

Hurry Sickness

Have you ever heard a conversation like this?

“So how’ve you been?”

”Busy.”

“And how’s the family?”

“Busy.”

“How’s work?”

“Busy.”

Okay, usually there is a few more details added than that, but I guarantee that if you pay attention to some of the conversations going on around you at the coffee shop or at the grocery store that you will hear this conversation repeated over and over.

Statistics demonstrate that as a country we are growing increasingly busy. We are working more hours. We are taking less vacation time. Our lives are full of devices that add demands to our time. And on top of all of this there is a cultural value attached to busyness. We equate busyness with significance. Stephen Covey in his book, *First Things First*, says it this way:

People expect us to be busy, overworked. It’s become a status symbol in our society – if we are busy, we’re important; if we’re not busy, we’re almost embarrassed to admit it (*First Things First*, 35).

Here’s the deal, busyness in and of itself is not wrong. Jesus was a busy person. But there is a kind of busyness that is destructive to our lives. Some have given this kind of busyness the name “hurry sickness.” I think that’s a great name, because if we are infected with this kind of busyness it will affect our health - our spiritual health, our family’s health and even our physical health. Hurry sickness can lead to all sorts of negative things.

In his book, *The Life You’ve Always Wanted*, John Ortberg talks about three things that hurry sickness can cause. First, hurry sickness causes a **decreased capacity to love** those around us. When we are too busy, we tend to neglect the people that are most important to us. When we overly busy, we don’t see the needs around us and if we do, we don’t have the capacity to respond to them. If our lives have no margins then when that person who has a need shows up they’re viewed as an interruption rather than a person that we can serve and love.

Hurry sickness also leads to **shallow lives**. When we are too busy we tend to not think about what really matters in life. We tend to not think about whether our life is counting for things that matter in eternity. We tend to not connect well with God. And as a result we become superficial and shallow. We may be productive, but we end up being productive for the wrong things. The depth of character and wisdom and spirituality that we

long for does not come by rushing through life. That kind of depth comes slowly as we make space for God.

Finally, hurry sickness **destroys passion**. It destroys passion for the things of God. There have been seasons here at Faith where I've been passionate about what God has called me to do. And then there have been other times where I've lost my passion. In those times where I've lost passion it tends to be in times where I'm overly busy and ministry just becomes "pulling off another week" as opposed to an opportunity to use my gifting to do the things that God is calling me to do to make a difference in the world. When I'm infected with hurry sickness it destroys my passion because I lose sight of the big picture.

If you look at your life and realize that instead of a growing depth, you've become shallower; if you see a lack of capacity to love well the people in your life; if you don't really live with a passion for the things of God; and if you have a heart that is anxious, distracted and busy rather than quiet, joyful, at rest and centered on Christ chances are that you are infected with this hurry sickness, which is a very unsatisfying way to live.

Here's the deal, we don't have to live with hurry sickness. There is a different way and it is found in **following the example of Jesus**. Ortberg makes this observation about Jesus:

Jesus often had much to do, but he never did it in a way that severed the life-giving connection between him and his Father. He never did it in a way that interfered with his ability to give love when love was called for. . . . Jesus was often busy, but never hurried (pg. 79).

What was it about Jesus that kept him from the kind of busyness that we are talking about this morning? What was it that allowed him love well and to maintain a "life-giving connection between him and his Father" even when he had so many demands on him? I'm sure there are many things, but this morning I want to make three observations about the life of Jesus that I believe will be helpful for us as we seek to address hurry sickness in our lives. If we can follow Jesus' example in these things, then we are in better place to live with depth, to have capacity to love well and to be passionate about the things of God.

First, we need to understand is that **Jesus did not do every good thing that he could have done, but he did do what the Father wanted done**. In John 17:4 Jesus prayed this at the end of his life:

I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.

