

RUTHLESSLY ELIMINATE HURRY FROM YOUR LIFE TO FOLLOW JESUS

Series: ReFocus
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Discipleship, Vision, Self Denial
Matthew 11:28-30

We have been on this journey of talking about what we want to look like as a church. As we step into a new season for our life as a church, we decided to refocus. We went back to what the church, any church has always been about.

What we call our vision, 'bringing life to the city of Nakuru' is really about joining a missional God in his mission in the world. God is on a mission to bring all of creation under his rule and reign, sometimes in scripture called the promise or what I believe is the true blessing or real life.

What we have landed on is: for us to have real-life flowing from us to this city and joining God in his mission, we must apprentice under Jesus.

What Jesus showed us is how to live life if we are to enter into the reality of the Kingdom of God. And he constantly made the invitation to people to follow him. At the end of that ministry, he sent out his apostles to do the same things: invite people to follow him. Joining God in his mission starts with a life of apprenticeship under Jesus.

Now, the life of an apprentice must be arranged around 3 goals:

1. Being with Jesus
2. Becoming like Jesus
3. Doing what Jesus Did

We do this by engaging in spiritual disciplines like prayer, fasting, reading scripture. We intentionally learn to forgive as we are forgiven, deal with our past. We look forward to, like Jesus, do the works of the Kingdom like praying for the sick and feeding the hungry.

This is how we get formed into who we have been called to be. This is how we need up seeing in us what we see and admire in Jesus. And this is how we end up doing here on earth, here in Nakuru what the father is doing.

It has been fun. The series has encouraged us. That we can see God move in our lives. It has been empowering. Just giving us a few skills and tools here and there. It has been downright challenging to be honest because we have talked about the reality of what it must take from us. But overall, what I am hearing and getting from people is this willingness and excitement to dare follow Jesus. Not just believe but actually follow Jesus.

So as we finish this series, with all the fuel and excitement of wanting to follow Jesus, I wanna talk about the biggest impediment to following Jesus.

There is a guy called Dallas Willard, who was a great Christian thinker. One of the people learning from him called him because he was in a place where he felt stuck as a follower of

Jesus. He was doing the practices of Jesus, he was not struggling with any major sin but he just felt stuck. So he called up Dallas to ask what he must do.

So on the other end of the phone, he hears a long silence and then: ***You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life.***

He quickly rights it down and asks, "What else?" He is met by an award silence from the other end and then hears, there is nothing else.

"Hurry is the great enemy of spiritual life in our day." Even when trying to walk this great journey we can be so hurried in how we live or how we want to do it or how soon we want to see the fruits borne in us. Hurry will be the one big thing that holds you back.

And the evidence that our souls are hurried is that we are very busy. Our lives are packed with so much. And people are constantly feeling they have very little time. Because you are busy you have to constantly be in a hurry to get to the next thing.

I visited with some pastors of Vineyard churches in Kiambu and Nyandarua counties. In our conversations, I asked what they felt was a big hindrance to discipleship in their area. And guess what? Their answers deep in the country are the same as I would have here in our newly minted city and is the same in Nairobi and in London and Maine; availability. People just don't have time to follow Jesus. We are just too busy, to have time to actually follow Jesus. We are too in a hurry

Between school and 2 jobs or the job of looking for a job while pushing for success by all means; between events, all the things people enrol their kids into; between Netflix and social media people just don't have time to follow Jesus. Heck, people barely have time to sleep or eat healthily.

Even busy doing good things can often keep us too occupied and in a hurry to follow Jesus.

John Mark Comer is a pastor who has been a great influence in my life (I haven't met him, maybe not yet) a few years back was living the dream. His church had grown by 1000 people for a few years, they were having several services on Sunday, he was leading a big team. Which pastor doesn't want that?

So he called up a pastor who had been doing something similar for a few years to ask how it is done. The pastor on the other end said, ***"Simple, just do it like running a marathon every weekend."***

But no one is meant to run a marathon every weekend. Even Eliud Kipchoge couldn't do it. At what cost do we live our lives in a rush every day? He was too busy for his wife, too busy for his kids, too busy to properly lead his team and be present for them. He was too busy to even be found with Jesus.

It hit him where exactly his life was heading when the pastor he had talked with had to resign because of moral failure that really hurt the church he was leading. He had failed his wife and his family and his church. But where else could that life have led?

John Mark then realized it is possible to be living the dream and completely miss what God is inviting you to. You can, after all, gain the whole world and lose your soul.

In response, he demoted himself, started slowing down and simplifying his life.

