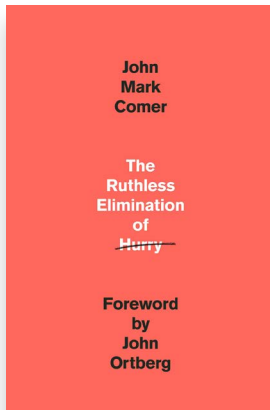


EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES

convenenow.com/executive-summaries



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Mark Comer
John Mark Comer is pastor for teaching and vision at Bridgetown Church in Portland, Oregon.

The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry

THE SUMMARY

WaterBrook / Penguin Random House 2019

Prologue: Autobiography of an epidemic

Five years ago. It's Sunday night, 10 p.m. Cracked open a beer. On the couch watching an obscure kung fu movie nobody's ever heard of. Chinese with subtitles. I taught six times that day—yes, *six*. The church I pastor just added *another* gathering. That's what you do, right? Make room for people?

But the thing is, I feel like a ghost. Half alive, half dead. More numb than anything else; flat, one dimensional. Emotionally I live with an undercurrent of nonstop anxiety that rarely goes away, and a tinge of sadness, but mostly I just feel blaah spiritually . . . empty. It's like my soul is hollow.

My life is so fast. And I like fast. I'm type A. Driven. A get-crap-done kind of guy. But we're well past that now. I work six days a week, early to late, and it's *still* not enough time to get it all done. Worse, I feel *hurried*. Like I'm tearing through each day, so busy with life that I'm missing out on the moment. And what is life, but a series of moments?

Monday morning. Up early. In a hurry to get to the office. Always in a hurry. Another day of meetings. I freaking hate meetings. I'm introverted and creative and I get bored way too easily. But our church grew really fast. We grew by over a thousand people a year for seven years straight.

The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry

I thought this was what I wanted. I mean, a fast-growing church is every pastor's dream. But some lessons are best learned the hard way: turns out, I don't actually *want* to be the CEO/executive director of a nonprofit/HR expert/strategy guru/leader of leaders, etc.

I got into this thing to teach the way of Jesus. Is *this* the way of Jesus?

Who am I becoming? I just hit thirty (level three!), so I have a little time under my belt. I envision myself at forty. Fifty. Sixty.

It's not pretty. I see a man who is "successful," but by all the wrong metrics: church size, book sales, speaking invites, social stats, Wikipedia page. In spite of all my talk about Jesus, I see a man who is emotionally unhealthy and spiritually shallow. I'm basically who I am today . . . but older and worse: stressed out, on edge, quick to snap at the people I love most, unhappy, preaching a way of life that sounds better than it actually is. Oh, and always in a hurry.

Why am I in such a rush to become somebody I don't even like? I don't want this to be my life. What's that leadership axiom? "As go the leaders, so goes the church?" Dang, I sure hope our church doesn't end up like me.

Here it is: *What if I changed my life?*

So I demote myself. We're a multi-site church, and I leave the largest church in the suburbs to pastor the smaller one downtown. It's much smaller. On way harder ground, urban Portland is a secular wonderland. My dream is to slow down, simplify my life around abiding. Walk to work. Work fewer hours. Date my wife. Play with my kids. Detox from Netflix. Practice Sabbath. Walk the dog before bed. You know, *live*.

In a way, I'm the worst person to write about hurry. I'm the guy angling at the stoplight for the lane with two cars instead of three; the guy bragging about being the "first to the office, last to go home"; the fast-walking, chronic-multitasking speed addict (to clarify, not *that* kind of speed addict). Or at least I was. Not anymore. I found an off-ramp from that life. So maybe I'm the best person to write a book on hurry? You decide.

PART ONE: THE PROBLEM

Hurry: the great enemy of spiritual life

John Ortberg calls up Dallas Willard and asks, "What do I need to do to become the me I want to be?"

There's a long silence on the other end of the line. According to John, with Willard there's always a long silence on the other end of the line.

The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry

Then: “You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life.”

John scribbles that line down in his journal. “Okay, what else?”

Another long silence. “There is nothing else. Hurry is the great enemy of spiritual life in our day. You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life.”

I live in one of the most secular, progressive cities in America, but if you were to ask me, “What is the great challenge to your spiritual life in Portland?” I’m not sure what I’d say.

Most likely I’d say it’s modernity or post-modernity or liberal theology or popularization of the prosperity gospel or the redefinition of sexuality and marriage or the erasure of gender or internet porn or the millions of questions people have about violence in the Old Testament or the fall of celebrity pastors or Donald Trump. I don’t know. How would you answer that question?