Jesus said he did everything that the Father wanted him to do. He *accomplished the work* that God had for him to do. But here's the deal, Jesus didn't heal every sick per-

son, he didn't feed every hungry person, he didn't meet every physical need. What he did do, however, was everything the Father gave him to do.

Sometimes I think we get too busy because we feel that we need to respond to every good thing that needs to be done. We think that if we don't respond that the need will go unmet. But Jesus didn't do every good thing that needed to be done. The central issue for Him was the Father's will. That's what he sought to do. That's what we need to seek as well.

The second thing that we need to understand is that **Jesus saw a need for rest**. In Mark 6 Jesus sends the 12 disciples out on a ministry assignment. We are told that they went out and preached, they cast out demons and healed many sick people. It was both an exhilarating time for them and a wearying time for them. And in verse 30 when the disciples report back to Jesus, we read this:

³⁰ And the apostles gathered together with Jesus; and they reported to Him all that they had done and taught. ³¹ And He said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a lonely place and rest a while." (For there were many people coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.) ³² And they went away in the boat to a lonely place by themselves.

I love this passage. Life had been busy for the disciples. They had been so busy that they had not even had time to eat. And so Jesus invites them, *Come away . . . and rest*. Jesus saw the need for rest. They needed to get away from the demands and rest. Of course it didn't work out as they planned because the people ended up following them and another ministry situation presented itself. But we see Jesus' perspective here that is that rest is important.

Sometimes we think we cannot afford to rest because there are so many important things that we need to do. But here we have Jesus, fully aware of the multitudes of people who needed to be helped and healed and taught, said yet he said, "*Come away by yourselves to a lonely place and rest a while.*" If the Lord of the Universal saw this as a valid need, isn't it possible that it is a need in our lives as well? We need to understand that Jesus saw the need to rest.

So, Jesus didn't do every good thing that needed to be done and He saw the need to rest. And third, he **regularly took time to get away to be with the Father**. Luke sums up this pattern of Jesus' life this way in Luke 5:

¹⁵ But the news about Him was spreading even farther, and great multitudes were gathering to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses. ¹⁶ But He Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.

Luke tells us that Jesus' life is becoming increasingly busy. The news about him is spreading and great multitudes are coming to him to have him meet their needs. The

demands are great – the multitudes want to hear him and to be healed. He is busy with important stuff. BUT. *But He Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.*

Luke doesn't say, "Jesus, when every need was met, when everybody was satisfied, when there was not one more important thing left to do, when his schedule was open and free, he would get away to the wilderness and pray." No, Luke tells us that even while all of these important demands remained, the pattern of Jesus' life was to often get away to the wilderness to spend time with the Father. And I believe that it was in these times with the Father that Jesus gained perspective. It was in these times that he discerned the Father's will and kept clear about what it was that he was to be busy with.

There was no hint of hurry sickness in Jesus' life. And it wasn't because he wasn't busy, but rather he didn't do every good thing that could be done; he took time for rest; and, he often took time to get away and pray and spend time with the Father. This was the pattern of his life. And as he did these things, Jesus maintained his capacity to love and he maintained his passion to do the will of God.

Jesus was often busy, but never hurried. As his disciples, Jesus invites each of us into this same kind of life where it is possible to be busy, but never hurried. But it doesn't just happen; it will happen as we follow Jesus' example. And so in the remainder of our time I'd like to offer some practical suggestions on how we can follow Jesus' example.

First, **take a hard look at your schedule.** Sometimes we think that we don't have a choice about how busy we are. We look at all of the good things that we are involved in and we just don't see how we can cut anything out. The reality is that we do have a choice. Sometimes we need to learn how to say no – even to good things. Remember, Jesus didn't do every good thing that he could have done.

Second, **develop a rhythm of rest** (different than your outline). Jesus saw the need for rest, right? In the midst of busyness, he led his disciples into times of rest. We need times of rest as well and not just when everything is done.

