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## On a summer Monday

**B**eep! Beep! Beep! The alarm slices into my slumber, drags me into a state of grogginess, which evolves into an early morning stupor. Stumbling toward the coffeepot, I hear the thumpthumpthumpthump of a helicopter not too far away. I step out onto the tiny deck at the back of our house with my Bible and my coffee. I can't see the helicopter but it's right over there behind that building. A helicopter hovering at this hour means one thing: my neighborhood, Logan Square, is making news, probably in the worst of ways — again. Several other news copters join the first, all safely spaced in the sky, making an irritating racket. I wonder what they are seeing and what story is demanding their attention. I'm tempted to break my devotions and go watch the news. I resist. Later in the day I hear of the two men shot at dawn on this July Monday. Shot and killed, no suspects. It's a mile from my house.

In 2003, the *Chicago Tribune* called my police beat, 1413 — home of the Lyons' pride, my wife, and five kids — the deadliest police beat in the nation. There are 26 neighborhoods in Chicago. Logan Square is one of about four or five that constantly vie for the bloody headlines. It would be funny if it wasn't so awful. We just can't go more than a few days without Logan Square being the lead story.

So, I'm listening to the news and no sooner has the first story finished when the newscaster dives into the second story. A Logan Square woman has had acid thrown in her face and been robbed at about 6:30 a.m. (while I was sitting on the deck with my Bible and coffee). This was done by two young women. This is a mere two blocks from our church building and

four blocks from where I was quiet-timing.

After about three hours in the office, I head out for my midday routine. I'm walking (not running right now because my back has acted up), contemplating the beautiful day, the blue sky, and Logan Square's ability to dominate the news, yet again. Two young men that saw Sunday never saw much of Monday. A working mother headed to her job in the early morning hours now has 25 percent of her body burned by acid. I think. I pray. I lift

**The discipline of silence; stilling the noise that fills our lives in order to hear God.**

requests concerning my role, my place, my work. I drift from prayer to just thoughts. Does that ever happen to you? My mind goes to dangerous places. Questions regarding my fruitfulness, my effectiveness, my endurance.

The day is hot. My walk carries me across busy North Avenue. A young man stands in the middle of traffic hawking bottles of cold water. As I cross through waiting traffic (I don't know why I wasn't crossing at the crosswalk), he looks straight at me and yells, "Cold water!" "You're tempting me!" I holler back. He

smiles. I keep walking. I think about good temptation. I mean being tempted with good stuff. There's nothing wrong with water. Cold water on a hot day is a good thing. Isn't it a good thing for me to want my family to be safe? Is it wrong to want peace? Is it wrong to be tempted to go find safety, peace, and quiet? There's nothing sinful about safety for my family.

My thoughts meander to the subject of spiritual discipline as it relates to denying self of good things for a higher purpose. Abstaining from food or water or sex for the purpose of prayer and worship and listening. The discipline of silence; stilling the noise that fills our lives in order to hear God. The discipline of worship; setting aside shopping, cleaning the garage, going to the beach, etc., so I have a day to gather with God's people, hear His Word, reflect on His greatness, listen to Him speak His truth into my life. Isn't this part of the idea Paul was getting at in 2 Corinthians 4 when he said, "Death works in me but life works in you." Wasn't he talking about dying to self, not only to sinful self but to good things that we all want to enjoy? Wasn't he talking about resisting the temptation of good things in order that others might hear the gospel and grow in Christ?

So I walk past the water guy even as I have run past the water fountains in Humboldt Park on 90 degree plus days, disciplining myself to say no to good things for the mental discipline and for greater endurance.

I can't run for now, but I will walk — because the discipline of walking is my best chance at running again. And I've got to finish this race. Fight the fight, keep the faith. On a summer Monday.