



Devotional Reflections for the Week of June 13, 2021

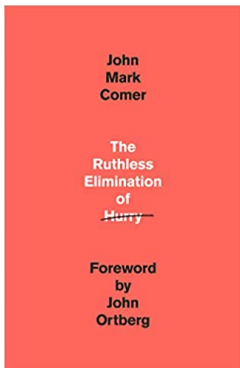
This is our second of three weeks exploring the inherent danger of the pace of our lives. This week we focus on the biblical view towards a

solution. Our reflections for this week are written by Ed Green, BCC's pastor of equipping & care.

Day 1 Be Ruthless

Let's play word association: What does the word "ruthless" call to mind? As an adjective, possibilities include "cruel," "without mercy," or "unfeeling." You may think of a certain kind of person, a criminal or even a political dictator. But notice how it's used in this version of the fourth of the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous: "Make a thorough and *ruthless* inventory of all moral defects and immoral actions." In more recent phrasing it is a call for "a searching and *fearless* moral inventory of ourselves." "Ruthless" is understood as "fearless, without concern for any possible excuses."

The idea for our sermon series this month comes from Dallas Willard, who gave this advice to his friend John Ortberg as he was going through a particularly dry season of his life and ministry: "You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life." Why? "Because hurry is the greatest enemy of the spiritual life."



Hmmm. If you were asked what the greatest enemy of the spiritual life was, what would you have said? I don't think I would have said "hurry." John Mark Comer wrote a book a couple of years ago on this very topic: *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry: How to Stay Emotionally Healthy and Spiritually Alive in the Chaos of the Modern World*. Much of our teaching in this series and written devotionals is reflective of the wisdom from Comer's book. I cannot recommend this book highly enough. I think this

would be a great resource for everyone to engage with over the next few months, as life tends to slow down a little during the summer.

What better time to reflect on how we can best emerge from this pandemic?

Day 2 More time?

Have you ever done a "time audit" for work (or even for your personal life)? The goal is to help you evaluate how efficient you are using your time. It can be a very helpful exercise. It can also be very frustrating.



Wouldn't it be great if we had a few more hours in a day? In *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, J. K. Rowling's third installment in her series, Hermione Granger makes use of a magical object called a "time

turner." With it she is able to go back in time an hour or two and take advantage of the extra time to take more classes. When I first read the book (and later watched the movie) I thought, "That would be so cool!"

Who wouldn't enjoy an extra hour or two in the day to do more stuff? How would you use that time? STOP. Now answer that question.

Here's some things I would consider:

- Read more of the stacks of books on my reading list
- Work on our downstairs renovation project
- Exercise. Walk. Hike. Bike. Run. Anything!
- Watch through the series *Person of Interest* on DVD I got for my birthday
- Learn how to play the cello (I've always wanted to)
- Work ahead on my study / sermon preparation

But would any of that actually happen? Would it end up relieving any of the time pressure I'm under? The reality is that I would probably

just fill up the time with these or other good (or not-so-good?) things and continue to feel pressured, if not more than I did before.

Why do we think that “more time” would solve the problem of our hurried lives? The problem isn’t with the amount of time we have, but how we use the time we have (it’s a cliché, but it’s true). Remember Ephesians 5:15-16! But even more than that: it’s about the kind of persons we are, as we use that time. That’s what we learn from Jesus.

Day 3 The Easy Yoke?

When I ask people “How you doing?” one response I often get is “Living the dream!” But everyone who says that—everyone—means it (to some degree) sarcastically. We are so busy pursuing the American Dream, right?! One of the nasty symptoms of hurry sickness is an almost constant sense of weariness. It goes deeper than simply needing more sleep. We need REST.

In Matthew 11:28-30 Jesus offers what has become known as the Great Invitation: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (11:28). Two chapters earlier, Matthew records this of Jesus: “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (9:36).

Weary. Burdened. Harassed. Helpless. Do any of those describe how you feel right now? For everyone (“all”) whose experience this is, Jesus offers hope. The hope of REST.



