

The Harm of Hurry

Good morning everybody. If you have a bible, turn with me to **Luke 10**. If you're new with us this morning, we're glad you're here. You're hopping in on the second week of a series we do every year called *Formation*. Essentially, each year, we take a month or two to focus on one practice or *habit* that has the potential over the long haul to *form* us into the image and likeness of Jesus. So two years ago, we looked at prayer; last year, it was bible reading.

This year, the habit we're aiming to put into practice is the habit of **rest**. And we mentioned **last week** that maybe that feels like a weird thing to say, because it seems like *rest* isn't really something you should have to *work at*. But we said that to regularly experience *true* rest—the type of rest Jesus talks about as being “rest for our *souls*”—it's just a little more involved than we might think. It takes a little more *intentionality*, in other words. Because it's a matter of modeling your life after Jesus' life, and through that, experiencing true rest. So we're spending the rest of the series trying to learn how to do just that.

And this morning, we're going to be doing that largely **from this passage** in Luke 10. But before we get there, I want to pose a question for us to think on: *what, in your opinion, is the biggest enemy to people's relationship with Jesus?* When you think of the things that often threaten life and joy in God, what would you say is the *biggest* threat of them all? **Maybe some of us would say *secularism*. Or maybe *theological liberalism* (however we would define that). Maybe we'd say it's the attempt by some to *merge together nationalism and faith* in Jesus—we saw that on full display this past week. *That's a huge problem*. Maybe you'd say the *sexual revolution*.** All sorts of different answers, but what would you say it is? What is the biggest *threat* to our relationship with Jesus?

Now obviously that question is at some level, **fairly subjective**. There's not really an empirical way to say “here's what it is.” But I'll tell you what a guy named **Dallas Willard** once said it was. Some of you may have heard of Willard—we quote him every so often around here. He was a philosopher and bible teacher who followed Jesus for over five decades before he died in 2013. Incredibly smart guy, and incredibly sharp when it came to speaking into people's lives with Jesus. Here's what *he* once said in response to that question we just asked:

Hurry is the great enemy of spiritual life in our day. You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life.

According to Willard, *hurry* is the biggest threat to our relationship with Jesus. I'm not gonna lie: the first time I read that, I honestly felt like he was overstating his case. It just doesn't seem like that is anywhere near as big a threat as the other dozen things out there interrupting and interfering with our relationship to Jesus.

And yet, the more I think about it, **the more I understand why he said that.** As a pastor, I can tell you, anytime I talk to someone about their life with Jesus—say I ask them about how their time in the Scriptures has been recently, how their prayer life is going lately, or how they're doing at discipleship—regularly pouring into other followers of Jesus—anytime I ask people about any of those things, and they say they're not going so great. Do you know what by far the #1 reason I hear for *why* they aren't going good? It's usually something like "I've just been so *busy*." "I've just had so much going on." Or similar, "I just get so easily distracted by everything going on."

So I'm *beginning* to think that **maybe Dallas Willard was onto something.** It is entirely possible that *hurry* is one of the biggest barriers to us living the type of life we could be living with God. So this morning, I want us to talk for a bit about *hurry*, I want us to talk about where it comes from, and what to do about it. Does that make sense? And that, in many ways, is what this passage we have opened in front of us is about. So to start off, take a look with me at [Luke 10](#), starting in v. 38:

*[38] Now as they (Jesus & the disciples) went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. [39] And she had a sister called Mary, who **sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching.***

That's an **important detail to remember** about Mary—we're going to come back around to her due time. For now, I want us to focus on the *other* character in the story, *Martha*. For more on her, keep reading in v. 40 with me:

*[40] But **Martha** was **distracted with much serving.***

Now, before we keep going, I want to just **point out a thing or two.** First, **this passage is not about a problem that some women have.** Hopefully to most of us that's obvious to most of us, but I do sometimes hear people talk about it as if it *is* that. So whenever I teach this passage, I just like to crush that subtle bit of sexism right off the bat. Yes, it does happen to be a woman in the passage. But this story could've just as easily been about two brothers, or two men, or a man and a woman—you name it. It could've just as easily been about a *man* that was distracted by much serving. Or a man that was distracted by his work emails. The point isn't to critique a particularly feminine problem,

but rather a human problem. A problem that all of us are susceptible to. More on that in a bit. But the point is that *guys*: you're not off the hook on this. Far from it.

