

## THE PROBLEM WITH HURRY

Week #1 of the 3-Week Series, "The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry"

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*So, a mentee asks his mentor, "What do I need to do to be the person I want to be?"*

And I want you to think about that question for yourself. What do you need to do to be the person you want to be? What do you need to do to be the best you? The happiest you? The most successful you?

*And the mentor answered the question, saying this: "For you to be the best you want to be, you must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life."*

*"Hurry," he said, "is the greatest enemy of our spiritual life today."*

You know, Carl Jung said, "*Hurry is not of the devil; hurry is the devil.*" Carl Jung and many others believe that hurry is at the root of all our problems. Hurry is the cause of our unhappiness, our frustration, and the toxicity in the world.

Reading that, I thought to myself, "*Is that a little bit exaggerated or extreme? Or is it true?*" How many people would say that you have a very busy life and are often in a hurry? How many people would say that you always have more things to do than you have time to do it in? How many people would say that you always feel kind of behind and you're always working hard to just try and catch up? And last one: how many people would say that you have this chronic level of anxiety and always feel a sense of urgency to get things done to anybody?

And the fact is: we are all busy. College students are busy. Young parents are busy. CEOs are busy. Employees are busy. Baristas are busy! [Congregants laugh] Even people who are retired are busy!

So today we begin a three-week series on a book I'm reading now called *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry* by John Comer. And today we're going to look at "The Problem of Hurry."

Comer says that hurry is an epidemic and it does us all more harm than we even realize. He says we're all too busy in our lives to live emotionally-healthy, spiritually-rich and vibrant lives. Because busyness doesn't just make us feel stressed and exhausted; it actually disconnects us from ourselves. And it disconnects us from the things that really matter most in our lives.

And so the question is: Why? Why are we so busy? Why are we always in a hurry? And here are seven reasons.

The first one is: busy is a status symbol in our culture. We like the busy one. The busy one is the one who is successful. The busy one is thought of as being important and productive. We want to be seen as someone with a great work ethic. You know, "*He stays up late and pulls all nighters. He works so hard!*" We love the status that comes with being busy.

The second one is: we are busy in a hurry because we have this drive for life that we want to succeed. We want to achieve. We want to make more money. We want the promotion. You know, bigger, better, faster, higher. We have that drive!

The third one is fear. The fear that you're just not enough and, "*I'd better get mine before someone takes mine.*" "*There's not enough money.*" "*There's not enough time.*" You know, "*There's just not enough and I got to go after it.*"

The fourth one is: too much to do. And some of that might be a function of poor time management, but I think it's often a function of over-committing. How many people have ever said "Yes" to many things to

the point that it was taking up some of your family time and personal time, and you regretted it? You thought, "*Oh, why did I do that?*" We keep doing it! But we will pause and ask ourselves, "*Why do we do it?*"

The next one, I think is that: we get a bit of a rush out of doing things at the last second. There's this little adrenaline rush or this dopamine hit that we get. We kind of like it. And then we tell ourselves, "*Wow, look how much I got done in such a short time.*" You know, look how efficient I was, even though it was at the last minute.

Sixth one is: societal pressure, especially from technology, to go fast. Like, you ever send someone a text and it's like two minutes later and it's like, "*What's taking them so long?!?*" [Congregants laugh] We think we've got to answer texts and emails back both ways, you know fast. We feel like we got to be in a hurry.

And then the last one is: personal pressure. Any Type A personalities in the house? Okay. I mean, some. Ronald Rolheiser coined the term "pathological busyness." He said that we are habitually preoccupied because we are always so busy and always in a hurry. You know, "*I've got to go; I'm in a hurry. I've got to get there; I've got to be there! I've got to finish this; I've got to do that.*"

You know, we create a hurry mindset that puts a level of pressure and has everything feel like it's got a sense of urgency, even when it's not real. And that mindset of hurry, you know, creates this imaginary stress ... or adds to it, at least.

And sometimes we end up making mountains out of molehills. You know, "*The sky is falling!*" kind of energy for me to get this thing done. "*There'll be trouble; there'll be problems if I don't get this done.*"

And so, every one of us have been conditioned to believe that busy and being in a hurry is normal. It's needed; it's natural; it's necessary for us to have a successful life in this modern world.