He goes on: “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.” Now, I grew up in the city. The only yoke I ever saw was on TV watching *Bonanza* or *Little House on the Prairie*. A yoke is a wooden

instrument placed over the heads and around the necks that bound two draft animals, enabling them to work together.

Personally, the idea of a yoke doesn’t sound very restful to me! But in Jesus’ day, “yoke” also described the teaching of any particular rabbi. Notice how Jesus described his yoke as someone who is gentle and humble: it is easy and light. Just what the doctor ordered for those of us with hurry sickness (and a whole host of other issues)! We are invited to take on the teaching and lifestyle of Jesus, being bound together with him. What we will discover is, over time, we will become more and more like him. And our lives, too, will be characterized by gentleness, humility, compassion, and rest.

Day 4 Choose what is better



One of my favorite scenes in all of the Indiana Jones movies occurs in *The Last Crusade*. Indy is in the cavern where there is gathered a collection of all kinds of cups

and chalices, some plain, some fancy. Present also in the cavern is a medieval knight whose task it is to guard the Holy Grail (the cup Jesus drank from at the Last Supper). He instructs the seeker about the blessing of choosing the right cup versus the consequences of choosing the wrong one. He simply says: “Choose wisely.”

Read Luke 10:38-42. Jesus comes to the home of Martha who had a sister named Mary (and also a brother named Lazarus—yes, THAT Lazarus). You remember the story: Mary is sitting at Jesus’ feet with the rest of his followers, listening to him teach. But her sister Martha is busy with the details, the expected tasks of hospitality and being a good host to her guests.

Then Martha asks Jesus to tell Mary to get up and give her a hand. Have you been there? If you’ve got brothers or sisters, you know *exactly* why Martha is upset. But instead of addressing Mary, Jesus turns to Martha and gently tells her that, among the many things that could be done in that moment, Mary has chosen what was better—actually, what was best. To sit and learn from the master.

There is both grace and truth in Jesus' words. He is gentle and loving, but he reminds Martha of what is truly important. All other things can wait.

I know that I tend to get distracted with many things that draw me away from what is best. Maybe you do, too. Comer quotes Thoreau from his memoir *Walden* (which I hadn't read since high school): "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived."

We don't want to miss what is most important, what is best. We, too, need to choose wisely.

Day 5 Trellis

I am not a farmer. I'm barely a passable gardener. There is so much in the Scriptures that reflects the agrarian cultures where they were written. So, that often presents a challenge for me to fully grasp the meaning.

One of those passages is John 15:1-8 (and the Isaiah 5 passage that it echoes). Take a few minutes to read this passage in John's Gospel as Jesus and his disciples make their way from the upper room to Gethsemane. Using the image of the vineyard and how the whole system grows and works, Jesus speaks about the importance of staying connected to him. The word several translations use for this idea is "abide." Jesus says, "Abide in me." Other translations translate this word as "remain." But I like the word *abide*.

Jesus doesn't go into great detail here about the "how," only the "what." But being practical people, we want to know how—How can I abide in him, so that he will abide in me? Jesus does speak about the importance of his teaching, and the imperative of love. These two form the foundation for a life of abiding in him.

Christians through the years have found it helpful in their pursuit of a life of "abiding" to develop what is called a "rule of life." The word for "rule" is the Latin word *regula*, which meant a straight piece of wood (think "ruler"). What we are talking about here then, using an agricultural concept again, is that of a trellis. A trellis provides



structure and support to a plant so that it can be healthy and productive, accomplishing what the gardener desires. A rule of life, then, is a set of practices intentionally chosen as part of the rhythm of your life to help you abide in Christ, in order to be and do what he desires.

Next week we will focus on a few particular practices that have consistently been helpful in resisting the hurried lifestyle that is so prevalent in our day. In the meantime, think about practices you already include and what else might be helpful for you as you seek to abide...