Now, the *second* thing I want you to notice (to that same effect) is that it says that **Martha was "serving."** Question for you: is *serving* a bad thing? Easy answer: for followers of Jesus, *no*. Serving is a *great* thing. Serving, in many ways, should be our default posture as followers of Jesus. So that tells me that the critique implicit in this passage is not the *serving*, per se.

But there *is* a critique, so **what is it?** Well if it's not "serving," that tells me it has something to do with the word *distracted* and the word *much*. **The problem with Martha wasn't that she was serving—it was that she was *distracted with much serving*.** Martha was the type of person who was always consumed with what needed to get *done next*. I'm sure if she were around today, she would toss out phrases like "time is of the essence," and "the devil never takes a day off" or "the early bird gets the worm." She'd say things like "I'm not too busy—I'm just really *productive*." "I'm just *high capacity*." All these expressions we throw out.

And it might be a caricature in this passage, but **it is an extremely common experience, especially in our modern world.** Our society tends to *generate* people like *Martha*. We celebrate them. We give them raises. We hold them up *frequently* as examples of what it means to be contributing members of society. **This is what we think it means to be human: to live a life of constant, unceasing, overbusy activity.**

Which honestly **explains Martha's attitude** towards Mary's in the rest of v. 40. Take a look there with me:

*And she Martha went up to him (Jesus) and said, "Lord, do you not **care** that my sister has left **me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.**"*

Another frequent characteristic of people like Martha is that **they tend to hold a little bit of frustration towards those that aren't as "productive" as they are.** They often are keenly aware of all the people that get *less* done than they do, and tend to look at those people with anything from pity to outright contempt. Martha says, "Jesus—will you please tell Mary to make herself *useful*? To *do something* with her life? To stop being so lazy and unproductive?" But take a look at Jesus' response, v. 41:

*[41] **But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are **anxious and troubled about many things**, but one thing is necessary.***

Let's stop there for a bit. That's **the diagnosis from Jesus**: that Martha is "anxious and troubled about many things." The problem isn't that she's serving. The problem isn't that she's productive. The problem is that she is so concerned with a dozen different things, that she has forgotten the things that matter *most*. Has anybody found themselves *there* before? **Yeah, in a word, Martha is hurried: she is anxious and troubled and preoccupied with many things, to the neglect of things that matter most.**

And **hurry is something of an epidemic in the 21st century**. Such that psychologists and mental health professionals have given a label to this problem: they call it **"hurry sickness."** As in, a type of *illness*. Here's one way they **define** it:

(Hurry sickness is...) ...a malaise in which a person feels chronically short of time, and so tends to perform every task faster and to get flustered when encountering any kind of delay.

I think so *many* people experience this. For instance, think about the **most common answer** when you ask somebody how they're doing? How do people tend to answer that question? "I'm good—just (what?) *busy*." **When most of us say we're busy, generally what we mean is that we have more things to do than we have time to do.** We mean we are running on overload. What we mean is that we're trying to keep more plates spinning than we *know how* to keep spinning. We often mean that we are, to quote Jesus in this passage, "anxious and troubled about many things." And again: **the problem isn't that we have a lot to do—the problem is that we have *too much* to do, and we feel like the only way to get them all done is to do everything in a *hurry*.**

Now, **obviously, there are situations** in life when we *should* be hurried. If you or your spouse goes into labor and you need to get to the hospital, *hurry* is a *correct* response. If there's an emergency of some sort, *hurry* is good and needed. If you're running late to work one day and you need to get there on time, *hurry* might be necessary. There are even some *seasons* in life that dictate hurry. Say you just lost your job and you are hustling each and every day to look for and apply for a new one so you can pay the bills. *Hurry* might be completely necessary in that case. Maybe you just *became* a parent for the first time, and you're trying to figure out how to function in life, during COVID, while now trying to keep an additional human alive in your household. *Hurry* might be your **M.O. for a while**. So there are situations where hurry is unavoidable—I'm not talking about *that*.

