

Spiritual Rhythms

SLOW DOWN

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. –Matthew 11:28–30

What we do with our hours today shapes the person we will become tomorrow. To experience the “deeper life,” we must develop spiritual practices that help us **encounter** God, **experience** the Holy Spirit, and follow Jesus’ **example**. What we do with our time, talent, and resources reflects our level of commitment to follow Jesus.

In *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*, John Mark Comer notes “If you want to experience the life of Jesus, you have to adopt the lifestyle of Jesus.”¹ Comer reminds us that time is one of our most precious resources, and we can never increase the amount of time we have. All we can do is learn to live within the limits of that “time,” and in this book he teaches us about practices to help us do just that.

The deeper life is exemplified in three of CCC’s DNA statements:²

- *We are all for Jesus.* When we center our lives on Jesus, our focus becomes clear, and our values align with his. This leads us to the practice of simplicity.
- *We are empowered by the Holy Spirit.* When we work from the outflow of the Spirit within us, we stop striving for outward success and the approval of people. This frees us to practice sabbath.
- *We encounter the Father daily.* To encounter God, we need to quiet our minds, slow our pace, and pay attention to the reality of God’s presence. These choices require slowing, silence, and solitude.

Comer encourages us to incorporate these practices in our daily lives.

SCRIPTURE BASIS

Read and reflect on Philippians 2:1–11.

- How could slowing down be a posture of humility? How might this relate to “valuing others above yourselves” (*hint*: see ideas for “slowing” on pages 223–225 in Comer’s book)?
- “In your relationships with one another” (verse 5), how can slowing down help them see the character of Christ in you? How does serving others require us to “slow down”?

Read and reflect on Luke 8:40–56.

- Imagine you are Jairus as you read this story. How would you feel about Jesus *stopping* (while on his way to heal your daughter) so that he could heal someone else?
- What can we learn from Jesus’ choice to slow down and care for those around him, even in the middle of being “on his way to do ministry”?

¹ John Mark Comer, *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry* (2021), page 82

² CCC’s DNA statements can be read here: cccomaha.org/dna

RESPONSE

- What would your week look like if you made time for “interruptions”? What if those interruptions are the ministry God has in mind for you each day?
- Reflect on the possible motive(s) behind our addiction to “hurry.”
 - Does it feed your ego? Make you feel indispensable?
 - Is it related to poor time management? Saying “yes” when you should say “no”?
 - Is it a coping mechanism to avoid facing difficult circumstances or conversations?

CHRISTIAN TRADITION

Brother Lawrence (1611–1691) was assigned to tasks in a monastery kitchen, where his cleaning and cooking helped him develop his own rule of life. He once said, “It seems like a world of trouble to bring oneself into the consciousness of God's presence. Yet it might be so simple. Is it not quicker and easier just to do our common business wholly for the love of God?” Brother Lawrence saw every chore, no matter how mundane, as an opportunity to turn his awareness to God. The motivation behind each chore was to do even small things with great love for God. His ability to slow down and experience God in each moment gave him clarity of purpose, and he recorded his reflections in the book *Practicing the Presence of God*.³

PRACTICE

Choose one or more exercises to try this week, alone or in community.

New to this practice?

- For one whole day, choose *not* to multi-task. Do only one thing at a time. Record your reflections at the end of the day.
- Cook a family meal from scratch and invite others into the preparation. Make something that takes some time to cook (such as soup or lasagna) and then take plenty of time as a family to eat it.
- Drive the speed limit—*all week long*.
- Get in the longest line at the drive through or grocery checkout—*on purpose*.
- Say, “No, thank you,” to one optional social obligation this week. Use that time for one of the practices below.

Ready to go deeper?

- Choose a piece of art online or at a museum. Sit and reflect on it for a full ten minutes without speaking or writing. What do you notice? How do you feel? How does it call your attention to God? After the ten minutes are up, write about the experience in a journal.
- Write out a passage of scripture by hand. Read it out loud. Underline words or phrases that stand out to you or give you pause. Why do you think those words or phrases were so impactful to you?

PRAYER FOCUS

Use these specific prayer prompts as catalysts to action this week.

- Creator God, thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit and the way you have shaped each of us to serve with purpose in your kingdom on earth. Give us the willingness to follow your Spirit's prompting when we are interrupted, recognizing those as opportunities for ministry. Thank you for the works you've prepared for us, and the wisdom to lean into opportunities you provide.

³ christianitytoday.com/history/people/innertravelers/brother-lawrence.html

- Jesus, walk beside us and help us pay attention to the beauties in nature, and in the faces of people we see. Give us greater awareness of your image in each person, and an appreciation for the gifts you provide us each day.

RESOURCES

Books and websites that support this week's practice:

- John Mark Comer, *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry: How to Stay Emotionally Healthy and Spiritually Alive in the Chaos of the Modern World*, (Waterbrook, 2019). See also Comer's web resources at johnmarkcomer.com/blog/unhurry. Some of the above practices are adapted from that resource.
- Ann Voskamp, *One Thousand Gifts: A Dare to Live Fully Right Where You Are*, (Zondervan, 2010)
- Ruth Haley Barton, *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation* (IVP, 2006)
- Tish Warren, *Liturgy of the Ordinary: Sacred Practices in Everyday Life*, (IVP, 2016)
- Rachel Williams, *Slow Down: 50 Mindful Moments in Nature* (Harry Abrams: 2020)
- Shauna Niequist, *Present Over Perfect: Leaving Behind Frantic for a Simpler, More Soulful Way of Living* (Zondervan, 2016)