I bet very few of us would default to “hurry” as our answer.

Recently I ran the vision of our church by my therapist, who is this Jesus-loving, uber-smart PHD. Our dream was to re-architect our communities around apprenticeship to Jesus. (That feels so odd to write because what else would we be doing as a church?) He loved it but kept saying the same thing: “The number one problem you will face is time. People are just too busy to live emotionally healthy and spiritually rich and vibrant lives.”

Love, joy, and peace are at the heart of all Jesus is trying to grow in the soil of your life and all three are incompatible with hurry. If you don’t believe me, next time you’re dragging the family (or if you’re single, the roommate) out the door, pay attention to your heart. Is it love and joy and peace you feel? Of course not.

Not only does hurry keep us from the love, joy, and peace of the kingdom of God—the core of what all human beings crave—but it also keeps us from God *himself* simply by stealing our attention. With hurry, we always lose more than we gain. Very little can be done with hurry that can’t be done better without it. Especially our lives with God and even our work for God.

Do you see what’s at stake here? It’s not just our emotional health that’s under threat, as if that’s not enough. We move so fast through life that we’re stressed out, on edge, quick to snap at our spouses or kids. But it’s even more terrifying that our spiritual lives hang in the balance. Could it be that an over busy, digitally distracted life of speed is the greatest threat to spiritual life that we face in the modern world?

A brief history of speed

As far back as approximately 200 BC, people were complaining about what the “new” technology

The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry

was doing to society. The Roman playwright Plautus turned anger into poetry: “The gods confound the man . . . Who in this place set up a sun-dial to cut and hack my days so wretchedly into small portions.”

Most historians point to 1370 as the turning point in the West’s relationship to time. That year the first public clock tower was erected in Cologne Germany. Before that, time was natural. You went to bed with the moon and got up with the sun. Days were long and busy in the summer, short and slow in the winter. But the clock changed all that: it created artificial time—the slog of the nine-to-five *all year long*. We stopped listening to our bodies and started rising when our alarms droned their oppressive siren—not when our bodies were done resting. We became more efficient, yes, but also more machine, less human being.

Then in 1870 you had Edison and the light bulb, which made it possible to stay up past sunset. Okay, brace yourself for this next stat: before Edison the average person slept eleven hours a night. Yes, *eleven*. Now, at least in America, we’re down to about seven as the median number of hours of sleep per night. Is it any wonder why we’re exhausted all the time?

About a century ago technology started to change our relationship to time yet again, this time with so-called labor-saving devices. Yet in spite of our smartphones and programmable coffeemakers and dishwashers and laundry machines and toasters, most of us feel like we have *less* time, not more. The internet alone has changed the world, and not just for the better.

All of this reached a climax in 2007 (on par with 1440 when Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press): Drumroll... The year Steve Jobs released the iPhone into the wild.

Psychologists make the point that the vast majority of American’s relationship to their phones falls at least under the category of “compulsion”—we *have* to check that last text, click on Instagram, open that email, etc. But most of us are past that to full-on addiction.

To summarize: after millennia of slow, gradual acceleration, in recent decades the sheer velocity of our culture has reached an exponential fever pitch. My question is simple. What is all this distraction, addiction, and pace of life doing to our *souls*?

Something is deeply wrong

Not to play armchair psychologist, but I’m pretty sure we *all* have “hurry sickness.” Hurry is a form of violence on the soul. Here are my ten symptoms of hurry sickness.

1. *Irritability* — You get mad, frustrated, or just annoyed *way* too easily. Little, normal things irk you. Look at how you treat those closest to you.

The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry

2. *Hypersensitivity* — All it takes is a minor comment, a grumpy email, or a little turn of events to set you off. You can't seem to roll with punches
3. *Restlessness* — When you actually do try to slow down and rest, you can't relax. You multitask while watching TV. You go to bed early but toss and turn. Your mind and body are hyped up on the drug of speed.
4. *Workaholism (or just nonstop activity)* — You just don't know when to stop. Or worse, you *can't* stop. At the end of the day you have "sunset fatigue" and nothing left to give to your spouse, children, or loved ones.
5. *Emotional numbness* — You don't have the capacity to *feel* another's pain. Or your own pain for that matter.
6. *Out-of-order priorities* — You feel disconnected from your identity and calling. You get sucked into the urgent, not the important. You still haven't gotten around to all the things you *said* were most important in your life.
7. *Lack of care for your body* — You don't have time for the basics: eight hours of sleep, daily exercise, home-cooked food.
8. *Escapist behaviors* — When we're too tired we turn to the distraction of choice: overeating, overdrinking, binge-watching Netflix, browsing social media, looking at porn — and getting stuck in socially acceptable addictions.
9. *Slippage of spiritual disciplines* — When you get over busy, the things that truly give life are the first to go rather than your first *go to*.
10. *Isolation* — You feel disconnected from God, others, and your own soul. You're so stressed and distracted that you can't settle down long enough to enjoy the Father's company in prayer. Same with your friends.