I'm talking about **when our default mode of existence in life** is that of hurry. I'm talking about when we are in a hurry far more often than we're not. I'm talking about when we

stay in a hurry, even we don't really have any good reason to be. It's like that classic song by the band *Alabama* (which, for the record, is a great band with a terrible name):

~~*I'm in a hurry to get things done, oh I'm rushing and rushing until life's no fun. All I've really gotta do is live and die, but I'm in a hurry and don't know why.*~~

That's it. I'm talking about when we rush through life so fast that **people incur our wrath** for going just a little bit slower than we want them to. I'm talking about when we are so preoccupied with so many things that people think they are bothering us just by being *present* in our lives. That is the *harmful* kind of hurry. Does that make sense?

So **how do we know if you struggle** with hurry? Well aside from those of us that knew we did as soon as I started talking about it, let me just give you some common **symptoms**. These are mostly taken from a book called *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry* by John Mark Comer—a book that has obviously inspired large parts of this teaching. Are you ready? You may want to buckle up for these:

- **Irritability:** You are very easily irritated at anyone who takes just a little longer than they should, or anyone who doesn't adhere to the same breakneck pace of life that you do. Think of Martha in our story: "Jesus, I'm trying to prepare all this stuff and Mary is making it take longer because she's not helping."
- **Restlessness & Workaholism:** Meaning, anytime you *try* to slow down, take a day off, take a couple *hours* off—you can't do it. You feel lazy and unproductive. You need a ten-item to-do list of things to accomplish on your day off of work. You read Scripture but find it boring and unproductive. You tend to do things like watching TV while checking your phone and folding laundry and checking Twitter for the news. You don't know how to just *stop*.
- **Emotional numbness.** You start to lose the capacity to regularly empathize with other people, or even with your own pain and disappointments. Caring for other people is difficult for you because if you were completely honest, it feels like it just takes too long and too much effort to do.
- **Lack of care for your body.** You often don't get around to the basics of physical health: eight hours of sleep at night, daily exercise, a moderately healthy diet. You gain weight rapidly in unhealthy ways, you get sick several times a year. You primarily live off of some combination of caffeine, sugar, processed food, and alcohol.
- **Escapist behaviors.** The rare moments in your life that seem "restful" are actually just distractions and entertainment: overeating, overdrinking, Netflix, hours upon hours of social media, surfing the internet, porn—whatever it is for you. In your time off of work or school, you do more escaping than you do truly resting.

- **Absence of spiritual disciplines.** Ironically, when we are overbusy and overtired, we just don't have the energy to do what we need to do the most: spend time in the Scriptures, pray, rest, set time aside to regularly interact with and listen to the Spirit. It's easy to let those things fall by the wayside, because we feel like we don't have enough time to do them. Every moment is a moment we could be getting something done, and if we're honest, a lot of the time, spiritual disciplines don't feel productive.
- And lastly, **isolation.** Hurry makes us quick to feel disconnected from God and others and even ourselves. Even when you *do pray*, it's more like *trying to pray* while being distracted by the ten things you need to get done before noon. Even when you hang out with friends (if you can find the time to), you're not fully present with them because you're thinking about all the other stuff you *could be* getting done instead of hanging out.

Not to state it too strongly, but I'm pretty sure a large portion of us—maybe **most of us**—struggle with hurry. And just to be clear, that **includes me**. I'll be honest with you guys and tell you that one of the reasons I wanted to do this *teaching* and this whole *series*, is because *I* desperately need it. I am a self-diagnosed *hurry* addict. I am fairly type-A, driven, Enneagram 1 if you know what that is (basically, a perfectionist). So in my mind, there is never a shortage of things to do, accomplish, or improve upon. *I frequently* find myself irritated at anybody who doesn't move as quickly as I want them to. *I frequently* find myself thinking I need to get things done, even when I really don't. *I frequently* look like Martha in the story, frustrated and irritable at anyone who I think doesn't work as hard as I do (or at least doesn't in the moment). Candidly, some of the ugliest, most sinful moments in my life have something to do with me being in a hurry for no particular reason.

