

Introduction

I'd like to begin with an observation. Americans want everything to happen **"as soon as possible."** In fact, they want **"as soon as possible"** to happen so **"as soon as possible"** that they don't even bother to say the whole phrase anymore. They just say **"ASAP"** instead. That illustrates something about us. We're hurried and need to slow down, and that's what I'm going to preach about today.

Sick with Hurry

In verses 7-13, Jesus sent out His 12 disciples to preach, teach, and heal. According to verse 30, they then gathered together with Him to report to Him what they had experienced and done. But **"people coming and going"** quickly interrupted them so that **"they did not even have time to eat"** to quote verse 31.

Most of us can relate to that. We're busy just as Jesus and His disciples were here so that we don't even have time to eat, which is why we have fast food restaurants. It's revealing isn't it that we don't call them **"good food"** or **"cheap food"** restaurants, although they're both (in my opinion at least). We call them **"fast food"** restaurants. Why is that? It's because that's the feature of them that appeals to us the most. They're fast. With drive-thru windows, we can even order and eat without exiting our cars. Fast food is America's major contribution to world cuisine, which shows something about us. We're busy.

But we aren't just busy. We're hurried as well. We feel and/or act rushed in what we do. That's hurry, and it has two causes.

One is a disordered schedule. We all have our **"to-do lists."** The problem is many of ours are too long. We're attempting to accomplish more things and participate in more events than we have the time for.

There's a second cause of hurry – a disordered mind. It's a fact that our circumstances can be leisurely but our thoughts and feelings in a state of rush. We aren't pressed for time. There's no objective reason

to be in a hurry but we are.

Those then are the causes of hurry – a disordered schedule and/or a disordered mind. The word **“disordered”** suggests something about it that’s true. It’s a sickness. Psychologists in fact talk about what they call **“hurry sickness.”** One defines it this way: **“A behavioral pattern characterized by continual rushing and anxiousness; a continual sense of urgency.”** Those who have that pattern act and do as quickly as they can and get flustered by even the slightest delays. With that in mind let me ask you. Do you or I have hurry sickness?

There are some signs we do. So we’re microwaving something that takes 60 seconds, waiting for the red light to turn green, or brushing our teeth – but feel the urge to do something else while we are. Or there’s what London Business School professor and executive coach Richard Jolly calls the **“sure sign.”** It’s pushing the door-close button on the elevator. He observes about that: **“Half the time, those buttons aren’t even connected to anything but a light bulb – they’re what’s called a ‘mechanical placebo.’ But even if they worked how much time have you saved? Five seconds?”** I don’t know about you, but I’ve been guilty of those things and many more.

It’s true isn’t it? We talk about people being sick with *worry*. Probably more of us though are sick with *hurry*.

Eliminate Hurry

Jesus, however, wasn’t. We can conjecture that the disciples were all pumped up by their success and couldn’t wait to preach to and to heal the crowds of people coming to them. But notice what Jesus had them do instead in verses 31 and 32. They and He got into a boat, went to a secluded place, and rested awhile. That shows us what we have to do in order to be spiritually and psychologically well. We have to slow down.

When John Ortberg was about to begin his ministry at Willow Creek, a mega church in Illinois, he called his mentor and friend Dallas Willard for some advice. He described to him the fast paced ministry at Willow

Creek and the rhythms of his family life like van-driving, baseball games, piano lessons, school orientation nights, and so on. He then asked him, **“What do I need to do to be spiritually healthy?”** There was a long pause after which Willard replied, **“Ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life.”** Ortberg, who was busy at the time, quickly responded a little impatiently: **“Okay, I’ve written that down. That’s a good one. Now what else?”** There was another long pause, after which Willard again replied, **“There is nothing else. You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life.”**

Willard was right. I know he was because that’s precisely what Jesus did in verses 31 and 32 of our text today, and in other texts like these: Matthew 14:23; Mark 1:35; 6:46; Luke 4:42; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18; 9:28 and 11:1. Suppose Jesus came in the flesh to preach one sermon to America. What would He say? One of things He’d say, I believe, is this, **“Slow down. Ruthlessly eliminate worry from your lives.”**

We must make doing so one of our highest priorities in this fast-paced culture of ours. Psychiatrist Carl Jung once declared, **“Hurry is not of the devil; hurry is the devil.”** I agree. In my view, it’s his primary strategy for defeating disciples of Jesus in America. For most of us, the serious threat isn’t that we’ll renounce our faith. It’s that we’ll become so rushed that we settle for a mediocre version of it – that we just skim the surface of our lives with Jesus instead of going deep. Think of it this way. We can’t follow Jesus at a sprint. As those texts I gave you and our text today reveal, He never was in a hurry and still isn’t. So, if we are, we’re going faster than He is and can’t follow Him.

That’s why we desperately need to do it. Slow down! Ruthlessly eliminate hurry from our lives!

Intend to Eliminate Hurry

The question is, **“How do we do that?”** It begins with intention, which is exactly where many fall short. They don’t firmly intend to eliminate it. They don’t because of how they view it.