All the contemplatives agree that *attention* leads to *awareness*. The mystics point out that what's missing in our lives is awareness. Meaning, in the chronic problem of human beings experiencing distance from God, God isn't usually the culprit. God is omnipresent—there is no place where God is not, and no time he isn't present in either. Our *awareness* of God is the problem, and it's acute.

So many people live without a sense of God's presence. Could it be said that, with a few exceptions, we're the ones who are absent, not God? We sit around sucked into our phones or TV or to-do lists, oblivious to the God who is around us, with us, *in us*, even more desirous than we are for relationship.

The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry

This is why I harp on technology. I fear for the future of the church. There is more at stake here than our attention spans, because *what you give your attention to is the person you become*.

Some of the most sincere and honest people I know tell me that when they get into the presence of God, they just can't pay attention. If we lose our capacity to pay attention to God—for long, or even short, lengths of time—who knows who we'll become.

You see, not only is hurry toxic to our emotional health and spiritual lives, but it's also symptomatic of much deep issues of the heart. I love how John Ortberg framed it: "Hurry is not just a disordered schedule. Hurry is a disordered heart."

PART TWO: THE SOLUTION

Hint: the solution isn't more time

On a regular basis I catch myself saying, "I wish there were ten more hours in a day." Even as I mouth it, I realize my logic is flawed. I'd fill those hours up with good things, even great things. I'd use up my extra ten hours and then some. Same problem again.

The solution to an over busy life is *not* more time. It's to slow down and simplify our lives around what really matters.

We can't do it all. We simply can't see, read, watch, taste, drink, experience, be, or do it all. Not an option.

We have limitations. Lots of them. Our bodies. Our minds. Our giftings. Our personalities and emotional wiring. Our families of origin. Our socioeconomic origins. Our educations and careers. Our seasons of life and their responsibilities. Our eighty or so years of life. God's call on our lives. Nobody has more than twenty-four hours in a day.

What if these limitations aren't something to fight but to gratefully accept as a signpost to God's call on our souls? Peter Scazzero: "We find God's will for our lives in our limitations."

Life is a series of choices. Every yes is a thousand nos. Every activity we give our time to is a thousand other activities we can't give our time to. Because, duh, we can't be in two places at once.

Do you ever catch yourself with the sneaking suspicion that you'll wake up on your deathbed with this nagging sense that somehow, in all the hurry and busyness and frenetic activity, you missed the most important things?

The terrifying aspect of these conversations for me is that most of us waste copious amounts of time.

The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry

Myself included. For all the talk about hurry and overload, most of it is self-inflicted. Recent research suggests the average guy spends ten thousand hours playing video games by age twenty-one.

Ten thousand hours. My mind jumps to the research around this rule; in ten thousand hours you could master any craft or become an expert in any field—from Sumerian archeology to Olympic water polo. You could get your bachelor's degree *and* your master's degree. You could memorize the New Testament. Or, you could beat level four of *Call of Duty*.

Every day is a chance. Every hour an opportunity. Every moment a precious gift. How will you spend yours? Will you squander them on trivial things? Or invest them in the eternal kind of life?

How do we slow down, simplify, and live deliberately right in the middle of the chaos of the noisy, fast-paced, urban, digital world we call home?

Well, the answer, of course, is easy. Follow Jesus.

The secret of the easy yoke

We read the stories of Jesus—his joy, his resolute peace through uncertainty, his un-anxious presence, his relaxed manner and how in the moment he was—and think, *I want that life*. We hear his open invite to “life . . . to the full” and think, *Sign me up*. We hear about his easy yoke and soul-deep rest and think, *Gosh, yes, heck yes. I need that*. But then we're not willing to adopt His lifestyle.