Anybody ever ask you, "*Hey, how are you doing?*" And you say, "*Well, I'm good; just busy.*" You ever ...? You know, when someone asks you a question, isn't "*Hey, I'm just busy*" or "*I'm really busy, I'm really busy!*" becomes a part of asking, "*How are you?*" "*I'm busy.*"

Now, we have to admit that there are levels of busyness that are absolutely required if you want to be productive; if you want to be effective and successful and not waste time or procrastinate in our lives. And there are times when you're in a hurry -- when it's a 911 emergency -- there are absolute times. But the majority of our lives are not in those. And yet we act like it is.

You know, hurry is actually harmful. They're doing a lot more studies now to see that there is a negative impact in constantly being in a rush, constantly hurrying and being busy in our lives. And here are three ways that hurry harms us.

The first one is **hurry disconnects us spiritually**. This author is a minister and here's what he wrote. He said, "*Busyness and sin have both the same effect. They cut our connection off to God, to others, and our own soul by pulling our attention away from God, our spiritual life, and our spiritual practice.*"

Sometimes busy pulls us away from our spiritual practice. I'm sure every one of us has said at some point, "*You know, I was just too busy to pray today. I was so busy, I forgot to pray.*"

You know, God created and rested. God did not create hurry. You know, if you look at all the words in the Scriptures that have to do with God and do with spirituality, they are the exact opposite of the words that describe hurry.

Anything to do with God is calming, peaceful, and soothing. The 23rd Psalm: *"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me besides the still waters. He restores my soul."* The exact opposite of hurry.

Jesus said, *"Come to me, all who are weary and heavy burdened, and I will give you rest."*

The Book of Isaiah said, *"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."*

Notice it didn't say, *"The Lord is my shepherd, I'd better go faster."* Or, *"The Lord is my shepherd; I'd better look busy."* Hurry does not deepen our spiritual life. Hurry doesn't deepen our spiritual connection; in fact, it blocks it. And it denies the three core realities of the kingdom of heaven, and that is peace, love, and joy. Hurry is incompatible with these three things. You know, when we're in a hurry, we are absolutely disconnected from the moment, and we are not connected to peace or joy or love.

You know, all the things we do with hurry can be done as well, if not better, without hurry. You know, to live without hurry means to do calmly and efficiently with strength and joy that which really matters.

You know, everybody wants a deeper spiritual life, deeper levels of fulfillment. And what we need to learn to do is to overcome hurry so that it doesn't have us feel disconnected and blocked from the very connection; to peace, love, and joy, and God that we desire.

The second thing that a hurry does is that it not only disconnects us spiritually, but **it drains us emotionally**. Everybody remember Alice in Wonderland? You remember the white rabbit, who was kind of always obsessed with time? And remember that thing he said? *"I'm late! I'm late for a very important date. No time to say hello, goodbye; I'm late, I'm late, I'm late!"* You can almost feel the stress watching this and hearing this. *"I'm late. I'm late!"* But we're kind of like that rabbit sometimes. We are constantly going and stressing ourselves.

And we think it just leads to sometimes exhaustion, but it can lead to depression and even burnout. In our culture, we celebrate productivity, busyness. We celebrate all this, but we don't always take into account the cost and the toll it has on us: on our health, on our happiness, on our well-being, on our relationships.

We like to overdo things in life. I have lived by the adage -- I'm sure many of us -- that if some is good, more is better, and too much is just right! [Congregants laugh]

So, where in your life are you overdoing it? Where in your life are you over committing? Where in your life are you always in a hurry?

You know, there's a phrase I heard as a kid that I did not like, but that absolutely I knew was true. And that is: *"All things in moderation."* You know, so, it's saying don't overdo it. You know, don't burn yourself out.

Listen to this fabulous line in the Book of Ecclesiastes, Chapter 4, Verse 6. It says, *"Better one handful with tranquility than two handfuls with toil and chasing the wind."* [Repeats] Better one handful with tranquility than two with toil and chasing after the wind.

Hurry harms us by disconnecting us spiritually, draining us emotionally, and **distracting us mentally**. The Apostle Paul wrote, *"Do not conform to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."* And what it is really saying is: our minds get distracted. That's why they need renewing, because they get distracted easily and frequently.

I'll tell you three of the things that creates more distraction in our lives in history have been these three: the internet, social media, and the iPhone. This book actually said -- and I don't believe it -- that we look at our phones 2,617 times a day. I do not believe that. That would be my full-time job to be touching my

phone if ... However, I looked up some other stats, and it says that we touch our phones every 10 minutes, which means we touch our phones about 144 times a day. I mean it is absolutely ... And we spend about 5.4 hours either looking at our phone or fiddling with it in some way -- not actually being on the phone. Isn't that crazy? Is that distracting, or what?

