

KIRBSTONES

ALONG THE NARROW WAY

curb-stone (kürb'stōn') - *noun* - one of the stones or a range of stones forming a curb, as along a sidewalk or roadway. Historically, the curbstones were placed vertically along the edges of the roadbed and the paving material was backfilled against the row of curbstones. The curbstones served ⁽¹⁾to hold the material in the roadbed, ⁽²⁾to prevent the scattering of the material along the edges, and ⁽³⁾to define the road itself from all the adjoining areas.

¹³ "ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW GATE. FOR WIDE IS THE GATE AND BROAD IS THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO DESTRUCTION, AND MANY ENTER THROUGH IT.
¹⁴ BUT SMALL IS THE GATE AND NARROW THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO LIFE, AND ONLY A FEW FIND IT." - MATTHEW 7:13-14 - NIV

11.2020 | #213



Are you aware of your *reticular activating system*? What is RAS? What does it have to do with your faith and relationship to God? How can your RAS impact your faith? Why does it matter to you, to me, or to the 7,600,000,000 other people, who make up the human race and are the owners of their own, personal *reticular activating systems*?

In his perfect, infinite wisdom God created us in his image—*complicated as we may be*—with built in systems including those systems for our personal guidance and awareness of our surroundings. While we have—*in our well-educated, well-read, and enlightened selves*—learned a great deal about the concept of human emotional intelligence, which is our ability to read people and situations, we may not be aware of our own RAS.

My question becomes, “How might I fully deploy my *reticular activating system* for (1) my engagement of God, (2) my intentional improvement of the relationship I desire with God, and (3) my improved awareness of God’s presence in my life?”

First, let us define RAS, or, at the least, learn what web neuroscience has to say about how it operates within the human brain. The *Textbook of Clinical Neurology* teaches us that we are the proud owners of a structure called the reticular activating system (RAS), and that “it is a fine network of neurons located in the brain stems of everyone of us. The neurons project anteriorly to the hypothalamus to mediate behavior, as well as both posteriorly to the thalamus and directly to the cortex for activation of awake, desynchronized cortical EEG patterns.”¹

Knowledge of RAS has been around since 1949. Italian neurophysiologist, Giuseppe Moruzzi, was primarily responsible for its discovery. The short, simple way of looking at our *reticular activating system* points to a part of the brainstem that filters out all unnecessary and unimportant data.

28 Yet give attention to your servant's prayer and his plea for mercy, O LORD my God. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is praying in your presence this day.

1 Kings 8:28 – NIV

While this filter leaves us to focus on all that is really important, it heightens our awareness of specific things we might have programmed ourselves to notice in our world.

As a certified individual, personal, and group coach I have been trained to be aware of conversations. Responsibility for what I have *noticed* as I am engaged in conversations is as essential as our breathing is to life itself.

As a real estate broker several decades ago I heard many stories from clients, with whom I had engaged to sell their homes. I have had many calls where folks have *noticed*—*on the way home from my office*—that nearly every home they passed had a FOR SALE sign in the front yard.

I remember being out and about after learning that Chris was pregnant with Jennifer, our first. It seemed as though every woman we passed in the mall or on the street was pregnant. We *noticed!*

What are we noticing? What has that marvelous *reticular activating system* caused us to notice, as a result of our claim to follow Jesus Christ?

Do we have a heightened awareness of what is going on around us within our congregation? Are we aware of all the opportunities that we have within our Morris Memorial United Methodist Church?

Are we aware of our surroundings both at home and when we go out, and in our surroundings are we aware of the needs of the persons we encounter?

What are we seeing? And, what are we hearing? What are we *noticing*? Then, once we notice something specific, what action are we taking?

¹ *Textbook of Clinical Neurology* (Third Edition), 2007.

Copyright © - 2020
Robert Wingfield Kirby III, D.Min.