Here's a conviction of mine. The Western church has lost sight of the fact that the way of Jesus is just that: a way of life. It's not just a set of ideas (what we call *theology*) or a list of dos and don'ts (what we call *ethics*). I mean, it is that, but it's so much more. It's a way of life based on that of Jesus himself. A lifestyle.

If you want to experience the life “to the full” of Jesus, his nonstop, conscious enjoyment of God's presence and the world, all you have to do is adopt not only his theology and ethics *but also his lifestyle*. Just follow his way. That's it.

Just take his life as a template for your own. Take on his habits and practices. As an apprentice, copy your Rabbi's every move. After all, that's the whole point of apprenticeship.

People all over the world—outside the church and in—are looking for an escape, a way out from under the crushing weight to life this side of Eden. But there is no escaping it. The best the world can offer is a temporary distraction to delay the inevitable or deny the inescapable.

That's why Jesus doesn't offer us an escape. He offers us something far better and that's “equipment.” He offers his apprentices a whole new way to bear the weight of our humanity with ease. At his side.

The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry

Like two oxen in a field, tied shoulder to shoulder. With Jesus doing all the heavy lifting. At his pace. Slow, unhurried, present in the moment, full of love and joy and peace. An easy life isn't an option; an easy yoke is.

What we're really talking about is a rule of life

Over a millennium ago, monastic orders and often entire communities would choose to do life around a rule of life. A rule was a daily schedule and set of practices to order your life around the way of Jesus in community. It was a way to keep from getting sucked into the hurry, business, noise, and distraction of regular life. A way to slow down. A way to live into what really matters which is what Jesus called *abiding*. Key relationships with family and community. The work God has set before us. A healthy soul. You know, the good stuff.

Following Jesus has to make it onto your schedule and into your practices or it will simply never happen. Apprenticeship to Jesus will remain an idea, not a reality in your life. But here's the rub. Most of us are too *busy* to follow Jesus.

Yet most of us have more than enough time to work with, even in the busy seasons of life. We just have to reallocate our time to "seek first the kingdom of God," not the kingdom of entertainment. (Sometimes I'll suggest to people that they keep a time log for a week; when they do, they are usually *shocked* at how much time they give to trivial things.)

In our relationship with Jesus, we get out what we put in. This isn't some legalistic quilt trip. This is an *invitation*. To the life we actually ache for. A life that can be found only by moving through the world shoulder to shoulder with Jesus.

So I guess we come to a crossroads. A get-on-or-get-off moment. Are you ready to schedule a practice (or two) to create space for life with Jesus? To make room for love and joy and peace to become your default settings?

Are you ready to arrange (or rearrange) your days so that Jesus' life becomes your new normal?

INTERMISSION: Wait, what are the spiritual disciplines again?

Before we move on to the four core practices that I find the most helpful in slowing down to experience health and life with Jesus, let me offer a brief summary of what the practices of Jesus (or what most call the spiritual disciplines) are.

If you want to emulate (or eschew) the life of Steve Jobs or Barack Obama or [insert your biography of choice], you don't just look at what he or she said *said* or *did*; you look at *how* he or she *lived the details of day-to-day life*. If you're smart, you copy those details, make the individual's habits your

The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry

habits; his or her routine, your routine; his or her values, your values in the hope that it will foster a similar kind of result in your own more ordinary life.

So, this person went to X law school, you go to X law school. He or she read an hour a day, you read an hour a day. The individual was famous for an afternoon power nap? You buy a couch for your office. You copy all these details because you know the person you will eventually become is the cumulative effect of thousands of tiny, seemingly mundane, or even insignificant details, that in the end function like compound interest and create a life.

The four Gospels are biographies. I would argue that these stories about the details of Jesus' life have just as much to teach us about life in the kingdom as his teachings or miracles. I mean that. Now, Jesus' life rhythms, or the details of his lifestyle, have come to be called the "spiritual disciplines." I prefer to call them the "practices of Jesus." Or just call them the habits of Jesus.

Like all habits, they are a means to an end. They are a trellis. The point of a trellis isn't to make the vines stand up straight in neat rows, but rather to attain a rich, deep glass of wine. It's to create space for the vine to grow and bear fruit.

Ironically, the practices are almost never commanded by Jesus. He never commands you to walk up in the morning and have a quiet time, read your Bible, live in community, practice Sabbath, give your money to the poor, or any of the core practices from his way.

He just *does these practices* and then says, "Follow me." He simply set the example of a new way to "carry life" and then he turned around and said, "If you're tired of the way you've been doing it and want rest for your souls, then come, take up the easy yoke, and copy the details of my life."