In church, there is so much talk about life. Sadly not enough talk about lifestyle. You see, your lifestyle is perfectly designed to produce the life you are seeing in yourself.

The fatigue, the low-grade anxiety many have, the irritability and anger and bitterness is all life produced by a way of living.

So the invitation of Jesus is to enter a different lifestyle that produces the life of the Kingdom of God, which we all desire.

We want peace, gentleness, patience, faithfulness, goodness, self-control but just don't have the time to actually live the life that produces that. We are instead, too in a hurry. We live life in a sprint from one thing to another, a life packed with a lot of stuff and activities.

There is an old spiritual song sang by slaves in the Americas and these were so rich and deep and one of them says, "I want Jesus to walk with me". Similar to our Swahili song tembea na Yesu? When we sing that? What do we imagine? A sprint or a walk?

Guess what? Following Jesus will take living in a whole new way. That means slowing down, living with a different rhythm and at a different pace. It takes ruthlessly eliminating hurry, the great enemy of spiritual life in our day.

Let's pray

28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Matthew 11:28-30

This is Jesus' great invitation. And it is a verse that has been so central to our life as a church here at Trinity. So much so that I heard from someone at the church last week this verse as it is ut they thought it came from Paul's letter to the church in Rome what we call the book of Romans. So at least people know the gist of it. (We will one day work on the proper referencing.)

Jesus invites everyone tired, hurting, aware that they are being formed into something by this culture over time. Anyone in need of true life. Those tired of sin in their lives. Men and women burdened by what their marriage has become or their lives as single people. Anyone exhausted by the addictions and bitterness.

He says, ***“come to me... and you will find rest for your souls.”***

And we all want that rest. Anyone who has seen their lives for what they are outside of Jesus deeply desires that rest. Then he says this phrase that can easily be lost in translation, ***“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me...”***

A yoke is farming equipment. You use it to harness animals to do work. It is the means by which you get work done by an animal or a pair.

Here Jesus is referring to discipleship or apprenticeship. You see, Jesus was a rabbi. And a rabbi's way of life, his interpretation of scripture and therefore how to live life was called their yoke.

So let's be clear, Jesus is saying that if you are tired, he can give rest yet and that means taking his way of life. This was and is an invitation to be his disciple, to learn from him.

One of the things Jesus is saying is that your life is restless because of how you are living it. So even if you could enter rest, which some of you experience in the presence of God or when you experience healing and all, if you live your life the same you have lived it, you will see the same results.

Your lifestyle is perfectly designed to produce the life you are seeing.

But there is a lot more that is being said there.

One, you do not yoke 2 animals that are different. If you did, they would not work very well together or at the same pace. The two have to be the same. So if Jesus is saying we can take his yoke, he is saying he is just like us. And I like that.

That says is, he has so much confidence in us that we can do this. Listen up, Jesus has faith in you. Because he can, you can too. "But he was God!" Yes, and he was human too. You can do this.

The other thing Jesus is saying is that you are not alone. The work being done in your life, in the world, you are not doing it on your own. And who better to be partnered with than God himself.

The work to undo bitterness you? You are not alone. The work to join God in healing the sick, you are not alone. The work to train yourself under Jesus, you are not alone.

And because he is God, he has carried the most weight. He is the master at it. Changing lives is his MO. Transformation is what he does. Creating and making all things is new, is his deal.

If you want to see new creation spring out in you and around you, God has done and will do the heavy lifting. You are not alone. And thankfully he is gentle and humble at heart. He won't rush you, he won't hurt you, he won't give up on you.

The other things yoked animals have to move at the same pace. And that is the thing we are talking about today. To enter into rest we much move at the same pace as Jesus. We cannot

follow Jesus and live life like everybody else. We cannot follow Jesus and move at the same pace as the world, we must take on Jesus' pace. And he was really never in a hurry. I think often it is not that God is delayed in our lives rather it is that we are in a hurry.

Take Jesus for example his favourite car must have been Honda coz he constantly talks about the church being in one Accord. Okay...

Jesus walked everywhere he went, yes he did not have a car. It was not a reality in his time. But that too dictated a certain pace. He could only move on average at 3 miles per hour.

But even though everyone else also did walk, he never seemed to be too busy or in a hurry. How do we know this? Constantly his day would be interrupted and he would flow with the interruption as if he had no schedule.

There was this day he had been invited to the house of a man whose daughter was critically ill, close to death even. On the way crowds thronged around him and then Jesus suddenly stops and asks, "**Who touched me?**" And he stands there in this awkwardness until the person who touched him owned up.

