The Life you Have Always Wanted

(But Need Spiritual Discipline to Obtain)

#3 The Practice of Slowing Down

**Introduction**

Remember, we are searching for some meaningful or purposeful activities (spiritual disciplines) that can help create the life we have always wanted.

We need to SLOW DOWN!

Consider the message Jesus gave in Mark 6:31: “… Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.”

**The Sickness: Hurry Sickness**

**“**Hurry is not just a disordered schedule. Hurry is a disordered heart.” (*The Life You Have Always Wanted,* John Ortberg)

Consider the instruction of Deut. 6 (repeated in Matt. 22: 37, Luke 10:27 and Mark 12:30): Love the Lord your God with all your heart…

We are exhausting ourselves for nothing:

Hab. 2:13 “Has not the Lord Almighty determined that the people’s labor is only fuel for the fire, that the nations exhaust themselves for nothing?

We often have a very fractured focus in life:

Luke 10:41 “Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better…”

**The Symptoms**

1. OVERLOADED

Consider the material found in *Margins,* by Richard Swenson.

1. SPED UP

Some examples: We talk faster than we need to (impatient with others who give us information too slowly). We drive, walk and generally move quickly. (we estimate distance on the basis of time rather than expanse between two points). We constantly shift to a speedier check-out line in the grocery store or to a faster lane on the freeway.

Our hearts and minds are always set on HIGH.

1. MULTITASKING

“polyphasic activity:” The urge to do more than one thing at a time causes a great lack of focus and a corresponding lack of satisfaction or pleasure when it is over.

We incessantly ask “What’s Next?”

1. CLUTTER

Physically: We seem to lack the ability to live simply. We need a “closet exorcist.” We just keep building bigger barns (Luke 12:16-21)

Emotionally or Psychologically: We seem to lack the ability to say NO. Remember, Mary chose the “better part.”

1. SUPERFICIALITY

Mentally: We seem to have traded wisdom for information. We skim everything. “Give me the highlights…give the headlines…let me watch a video rather than read a paragraph.”

Spiritually: We seem to “want to microwave maturity.” (Ortberg) We seem to be unwilling to “pay the price” for the development of character.

Remember: James told us “…you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, lacking anything.” (James 1:3-4)

1. IMPATIENCE

The injunction from the Lord: “Wait for the Lord, be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.” (Ps. 27:14)

It’s no surprise that the very first quality of LOVE mentioned is I Cor. 13 is PATIENCE.

See Prov. 14:29 and 16:32.

**The Cure**

1. Create MARGINS

A margin is that space that exists between ourselves and our limits. It is the amount allowed beyond that which is absolutely necessary. Consider how God dealt with Elijah in I Kings 19:1-8

1. We need TIME MARGINS . Expect the unexpected. Add a 10-20% margin to your scheduled activities.
2. We need MARGINS in our EMOTIONAL Life. Learn to laugh and cry (Ecc. 3:4). Be liberal with your gratitude (I Thess.5:18)
3. We need MARGINS in PHYSICAL ENERGY. Get the sleep that you need. Pay attention to what you feed your body. Exercise. Get outdoors.
4. We need FINANCIAL MARGINS. Learn the difference between needs and wants. Live on a budget. Save and give more. Set your priorities according to Matt. 6:33.
5. Force yourself to SLOW DOWN and REST. Eat slower. Drive in the “slow lane.” Park far away from the store’s door. Enjoy the walk. Consider Matt. 11:28-29
6. Find time for SOLITUDE (daily and occasionally for extended periods of time). Jesus practiced solitude. See Matt. 14:13 “When Jesus heard what had happened, He withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place.”

“Solitude is the one place where we can gain freedom from the forces of society that will otherwise relentlessly mold us.” (Ortberg)

Schedule time for solitude. Don’t ignore it or minimize its importance.

**So What?**

Slowing down starts with a decision and then is sustained by discipline.

1. List the top three “HURRY” symptoms that affect your life right now and list a scripture that might help you overcome each of those challenges.
2. Can you make the decision today to slow down? Why or why not?
3. What obstacles do you anticipate as you develop the spiritual discipline of slowing down? Be practical as you think it through.
4. Are there others that you need to involve in this new way of living? Is there someone who could help hold you accountable to this discipline?

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