So all of that to say, there are **times** where I as your pastor get to **teach out of my strengths**—where the Holy Spirit has really done a work in my life, has really grown me in a particular area, and then I get to lead you guys through it *afterwards*, and tell you what I've learned. This teaching is *not* one of those teachings. This teaching is one where I am in the process of realizing how much of a *problem* this stuff is in my life, and am still in the weeds of setting things back to where they need to be. And I just wanted to bring you guys along for the ride, so that I wouldn't be the *only* one being convicted :)

But all that said, let's talk for just a bit about why hurry is **harmful at a spiritual level**. Because **it's not just that hurry makes us less pleasant people and makes life less pleasant. As we've said already, it's actually that constant hurry prohibits a life of genuine discipleship to Jesus.** So let's unpack for a few minutes *why* exactly that is. For this, I'm just going to read from a few people smarter than me. First, **Michael**

Zigarelli, former professor at Charleston Southern University School of Business. He actually did some *research* on all of this, and here was one of his conclusions:

It may be the case that (1) Christians are assimilating to a culture of busyness, hurry and overload, which leads to (2) God becoming more marginalized in Christians' lives, which leads to (3) a deteriorating relationship with God, which leads to (4) Christians becoming even more vulnerable to adopting secular assumptions about how to live, which leads to (5) more conformity to a culture of busyness, hurry and overload. And then the cycle begins again.

John Ortberg, a pastor in California, summarizes it like this:

*For many of us the great danger is not that we will renounce our faith. It is that we will **become so distracted and rushed and preoccupied** that we will settle for a **mediocre version** of it. We will just **skim our lives** instead of **actually living them**.*

And then Catholic writer **Ronald Rolheiser** for the kill:

*We, for every kind of reason, good and bad, are **distracting ourselves into spiritual oblivion**. It is not that we have **anything against** God, depth, and spirit. We would like these—it is just that we are **habitually too preoccupied** to have any of these show up on our radar screens. We are **more busy than bad**, more distracted than nonspiritual, and more interested in the movie theater, the sports stadium, and the shopping mall and the fantasy life they produce in us than we are in church. **Pathological busyness, distraction, and restlessness** are major blocks today within our spiritual lives.*

If I could just do a quick **mash-up of those three** different quotes into one, it would be something like this: *for a lot of us, hurry is the primary thing keeping us from a vibrant relationship with Jesus. A life of constant hurry is incompatible with discipleship to Jesus. **You cannot live in the kingdom of God with a hurried soul.***¹

Which brings us **full circle back to Mary and Martha**. Martha, who is anxious and troubled and hurried about many things, comes to Jesus and wants him to rebuke Mary for not helping out. And when she does, she gets something unexpected. Take a look back with me at the passage, and read v. 41-42 with me:

¹ This is another paraphrase of a quote from John Ortberg.

[41] *But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are **anxious and troubled about many things**, [42] but **one thing is necessary**. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.”*

So what is the “one (necessary) thing,” that Mary was faithfully doing, and that Martha should have been doing? Well, if you look back at the passage, it’s simple: she was “sitting at Jesus’ feet” and “listening to his teaching.” *Sitting with* Jesus, and *listening to* Jesus. *That*, according to Jesus, is *the necessary thing* to do. And not only is it the necessary thing—it is actually the one primary *antidote* to a hurried life for each of us.

Through the years, **followers of Jesus have called this** a number of different things. Some have called it *silence & solitude*. Some people call it a “quiet time” (which is by far the most youth campy name for it). Others, *contemplative prayer or listening prayer*. I could honestly care less what we call it—I care more about what we *do* during that time. Namely, that we find a quiet spot, distance ourselves as much as we can from noise and tasks and to-do lists, and take time to sit and listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit. *That’s* the goal. *That’s* the solution to an overhurried life.