The disciples tried to tell him that it was impossible to know because everyone was touching him, it was a crowd for Peet's sake. Also, Jesus do you not realize the urgency of the invitation to heal that you have been given?

As he waited a woman who had been sick for so many years but had gotten healed by touching his garment owns up. She is scared, a woman who had been bleeding, and therefore unclean in that culture, was in the crowds and had touched a man, a holy man. That was not acceptable.

But Jesus is not in a hurry. He slows down long enough to pay attention to her and give her more than physical healing. He looks at her and calls her daughter.

Another day Jesus is walking again and a short man who was hated in town because of his job climbs a tree just to see this Jesus he had heard so much about. And when Jesus gets to him, so full of love, he asks him to get down and lead him to his house for an unplanned party. Jesus, weren't you heading somewhere? Where do you get all this time?

Another day, Jesus is walking and there are crowds around him as usual and some blind guy starts shouting for his attention. And the conference security guards, those who felt responsible for keeping Jesus on his schedule try to shut him up. Guess what, Jesus not in a hurry stops and asks the guy what he wanted. That day, Jesus healed yet another blind person.

And we can go on and on about how Jesus was always had time for interruptions because he was never in a hurry. It is the case when he fed the 5000, it is the case when he learnt that his friend Lazarus was sick.

There is also the fact that Jesus started his day really slow, just sitting in his father's presence. Often the disciples would find that he had left to be alone and pray.

Jesus had time to always be in community with his friends and be found at parties and dinners with ordinary people.

Throughout his life, you see the unhurried pace at which Jesus lived. There is the story of them in a boat and there is a storm and guess what? Jesus was asleep. Nothing seems to rush or panic Jesus.

Here is a different reading of the invitation from Matthew

Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me— watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.”

To enter the life of Jesus we must take on ourselves the lifestyle of Jesus. To live the lifestyle of Jesus we must take his pace. We cannot follow Jesus and live at the same pace as the rest of the world. His was an unhurried life.

If this was Jesus' pace at a time where there were no vehicles, fast jets and microwaves, how much slowing down will it take us to live as he did?

You see we live at a time with calendars and fast internet and super fast cars and microwaves and dishwasher: things designed to save time, yet we are always out of time. we seem to never have enough. The problem is not time, the problem is that we are a people in a hurry.

Hurry isn't of the devil, it is the devil, John Mark would say. You just cannot follow Jesus and be in a hurry in life. Where will you get time to read the bible or fast or pray or find a community group to do life?

“Breakfast in London lunch in New York” was the catchphrase of Richard Quest on his show on CNN, '**Quest means business**'. We have sped things up but we don't seem to have enough time, what happened? It is how we live life.

In our century, we have actually sped things up but lost time. We worship speed and lose time to actually be alive.

Sometimes people feel like if they only had an extra hour in the day, they would achieve a bit more. Yet, to be honest, even if you had an extra hour in your day, if you live life in the same way you do, you will simply fill it with more of the same stuff and end up just as exhausted as you are today.

Where is the time for prayer and community group and fasting? On average, people spend a month of their year glued to the phone. Around 3 hours every day. For social media and TV companies, the greatest competition they have for screen time is sleep. Because at some point our bodies shut down and demand we sleep. Otherwise, we would finish every series possible.

Your challenge with time to follow Jesus is not the lack of time, it is a way of life. And for things to change it will require a slowing down of your pace of life.

People eat out more often than cook at home. As a generation, we sleep less even though it is bad for our health and our brains that it is even linked to the early onset of dementia. We become more grumpy and irritable and that leads to all sorts of relational problems and that leads to rushing out of the door to your next appointment. When will you ever find time to pray if we live life like that?

It is not a time problem, it is a lifestyle problem. To follow Jesus our pace of life has to change. We have to slow down and simplify our lives.

Hurry does violence to our souls. If you are thinking you are not in a hurry think about everything you fill your day with. All the things you try to accomplish in one day including being up to date with all sorts of conversation on social media and around the world.

How many people enter business meetings or even dates with phones in their hands. You are trying to be there and everywhere at the same time.

I know that sometimes I used to watch a show on TV, I have a computer on my left on Facebook and my phone on my right on Instagram or WhatsApp.

You are in traffic and you are so far off from the turn and you start honking at the person in front of you because that is gonna make a difference. Or if you are in Kenya you just go off the road and join the thickening of the lane. Hurried souls we are.

You are at Naivas and you are waiting in line and it just feels too long and you keep looking for the shorter one and you move from one line to the other only to see the one you left moving. Then you get to the check out the line you pull out the phone because you cannot bearbaiting and doing nothing.

