**The Unhurried Life: The Practice of Slowing Down**

**Mark 6:30-46**

*30 The apostles returned to Jesus from their ministry tour and told him all they had done and taught. 31 Then Jesus said, “Let’s go off by ourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile.” He said this because there were so many people coming and going that Jesus and his apostles didn’t even have time to eat.*

*32 So they left by boat for a quiet place, where they could be alone.*

*45 Immediately after this, Jesus insisted that his disciples get back into the boat and head across the lake to Bethsaida, while he sent the people home. 46 After telling everyone good-bye, he went up into the hills by himself to pray.*

It’s no secret that most of us lead hurried lives. The New York lifestyle as being so rushed and preoccupied that we don’t actually live life, we just skim over it! Yet racing through life at such speed isn’t healthy physically or spiritually.

We are a people plagued by “hurry sickness,” and hurry causes great harm to our spiritual growth. Hurry is not merely a shortage of time; it is a disease of the soul. It is not just a disordered schedule; it reflects a disordered heart.

Hurry lies behind much of the anger and frustration of modern life. It disrupts our life-giving connection with God and prevents us from receiving love from the Father or giving it to his children. If we want to grow spiritually, we must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from our lives.

The discipline of slowing and the practice of solitude are antidotes to hurry sickness. To eliminate hurry from our lives doesn’t mean we won’t be busy. Jesus was often busy, but he was never hurried. His priorities were always ordered according to his life-giving connection with his Father.

By practicing the discipline of slowing, we too can learn to become unhurried people. When we practice solitude, we remove ourselves from the forces of daily life that otherwise mold us. We withdraw from noise, people, activities, and responsibilities in order to restore our connection with God.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. How many times a day do you estimate you think to yourself, Oh, I’d better hurry and ... ? In what ways has hurry sickness hurt you, people around you, and your relationship with God?
2. Consider how different your life would be if you approached it from an unhurried perspective, if you ordered your priorities according to your relationship with God. Think of specific things you can think or do to eliminate hurry.
3. When we feel hurried, when we are pressured and pressed from every angle, what does the Bible tell us to do? What is the result? (See 1 Peter 5:7 and Philippians 4:6, respectively.)
4. Every day, responsibilities pull us in many directions, so we each need times of solitude—times to withdraw, take a deep breath, focus on God, recharge, and evaluate. When can you find a daily moment for solitude? Identify at least two possibilities for regular, longer times of solitude.

**Planning a Time of Extended Solitude**

Here is a plan for eight hours of solitude. Remember that this practice may not be easy for you. You may feel as if you are wasting your time because you are not doing something. Or you may feel intimidated, which is why the following structure may help you.

1. Find a place where you can be uninterrupted and alone, such as a park or retreat center.
2. Spend time the night before to prepare, to ask God to bless the day and to tell him that you want to devote the day to him. This day will be your gift to God, but even more, it is a gift God wants to give you. What do you need from him? A sense of healing and forgiveness? Conviction for an apathetic heart? Compassion? A renewed sense of mission? Ask God for this.
3. Arrange the day around listening to God. The following format is adapted from *Glandion Carney’s book The Spiritual Formation Toolkit.*
* 8:00 – 9:00 Prepare your mind and heart, take a walk, or do whatever will help you set aside

concerns over tasks and responsibilities. Try to arrange your morning so you can remain in silence from the time you awaken.

* 9:00 – 11:00 Read and meditate on Scripture, taking time to stop to reflect

when God seems to be speaking to you through the text.

* 11:00 – 12:00 Write down responses to what you have read. Speak to God

about them.

* 12:00 – 1:00 Eat lunch and take a walk, reflecting on the morning.
* 1:00 – 2:00 Take a nap.
* 2:00 – 3:00 Set goals that emerge from the day’s reflection.
* 3:00 – 4:00 Write down three goals and other thoughts in a journal. You may want to do

this in the form of a letter to God. Prepare to reenter society.