The reason we *must* find space to do that is because a **lifestyle of hurry is never just a logistical problem**. It’s never *just* an issue of how many things you have to get done and how much time you have to do them. *Jesus* had plenty of things to get done, he was only on earth for 33 years, and he was never *hurried*. **The reason we live hurried lives is because we are actually seeking something from the hurry itself.** There is something that our souls need that we *think we can find* through hurrying. Often, it’s *significance. Importance. Value. Worth. Desirability*. **We often believe, even if it’s subconsciously, that if we are constantly in a hurry, that must mean that we matter.** If we are constantly busy, that must mean that we’re important. If our schedule is overloaded, that must mean that we’re valuable. We’re *in-demand*. We’re *desired*.

And the reality is that **in Jesus, all those things are true** of us: we *do* matter, we *are* valuable, we *are* significant, we *are* wanted. But in the kingdom of *Jesus*, we don’t have to run ourselves into the ground to know they’re true. In the kingdom of *Jesus*, those things are true of us, regardless of what or how much we get done. **One of the most liberating truths for a follower of Jesus is that our worth and our activity have nothing to do with each other.** For followers of *Jesus*, our worth and value were locked in, set in stone the moment *Jesus* died on the cross. And so any scrambling, any striving to try and establish a significance on our own for *ourselves* is simply wasted effort. **It’s an attempt to secure for ourselves what has already been secured for us at the cross.**

And **that is why the only real antidote** to an over-hurried life is to find time to sit with Jesus. Because it's there that we can clearly hear him speaking, proclaiming our identity over us. It's there that we can hear him say to us, "you *matter*, but not because of how productive or efficient you are. Or how *busy* you are." "You matter," Jesus says, "because of who *I* am and who I've made *you* to be. Because you're my son, my daughter, made in my image, and ransomed by my blood." To win the war against busyness and hurry, we need to create space in our life to hear him proclaim over us who we are, apart from anything we do or get done.

We all might **say that we believe those things** about us. But when we never slow down, we start to *functionally* forget it. Because every moment, long or short, that we take to slow down, unhurry, and be with Jesus, is an opportunity for him to speak those things into our lives. And as we internalize those things more and more, we realize that we actually *don't need* what hurry offers to us. We realize that we already possess, in Jesus, all the things that constant activity promises.

Author **John Koessler** says it this way:

*Silence and solitude are countermeasures for a world that tries to persuade us that our worth is measured by our usefulness. These experiences remind us that we have **intrinsic value** to God. We do not have to **produce to be loved and accepted** by him.*

Now, doing this—creating space for silence and solitude—might **look a number of different ways**, depending on your stage in life and situation. **For some of you, there might be very little keeping you from taking an hour or two (at least) each day to do this. Maybe you're single or married with no kids, your job isn't all that demanding. All it would take for you is waking up a little earlier, or blocking out some time when you get home from work or class to do it. For others of us, it's going to take a little more effort and creativity. Maybe you work a demanding job, and so for you, it looks more like a thirty minute chunk of time in the morning, and then a really solid Sabbath on one of your days off. Maybe you have small kids like I do, and they need you at what seems like every hour of the day. So maybe for you it looks like piecing together 10 minutes here, 15 minutes there. If you parent with someone else, maybe you take the kids in the morning so the other person can have some quiet, and then they take the kids towards the end of the day so you can.**

One of the **most freeing things**, I think, is that the bible doesn't prescribe a certain time of day or frequency or length of time for this. It can look different pending your age and stage of life and season of life and schedule. It can be in the morning, in the afternoon, in

the evening. It can be one good chunk of time per day or multiple small chunks of time throughout the day. It can be all sorts of things.

But listen: **the one thing it can't be, is optional.** The one thing it *can't* be is “yeah, when I get around to it.” The one thing it can't be is “one day I'll figure out how to work it in.” Remember Jesus' words to Martha in the passage: he says sitting and being with him is...*necessary*.” It is *necessary* to find time in your day to press pause on productivity and be with Jesus. Because it's the only way that we discover who we really are and learn to rest in his affections for us.