You try multitasking only to find you forgot one task or even messed it up. What is wrong? Hurried souls.

That is the hurrying of our souls. And it does violence. We are suffering from what is now being called hurry sickness.

And the world is catching up on this. Yet this is something that has always been a reality for following Jesus for a long time. Think about how popular meditation is becoming, and yoga and all that. Minimalism, Buddhism, mindfulness. It is all a realisation of this fact that hurry does violence to our souls.

Only that they wanna the kingdom without the king. So Jesus says, learn from me.

Other possible symptoms of a hurried soul or hurry sickness

1. Irritability, everything just annoys you
2. Restlessness and constantly fidgeting when will church end so that I get to the next things. Sorry that was manipulative

3. Hypersensitivity, everything hurts you. Everyone better walk on eggshells. And oh, trust me this is the current world. You cannot speak your mind without hurting a thousand people who also are just speaking their mind and their mind is for you to speak their mind too.
4. Compulsive overworking - you leave the office at 5 to only go home and work some more. Because you have to fix the world, right now.
5. Numbness, nothing moves you. You just don't feel anything anymore. Can't love, can't hate, can't cry. Just numb.
6. Escapist behaviour - Instead of dealing with your grief or pain you drink or watch porn or Instagram forever or flirt on chat or do Netflix or live on TikTok.
7. Disconnection from your identity
8. Lack of self-care - you don't sleep well, eat well,
9. Hoarding energy - you just hold out on people, your spouse and your family. I am definitely this one when I am not healthy.
10. You no longer do your spiritual disciplines. Can't read the bible, pray or be at church or be in a community group

And the solution is not more time. It is living at a different pace. It is slowing down and simplifying.

In the beginning, as God created everything and saw that it was good and it pleased him he said, "Let us make man in our own image and likeness." Then he made humanity out of dust.

This says 2 key things. We have tremendous potential. We are made to rule, reign and create just like God. And we have tremendous limitations. We are made from dust after all. Our bodies are fragile, we grow old, we grow weak, we grow tired, we do not know everything. We have to lean into both our potential and our limitations.

This has been one of the greatest learnings and challenges for me this year. Learning into my potential and limitations.

And one shared limitation is time. We all have just 24 hours a day and ultimately we all have just some time on earth. And the following of Jesus has to fit in here. It has to be all of it. And surely we cannot spend our time, in the same way, the rest of the world that does not follow Jesus does and expect any different results.

So I am finishing as we started, if you want to know who you are following and who is forming or discipling you, look at how you spend your time.

So what is the solution? Ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life. Slow down and simplify your life.

Here are some 5 ideas I borrowed as the band comes on stage

1. Practice the Sabbath

Take one day out of the week and just be present with God. Switch your phone off or get off social media, stay away from work and delight in God. Whatever that looks like. It could be being with good friends, eating good food, reading a good book, sleeping, definitely worship and prayer, time with the family. Just slow down enough to be aware and delight in God.

This will be very hard in a world where you feel like you are constantly missing out, but it will heal your soul. Maybe there is a reason why in Genesis creation story we see only 2 things blessed, human beings and the sabbath.

Generally, I would say schedule a daily distraction, a weekly sabbath and an annual retreat.

2. Have a prayer rhythm that is actually scheduled

Set out times in your day to pause and pray. Maybe morning, afternoon, evening and night time. Actually, schedule it.

3. Dream out what your ideal week would look like

Write it down and try it out. Have in there things like work, rest, exercise, spiritual disciples like fasting etc. Leave margin for interruptions just like Jesus.

This is like budgeting. Without a budget, you never quite know where your resources are getting wasted or underused. You may end up thinking you do not have enough for the things you need. You may think you have a lot and be careless about spending only to realize your priorities are uncared for.

4. Simple living

What things in your life do you not need that can be cut out? The more you have the more you care for? How many shoes do you really need? How many cars do you really need?

Declutter your life too. What events do you really need to spend your time on? Do you have to attend every party? What habits are no longer giving you life and at worst stealing your life? How many shows a week do you really need to watch? How many activities should your kids and family be involved in?

5. Slow yourself Down

We are one whole being. There is no slowing your soul down when your body is moving too fast.

There is a story from the colonial times when porters from an African tribe would stop moving despite being beaten and they would say that they were waiting for their souls to catch up with them.

Take walks instead of taxi or piki where you can

Talk to the cashier at the store as you wait

Do one thing at a time

Journal

Sleep more

Read a book

Cook your meals

Stop to eat instead of eating and working

Take Jesus lifestyle, this will mean slowing down and simplifying.