You still with me? Now we're ready to drill down on the easy yoke.

PART THREE: FOUR PRACTICES FOR UNHURRYING YOUR LIFE

Silence and solitude

In the Gospels, in Luke's in particular, you can chart Jesus' life along two axis points. The busier and more in demand and famous Jesus became, the more he withdrew to a quiet place to pray.

Over and over again we read that Jesus had an intense day of ministry and then he would go off alone to a solitary place. You would think Jesus would have slept in, gone for a light run, and then had brunch with his disciples. Nothing says post-Sunday recovery like a farmer's scramble. But instead Jesus was up early and out the door to be alone with God.

The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry

Through the years this practice of Jesus has come to be called “silence and solitude.” Through church history most of the master teachers of the way of Jesus have agreed. Silence and solitude are the most important of the spiritual disciplines.

There are two dimensions of silence—external and internal. External noise is easy to quiet. Just turn off your phone. Power down the stereo. Lie on your couch. Walk to the park. Book a night at a cabin close by. Easy. But internal noise? That’s a whole other animal. A wild beast in desperate need of taming. There’s no off switch.

Solitude is pretty straightforward. It’s when you’re alone, with God and with your own soul. For clarification, by solitude I don’t mean isolation. The two are worlds apart. Solitude is how you open yourself up to God; isolation is painting a target on your back for the tempter. Solitude is when you set aside time to feed and water and nourish your soul and let it grow into health and maturity. Solitude is anything but loneliness. In solitude we’re anything but alone. In fact, that’s where many of us feel *most* in connection to God.

It’s so easy. You just take a little time each day to be alone in the quiet with yourself and God. It’s more resting than working, more about *not* doing than doing, subtraction not addition. It’s “easy,” and (as is true of all the practices) it makes the rest of life even *easier*.

Sabbath

The word *Sabbath* comes to us from the Hebrew *Shabbat*. The word literally means “to stop.” The Sabbath is simply a day to stop working, stop wanting, stop worrying, just *stop*.

Think of the images that come to us through lifestyle advertising—in our social media feeds or that trendy magazine on the coffee table. The couple lounging in a king-size bed over breakfast and coffee, organic linen spilling onto the floor; the photo-perfect picnic at the beach with wine, cheese, and that trendy bathing suit; a twenty-something playing guitar on the couch while watching the rain fall. Whether they are selling a new bathrobe, a down comforter, or a piece of furniture, almost all of them are images of Sabbath. Of stopping.

Marketing people know you ache for this kind of stopping-rich life, *but you don’t have it*. They are tapping into your restlessness, hoping to cash in. The irony is, to get this feeling, you don’t have to pay \$99.99 for a handmade throw blanket. You just need to Sabbath, to stop. You just need to take a day of your week to slow down, breathe.

Sabbath is more than just a day; it’s a *way of being* in the world. It’s a spirit of restfulness that comes from abiding, from living in the Father’s loving presence all week long. Built into Jesus’ life rhythm was a core practice—an *entire* day, every week, set aside just to slow down, to stop.

The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry

On the Sabbath all we do is *rest* and *worship*. There is a discipline to the Sabbath that is really hard for a lot of us. It takes a lot of intentionality: it won't just happen to you. It takes planning and preparation. It takes self-control, the capacity to say no to a list of good things so you can yes to the best. But Sabbath is the primary discipline, or practice, by which we cultivate the spirit of restfulness in our lives as a *whole*. It's how we practice, how we prepare our minds and bodies for the moments that matter most.

Simplicity

Shopping is now the number one leisure activity in America, usurping the place previously held by religion. Amazon.com is the new temple. The Visa statement is the new altar. Double-clicking is the new liturgy. Lifestyle bloggers are the priests and priestesses. Money is the new god.

There's a reason the only other god Jesus ever called out by name was Mammon—the god of money, because it's a bad god and a lousy religion.

Jesus and the writers of the New Testament put the number of our material needs at a whopping two things: food and clothing. *"If we have food and clothing, we will be content with that."* (1 Timothy 6:8)

Now Jesus and his friends lived around the Mediterranean Sea, where it's warm and dry. I live in the Pacific Northwest, where it's cold and wet half the year, so I would add one more to the list and that's shelter.

But even the thought of that—of living by that expanded list—food, clothing, shelter—sounds *crazy* to most of us. If you doubt your ability to live that simply and thrive, you're not alone. The propaganda machine is working like a charm.

