

EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES

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The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry

THE NUTSHELL

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Prologue: Autobiography of an epidemic

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

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 was doing to society. 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*?

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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. Not only is hurry toxic to our emotional health and spiritual lives, but it's also symptomatic of much deeper 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." The solution to an over busy life is *not* more time. It's to slow down and simplify our lives around what really matters. 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

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. An easy life isn't an option; an easy yoke is.

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

Following Jesus has to make it onto your schedule and into your practices or will simply never happen. 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. 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? Ironically, the practices are almost never commanded by Jesus. He just *does these practices* and then says, "Follow me." He simply set the example of a whole 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."

PART THREE: FOUR PRACTICES FOR UNHURRYING YOUR LIFE

Silence and solitude

Through church history most of the master teachers of the way of Jesus have agreed that silence and solitude are the most important of the spiritual disciplines. 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*

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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 Sabbath is simply a day to stop. Stop working, stop wanting, stop worrying, just *stop*. 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 as it won't just happen to you. But Sabbath is the primary discipline, or practice, by which we cultivate the spirit of restfulness in our lives as a *whole*.

Simplicity

Simplicity 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 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.

Slowing

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, the basic idea behind the practice of slowing is this: slow down your body, slow down your life. It's wise to 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.

Epilogue: A quiet life

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

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