



Overwhelmed

We're not at the longest night of the year yet, but you can feel that we're pretty close. You wake up and it's dark, and by the time you're on your way back from work, it's dark; if you work inside an office or factory, you'll spend most of your life in the dark.

And then, there's life situations. Often, if you're working for a client, they'll want it done 'before Christmas'; all sorts of things need to happen 'by the end of the year'. But that includes family life too: December is the time for parents' evenings, end of term submissions, final meetings; it is also the time for buying Christmas presents for people, and you may or may not be able to afford them. You probably haven't been in holiday since August.

I have had three or four encounters this week with essentially sane and fun loving people who are really feeling under the cosh right now. I've put that rather glibly, but I mean it seriously. Not people who are contemplating the end of it all, but people who are struggling to sleep for worry; people who see no way out of a predicament, who feel like they are treading water and not making any progress.

I am certain that some of it is rooted in the time of the year. A nasty concoction of short days and societal pressures that mean life can be much more of a struggle than a joy.

What to suggest?

One thing that occurs is the title of a book by the

Bishop of Chelmsford. "Do nothing to save your life." His theory is essentially this; we have lost the ability to do nothing. Pascal put it another way:

"All mankind's problems can be attributed to his inability to sit still in a room."

There are many 'self-help' books which advise this or that course of action: seven habits of successful people, a thirty day plan to lose a stone; whatever... But in a vortex of activity, you can just lose your mind.

The key is to do nothing for a bit. Now that's so much harder than it sounds. Try it; try sitting still for a minute. I bet you'll be itching to do something. You might be itching to get on your phone; you might be itching to tidy the house because it looks a mess; you might be okay for ten seconds, but then remember that you've forgotten to make a key phone call and you'll be desperate to do that. And all these things are legitimate things to do. But they probably don't need to be done NOW.

And being still won't *solve* anything. But try it for ten minutes, and you may find yourself breathing back into life or at least into perspective. If I'm feeling really down, as a Christian, I do turn to the Psalms; (and if you want a place to start, 42 if you're feeling spiritually dry, 127 if you're super busy and 130 if you're at rock-bottom are decent places to go.) But the key really isn't even to do that. It's just to do nothing.

Peace will be restored to you in time.