Let me suggest three ways to develop a rhythm of rest. First, develop a daily rhythm of rest by choosing to go to bed at an appropriate time. Sometimes choosing to stop your work and to go to bed when important stuff remains to be done is one of the greatest acts of faith that you will do in a day. Do it. Develop that as a daily habit. Secondly, develop the rhythm of taking a day for rest each week. On that day, do things that restore you. Get some extra sleep. Spend time with people who energize you. Read. Pray. Do something fun. Again, this is an act of faith to pause from work for a whole day. Finally, if your work allows for it, develop the rhythm of annual rest. Take your vacation days. Stop from work for an extended time and rest.

Part of why I think these kinds of things can be so helpful in addressing hurry sickness is that when we choose to rest, daily, weekly, annually, even when important stuff remains to be done, we are expressing faith. We are saying to God, in effect, "I'm going to trust You. I'm going to enter a time of rest even while important stuff is undone."

When we do this it helps us remember that we are the created and God is the Creator. It helps us remember that it isn't all up to us. God is at work. And when we can stay clear about these things, it helps us be busy, but never hurried.

Third, let me encourage you to **address technology creep in your life**. This is nothing new. Technology has long been an issue that people have needed to manage to avoid a busy heart. But I think in our day this challenge is greater than ever with laptops, and smart phones, iPads and social media like Facebook and Twitter and on and on. We are plugged in constantly and have access to these things 24/7. We check Facebook first thing in the morning or email right before we go to bed.

Now, I love these tools. But what I'm saying is that we need to manage them and not have them be managing us. If we are not careful, technology creep will squeeze out all of our space for deeper thinking and reflecting. It will give us busy minds that are so distracted that we have a hard time hearing God's voice. We need to address this. Maybe a fast from all of this for a day or a week would be good once in a while. Regardless, if you want to avoid hurry sickness, you need to address technology creep in your life.

Finally, let me encourage you to **make time for solitude**. As we saw, Jesus would often slip away to the wilderness and pray. Personally, I have found that when I fail to make time for solitude that hurry sickness so easily infects my heart. I need daily times of solitude. For me, that is usually first thing in the morning. But I've also found that I need more than these daily times of solitude; I also need longer times of solitude. If I don't take 2 or 3 days a year to get away for several hours to walk and think and pray I tend to lose perspective on what is really important in my life. I can get busy with things that God doesn't want me to be busy with. But when I take these extended times, I find that God renews my focus. He gives me clarity on issues. And so when I return to life and ministry from these times away I have a greater sense of purpose and focus.

Let me encourage you, as you move into 2014, to make time for solitude. Find times each day to get away to spend some time with God. For you, first thing in the morning may be the best time. For others, it might be right before bed or over your lunch break. In these times, seek to quiet your heart and turn your attention to God. Pray and listen to Him. Read His Word.

In addition to this daily kind of solitude, try to find some times for longer periods of solitude. I would encourage you to put it on the calendar and then protect that time. I know it requires some work to get this kind of time. It is not easy, but it will be worth it.

When I've spent time like this there are several things I've done. I've gone out to Living Water Ranch in the past for a day. I've walked around the linear trail. I've walked around Warner Park. I've hiked the Konza trail. The key is getting some place where you can quiet your heart and focus on God and listen to Him. And in these times ask God to speak to you about your life and activities. Ask Him to show you the works that

He wants you to be involved in. The possibilities are many, but the point is, make it the habit of your life to find moments and sometimes extended moments for solitude. This was the pattern of Jesus' life.

Hurry sickness is a dangerous disease. Our culture is infected with it and as Christians we are not immune. But there is another way. There is a life of depth, a life of love and a life of deep purpose that we can live if we will follow Jesus' example.

May we learn from Jesus. May we learn from his example and take times to rest. May we remember that God isn't calling us to do every good thing that we could possibly do and may we take times often to slip away to spend time with God so that He can remind us of what is important and what it is that He wants us to do. May we learn from Jesus how to be busy, but never hurried in our hearts.

Amen.