Most of us believe the lie that more money and more stuff equals more happiness. Like all dangerous lies, it's a half-truth. More money does make you happier—if you're *poor*. Lifting people out of poverty will make them happier, but only up to a point.

(Incidentally, we now know exactly what that point is: \$75,000. A landmark study out of Princeton University with data from 450,000 Gallup surveys concluded that your overall well-being does rise with your income, but only to a point. After that you either plateau or, worse, decline: "No matter where you live, your emotional well-being is as good as it's going to get at \$75,000 . . . and money's not going to make it any better beyond that point.")

Simplicity (the secular version of this ancient practice is "minimalism") isn't poverty. It isn't a bare home, an empty closet, a joyless life with no freedom to enjoy material things. The whole goal is exactly the opposite—*more* freedom. Minimalism isn't about living with *nothing*; it's about living with *less*.

The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry

The goal of simplicity is to live with a high degree of intentionality around what matters most, which, for those of us who apprentice under Jesus, is Jesus himself and his kingdom.

Contentment isn't some Buddhist-like negation of all desire; it's living in such a way that your unfulfilled desires no longer curb your happiness. We all live with unfulfilled desires. In this life all our symphonies remain unfinished. This doesn't mean we can't live happy. Right now you have everything you need to live a happy, content life; you have access to the Father. To his loving attention. Who would have thought it's that easy of a yoke?

Slowing

Jesus lived in a village in the first century, not a city in the twenty-first. Jesus didn't drive a car or field text messages, and a late-night run to Taco Bell wasn't an option. What follows are modern practices based on my attempt at following Jesus while living in a city, raising a family, and having a smartphone, Wi-Fi access, etc. Could it be that we need a few new spiritual disciplines to survive the modern world?

So while you won't find the following rules on any standard list of the spiritual disciplines, you will find more and more teachers of the way talking about it, as a protest against the new normal of hyper-living.

John Ortberg and Richard Foster both labeled this emerging practice the spiritual discipline of "slowing" ("cultivating patience by deliberately choosing to place ourselves in positions where we simply have to wait"). The basic idea behind the practice of slowing is slow down your body and slow down your life. It's wise to regularly deny ourselves from getting what we want, whether through a practice as intense as fasting or as minor as picking the longest checkout line at the grocery store.

Drive the speed limit.

Get into the slow lane.

Come to a full stop at stop signs.

Don't text and drive.

Show up ten minutes early for an appointment, sans phone.

Get in the longest checkout line at the grocery store.

Turn your smartphone into a dumbphone.

Get a flip phone or ditch your cell phone all together.

Parent your phone; put it to bed before you and make it sleep in.

Keep your phone off until after your morning quiet time.

Set times for email.

Set a time and a time limit for social media (or just get off it).

Kill your TV.

Single-task.

The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry

Walk slower.
Take a regular day alone for silence and solitude.
Take up journaling.
Experiment with mindfulness and meditation.
If you can, take long vacations.
Cook your own food. Eat in.

These are just ideas. They might not be right for you. That's cool. Come up with your own list, but come up with a list. Then do it. Our time is our life, and our attention is the doorway to our hearts. We must ruthlessly eliminate hurry, and that's best done gamefully.

Epilogue: A quiet life

Eating lunch with John Ortberg again in Menlo Park. I open with the customary "How are you?"

He answers, "At this point in my life, I'm just trying to not miss the goodness of each day, and bring my best self to it."

Yes, he says that.

Over the last five years I've reorganized my life around three very simple goals:

- (1) Slow down.
- (2) Simplify my life around the practices of Jesus.
- (3) Live from the center of abiding.

Abiding is the metaphor I keep coming back to. I want so badly to live from a deep place of love, joy, and peace. These four practices—silence and solitude, Sabbath, simplicity, and slowing—have helped me tremendously to move toward abiding as my baseline, but to say it yet *again*, all four of them are a means to an end.

The end isn't silence and solitude; it's to come back to God and our true selves.

It isn't Sabbath; it's a restful, grateful life of ease, appreciation, wonder and worship.

It isn't simplicity; it's freedom and focus on what matters most.

It isn't even slowing down; it's to be *present*, to God, to people, to the moment.

The goal is practice, not perfection. If there's a formula for a happy life, it's quite simple—inhabit the moment.

The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry

I wish I could tell you that after a few years of practice I have this down. I'm never in a hurry. Consider it eliminated, check. I just live and love in a perpetual zen-like state of Jesus-derived joy and peace.

Alas, I live in the same place as you: the modern world.