I think of Jesus' words in [John 15](#), v. 5-6:

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.

I can't help but think that the reason many of us feel like we're withering is because we've chosen a life of constant activity instead of a life of constantly abiding with Jesus. So the invitation today, with the cross before us and the Holy Spirit within us, is to begin reversing that decision.

So a lot of the **practices** we'll focus on together during this series are designed to “un-hurry” our lives. But I want to highlight just two of them this morning. We mentioned last week that we were putting out a [PDF Practice Guide](#) on our website. In it, the first two practices are *Silence & Solitude* and an *Unhurrying Prayer*. A quick word on each...

First, **Silence & Solitude**. This is basically what we've just been talking about this morning: carving out a period of time, or several small chunks of time throughout the day to sit and be with Jesus.

So in the practice guide, what you'll find are a **few practical tips** to help set you up for success in *Silence & Solitude*. So things like leaving your **phone** and devices in another room. Things like using **journaling** to write what you feel like you're hearing *from God*. Jot down the things you think the Spirit is saying to you. **Now journaling is also helpful** because after you jot them down, you can then **spend time in the Scriptures** to see if the things you feel like you're hearing are affirmed in the Scriptures or not. That's an important step. Remember, the Holy Spirit is never going to say things to you that run *contrary* to the things revealed in the Scriptures. So there may be something you feel like

you're hearing, but if the Scriptures don't seem to affirm that, or even outright contradict it, you can go "well maybe that was just my own thinking or feeling going on there."

Another thing that can be helpful is to take the things you feel like God is speaking and run it by other followers of Jesus in your life or LifeGroup. They, obviously, have the Spirit living in them too. So take them the things you jotted down and say "here's what I think I'm hearing—what are y'all's thoughts on that? Yay? Nay? Kind of, but here's an additional thought with that?" This is one of the many ways that community is so vital, because it's a place (just like the Scriptures) where the Holy Spirit can confirm or correct what we are all hearing from the Spirit in our individual lives.

So find some time this week to practice Silence & Solitude. I'll just go ahead and tell you honestly: the first time or even the first handful of times you do it, it's probably not going to change your life. It might even be really difficult because we are so used to activity and noise at all times. But I can tell you that if you stick with it over a longer period of time—if you make it a priority that you don't often *depart* from—God will use it to change the pace of life that you run at to be more in step with his own. Does that make sense?

Okay, the second practice that can be helpful is what we call the **Unhurrying Prayer**. Silence & Solitude is more of a *proactive* practice; this one is more of a *reactive* one. The goal with this prayer is to pray it anytime you feel yourself getting hurried or overwhelmed. So this week, when you feel the anxiety rising in your soul at how many things you have to get done and how little time you have to do them, that's a perfect time to pray this prayer. When you are grabbing lunch or dinner with a friend, and you feel yourself spiraling, thinking about all the things you need to get done, you pray this prayer. When you open your work email tomorrow morning to find fifteen unread emails, and five of them contain problems that have to be solved before lunch. Let those types of moments be a trigger to remember and pray this prayer. I think it helps to take a deep breath or two first, and then spend literally ten seconds saying this:

Father, I am concerned with many things right now, but only one thing is necessary. Help me to remember that my worth is not in what or how much I accomplish—it's not even in how busy I am, but rather in what you have done for me. Amen.

Again, I doubt praying those words one or two times is going to magically fix all the hurry in your soul. But I would bet that if you make a habit of praying that prayer each time you feel hurried, over time, it will have an impact.

And remember: like we said last week, that's the **goal with this entire series**. That **our habits**, practiced over the long haul, have the ability to form us more and more into the image of Jesus. They might feel awkward at first, but over weeks and months and years, they *will make you* more like him. So that's our prayer once again this week. That's what we want to invite you into this week. Let me pray for us, and we'll spend some time celebrating Jesus together.