And so, access to all this information -- this information overload -- access to all this stuff impacts us in ways that we don't realize; that it actually harms our social and interpersonal skills. It decreases our IQ. It reduces our attention span. Do you know in 2000 our attention span was 12 seconds? Do you know what it is today? It's eight. Just to put it in context, the fish -- the attention span of a fish -- is nine seconds. We got to work it out to catch up to fish! [Congregants laugh] In terms of ... we are so distracted; so easily distracted.

You remember when -- and our memories are not as good! Do you remember when you have to memorize phone numbers? We don't have to do that now. Remember when you had to like actually spell? We don't have to spell anymore. I mean, our mental capacity is being lost because we are over reliant and are constantly distracted by some of these technologies.

So let me ask you a question. When it comes to your relationship with your phone, would you say you're addicted? Or would you at least say that you're highly distracted? How many people say you're highly distracted? How many would say you are addicted? Okay. And either way, it's a lot. I mean, it is incredible.

And you know what they're saying? Is that more and more of these apps are being created just to get your attention; just to attract. Because when they get your attention, they can get your money. And so sometimes this constant distraction is just not great. And you know what happens: we become what we give our attention to. *"As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."* So our minds are being distracted away, and that energy could be used for creativity; you know, for more positive and productive experiences in our lives. But we just give it away.

So, here's four things we can do to begin to ruthlessly eliminate hurry from our lives.

The first one is **BE AWARE OF THE HURRY**. Eckhart Tolle said the very first step of anything you want to change and transform in your life is to be aware of what's going on. Aware of what's wrong; aware of what isn't working; aware of what negativity that we are creating in our lives and what ways we are blocking our good.

And so, it's important for us to be aware. And this week I want you to pay attention and be aware of how hurry shows up in your life. You know, pay attention to where you're feeling urgency and a sense of anxiety. You know, what you think you have to do or how you're obsessed with time.

And also just notice: How is hurry affecting your peace of mind? How is hurry affecting your health, your happiness, your work, and your relationship? And all you need to do is just start by just being aware. Just be aware of the way that -- the role -- that hurry plays in our lives. Be aware of the where and the how hurry is affecting us.

The second thing is **HAVING AN INTENTION FOR LIVING WITH EASE AND GRACE**. So let me ask you: Could you imagine yourself living a life that's not hurried? Could you imagine yourself not always rushing or feeling less anxious? And feeling more calm, more peaceful, more joyful, and more effective in the way that you do all the things you do in your life?

Awareness is number one, but the second thing we need to do is to have an intention of how we want to show up in life; an intention of how we want to live; and an intention of how we want to live our lives without worry.

*"I choose to live my life with ease and grace."*

Together: [with congregants] *"I choose to live my life with ease and grace."* Take a deep breath and let the power of those words and that intention into your heart and mind.

And now half voice: [with congregants] *"I choose to live my life with ease and grace."* Deep breath.

*"I do all things calmly, efficiently, and joyously."*

Together: [with congregants] *"I do all things calmly, efficiently, and joyously."* Deep breath.

And now half voice: [with congregants] *"I do all things calmly, efficiently, and joyously."*

Intention is a powerful thing. And particularly when things aren't going as well as we'd like, having an intention of how we would like to move beyond that to create new patterns is powerful and important. And the reason I say that, and particularly in this situation, is because: think of all the technology that distracts you now. Well, can you imagine in 20 or 30 years how much even more distracted we might be?

When Jesus said, *"What good is it for us to gain the whole world and forfeit our soul?"* And that's to say: What good is it to keep getting all these technological things -- that impress us to do all these things so quickly and amazingly -- but lose connection with our souls? Lose connection with our peace and our joy? Because we're always so busy and in a hurry being distracted and allowing our minds to be so.

*"I choose to live my life with ease and grace."*

Together: [with congregants] *"I choose to live my life with ease and grace."*

*"I do all things calmly, efficiently, and joyously."*

Together: [with congregants] *"I do all things calmly, efficiently, and joyously."* Deep breath.

The third way to begin reducing and moving towards eliminating hurry is to **QUIET OUR MINDS**. Psalm 46, Verse 10 says, *"Be still and know that I am God."* And what it is saying is that stillness is essential to know and to feel, to connect and experience the living loving presence of God. Stillness is needed to feel peace. Stillness is needed to feel love and joy.

