

RUTHLESSLY ELIMINATE HURRY

When my friend John Ortberg took on a new and very demanding role in ministry, he called Dallas Willard for advice. With pen and notepad in hand, John was ready to write down a half dozen or more key things. Dallas began by saying, “ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life.” John wrote it down.

“Okay. What’s next?” queried John

“There is no next. Just do that, John, and you’ll be fine.”

Dallas knew that John already had everything he needed to be effective in this new role. John is one of the most brilliant and most deeply committed Christ-followers I have ever met. He has a great grasp of the Bible, a thorough understanding of theology and ministry, years of practice in spiritual formation, and the Holy Spirit as his guide. John did not need any new insights or techniques. But he needed to overcome the number one enemy in the spiritual life: HURRY SICKNESS.

Why is eliminating hurry from our lives so crucial? When we eliminate hurry we become present, or more specifically, present to the present moment in all of its glory. We become aware of our surroundings. We see colors and smell smells; we hear hushed sounds and can actually feel the wind in our faces. In short, we “show up” and experience the fullness of life. And that includes, not least of all, being present to God. If I am to live well as a Christian, I need to be constantly connected to God. Hurry is not part of a well-lived life.

It is possible to act quickly without hurrying. If I have only ten minutes to get from one end of the airport to another, I can move quickly without hurrying. Hurry is an inner condition that is fear based: “If I don’t make my plane everything will be ruined. Life as I know it is over!” But when I walk in step with God I learn to say, “If I don’t make that plane I’ll be fine. God is with me. Things will work out. Meanwhile, I’ll move my legs as fast as I can while my heart is happy and unhurried.”

“Hurry,” said Carl Jung, “is not of the Devil; it is the Devil.” When hurried, we cannot experience life at its fullest; nor can we come into contact with our true selves, our real feelings. And even more important, we outrun God. When we slow down we allow ourselves to be found, found by life and found by God. When we practice slowing down, we are moving into the rhythm of God. When we eliminate hurry (our part, in response to God’s gracious call to the deeper life), the Spirit comes alongside us and strengthens us.

Quoted from The Good and Beautiful God by James Bryan Smith, pp 183-184, InterVarsity Press, 2009