwards being disappointed in ourselves. And we can likely recall a time when we paused before replying, and, having put things into perspective, then proceeded with our time-in, to a satisfying conclusion. We learn from our experiences, both positive and negative.

We also receive movements in our hearts when, if we are honest, we realize that it is up to us to speak out, to say "yes" or to give voice to an inner realization of truth. In such cases we need to make a time-in right then, without delay. We do not need to take a timeout before acting from internalized values that are the abiding results of prior reflection upon experience. Some of our previous insights have settled into habitual principles that are quite trustworthy, and if we reflect after a day's activities, we might be thankful for our facility to respond quickly and appropriately to inspirations.

When those in authority call a timeout for their children, a team or any group, they are also responsible for arranging a re-start of activity. If we take an occasional timeout in our relationship with God because things have not been going along as we want or think that they should, it is our responsibility to accept the reality that we are not in charge of the world and to declare a time-in. However, even though God does not initiate timeouts, God is always present with invitations to a time-in that are sometimes very gentle and at other times not very subtle at all. Rather than wait for us to initiate the conversation, God acts on our behalf more certainly than lovers and friends who do not insist that the other person must make the first move.

If God seems at all distant, we can listen, and will usually sense a suggestion for a "time-in," and can then entrust ourselves to honest interaction.