And so my question for you, which is the opposite ... still is the opposite of hurry. And so my question for you is: What quiets your mind and helps you be still? And maybe it is taking a hike in nature. Maybe it is breathing and just focusing on your breath. Or practicing mindfulness. Maybe it's exercise; maybe yoga or swimming. Or reading poetry.

Whatever it is, I invite every one of us to consistently quiet our minds: to disconnect from hurry and busy, and find that peace of God that surpasses all human understanding. That even in the midst of it, find a way to center ourselves and quiet ourselves in our true nature, which is peace, love and joy.

And then the last one is for us to **REDUCE SOME OF THE DISTRACTION**. Everybody remember that story when Mary and Martha had invited Jesus for dinner, and Martha's preparing, and then Mary sitting at Jesus' feet? And then Martha starts complaining that she's doing all the work. And Jesus says, *"Martha, Martha; you are worried and distracted by many things. But Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."*

So he's saying you're distracted with all kinds of things, but Mary has chosen the better part. So, she chose to listen. She chose to be still. She chose to be present versus being distracted.

And so, let us all choose the better part this week. What is a distraction in your life that you can give up this week? What about if ... What if I said to you: *"Here's a way to reduce your distraction; turn your cell*

*phone off for 24 hours.*" I could tell half of us in this room have 10 reasons already why that's not a good idea! [Congregants laugh] Because someone at work will need us! You know, it's like *"My spouse is pregnant, or there might be an emergency."* We come up with all kinds of reasons!

How about turning off the TV? Or no social media for 24 hours? Or no radio? Or having a silent day where you do not speak at all? In what way would you like ... [Laughs with congregants] It's going to be harder than I thought! In what way would you reduce the distraction in your life?

You know, I went on this vacation once, and I'm really kind of addicted to my phone. And I forgot my phone. I went to Cancun. I forgot my phone. And at first, I was about to lose it. [Congregants laugh] But you know what happened? By the second day, I forgot it and had the best vacation ever. And amazing. You know what happened? Everybody survived without me. [Congregants laugh] Hard to believe!

And that's the kind of stories we tell ourselves. All this emergency is going to go on; somebody's going to really need me. And really the truth is that it was probably one of the best things I ever did for myself.

So Bob found out he was about to inherit \$2 billion when his elderly father passes away. His father had taken a lot of measures to hide their wealth, so it wasn't really very obvious. After finding out this, Bob decided he wanted to find a woman to marry to enjoy this and to take care of him in his older years. So he went to the singles bar, where he spotted the most beautiful woman he ever saw. Absolutely captivated by her – almost took his breath away.

And he went up to her, and he said, *"I may look like an ordinary guy, but just in a few weeks or so, my elderly father will die, and I will inherit two billion dollars. And I'm looking for a woman to spend my life with and to share it with me."*

Impressed, the woman took his business card. And then three days later, she became Bob's stepmom. [Congregants laugh] Was that groaning? [Congregants laugh] Woo!

You know, if you look at life, you can see the evolution of the speed of life. Mahatma Gandhi said, *"There is more to life than increasing its speed."* Because, when you look at it, life used to be slow -- at a pedestrian pace. And now it's fast -- at a frantic pace. We used to walk everywhere and now we've got planes, trains, and automobiles that will take us there so fast. We used to grow our own food; now we can go to the grocery store and pick it up. Or even more, we get Uber Eats to deliver it right to our door. We used to write letters. Remember that? Now we just send texts and emails. No, AI will even write your stuff for you. Before Thomas Edison, you know how many hours of sleep we used to get? We used to have? Eleven. And now it's seven. So, we gained four hours there.

Futurists in the 1960s projected in the future ... You know what the worst problem they projected would be? Too much leisure time. We have gained so much time; yet, we are so busy and yet, we are in such an incredible rush. And do you think it's a coincidence that Americans are reporting that we are more unhappy than we've ever been? More angry than we've ever been? More depressed and more alone than we've ever been?

At the beginning, when I read that thing about how hurry is the devil and hurry is the worst enemy against our spiritual life, I was a little skeptical. As I've gone on more, I've realized, *"Wow; there's a lot of truth in that."* Pathological business absolutely disconnects, drains, and distracts us from the very thing we're seeking: peace, love, and joy. To choose an unhurried life in this day and age, you know, is like choosing a vow of poverty centuries earlier. It's bold; it's scary; and it's an act of faith. And it is absolutely contrary to how we are conditioned and trained to live in our culture.

But I would say if we were to be bold and daring enough to make that intention, on the other side of it there would be greater peace, greater joy and love that we have known. But the thing is: we must first face and embrace the problem of hurry. God bless you all.

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