Some view hurry as being normal. Experimenters conducted a study. They gave mice amphetamine and put them together in a group. They were all hyped up as you can imagine, running around like chickens with their heads cut off. The experimenters then put a mouse that was given no amphetamine into the group. They repeated doing so and the same thing happened each time. The single mouse with no amphetamine was soon acting as hyperactively as the mice with it were. It's like that with human beings. We just naturally conform to the social pattern around us in all respects including hurry. The people around us are rushed and stressed and we become just like them without realizing that we are. We soon come to think it's normal to be rushed and stressed and thus, don't intend not to be.

But it isn't just normal. It's good, many in our fast paced, hard-driving culture believe. Did you ever notice that the people who aren't busy seem to be the ones who talk the most about being too busy. They do that, I think, because they recognize what our cultural consensus is. Being too busy and rushed is a good and therefore admirable thing. In the business world, for instance, "**many executives see it (*being too busy and rushed*) as a badge of honor,**" to quote Richard Jolly again. If it is that, then why eliminate it from our lives.

We need to be in touch with reality. We need to see hurry for what it is not and is. It is not normal and good. It is abnormal and bad. It makes us sick spiritually and psychologically. Knowing that and wanting to be well, we intend to eliminate it from our lives. Eliminating hurry doesn't happen by accident or drift. It happens by firm intention instead.

Complete Out Our Intention

But intention alone isn't enough. We must complete our intention by decisive action. We do whatever is necessary to get hurry out of our lives. Whatever is necessary is two things.

First, we direct our to-do lists to slowing down. Our to-do lists are comprised of the demands that God, others, and we put on us. Our aim

in that regard is to be busy *with* the important ones and not too busy *because of* the unimportant ones. In a coaching session with hurry sick managers, a business consultant asked them to write down their three top priorities. He then asked them to go back over their calendars for the past year and pinpoint how much time they had spent on them. One CEO, he says, realized he had spent only about 1% of his time and energy on his three priorities. The ideal, he went on to say, is 50%. The moral is this. We need to direct our to-do lists to slowing down by ordering our calendars. We give the demands put on us only the time and energy that their value deserves and the circumstances allow.

In his book *Freedom of Simplicity*, Richard Foster suggests a practical way of doing that. Keep a record of all of our activities for one month. Then place each in one of the following categories: (1) absolutely essential; (2) important but not essential; (3) helpful but not necessary; and (4) trivial. After that, eliminate all of the activities in the last two categories and 20% in the first two.

However we do it, we need to do it. Control the demands that are put on us. We don't give time and energy to the less important ones if it makes us too busy when we do. I'd quickly state the obvious in that regard. God's demands are always the most important. So we always give to them all the time and energy they require, beginning with this one. It's that we engage Jesus and His kingdom at hand.

Anyway, that's what we need to do. Direct our to-do lists to slowing down. I say "**need to**" because doing so keeps us within our emotional limits. Most of us are concerned about living within our physical limits. So we don't play a basketball game at the break-neck speed we did years ago when we were young. We want our Achilles Tendon to be still intact when we're done. Most of us are careful to know and stay within our physical limits. We need to do the same with regard to our emotional limits. We repudiate the modern success image of the "**person on the go**" whose workload exceeds what anyone could possibly do. We learn and respect our emotional limits instead.

A second thing is necessary to eliminate hurry from our lives. The first is to direct our to-do lists to slowing down, which reflects that hurry is a choice. The second is to direct our bodies to slowing down, which reflects that it's a habit as well. Hurry has been programmed into our body parts by repeated action. We hurry, as a result, without even thinking about it. It's an automatic response that occurs apart from our conscious thought. Or to use Paul's language in Romans 7, the law of hurry is in our members or body parts.

Our aim, therefore, is to get it out. We do so by directing our bodies to slowing down. We deliberately choose to wait. Pastor Chris Harrison suggests that we practice these **"slowing exercises"** as they're called: **"don't use contractions (like ASAP), walk slowly, look around and notice things you wouldn't normally notice, be aware that you're breathing, drive in the slow traffic lane, jump in the longest line at the grocery store, let someone ahead of you, read the instructions, and turn off notifications and check-emails and texts once a day."** There are many other slowing exercises like taking 15 chews before swallowing food and not changing channels during commercials. Let's practice those in the context of our discipleship to Jesus and for the purpose of being like Him. It provides fertile ground for the Holy Spirit to work when we do. He transforms and empowers us so that we're able to eliminate hurry from our lives. We don't feel or act rushed.

Conclusion

I close this morning with a power point slide and a question. The slide (a frantic man running and looking at his watch with the words **"ASAP Inc."** beside him). The question – Is that what your life is like? If so, direct your to-do list and your body to slowing down. Or to say it another way make **"ASAP"** mean in your life **"as spiritual as possible"** not **"as soon as possible."** You'll be well spiritually and psychologically if you do.

