

**John  
Mark  
Comer**

**The  
Ruthless  
Elimination  
of  
Hurry**

**How to stay emotionally healthy  
and spiritually alive in the chaos  
of the modern world**

**H**  
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1

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For Dallas Willard—thank you.

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xiii	Foreword by John Ortberg
1	Prologue: Autobiography of an epidemic
<b>Part one:</b> The problem	
17	Hurry: the great enemy of spiritual life
29	A brief history of speed
45	Something is deeply wrong
<b>Part two:</b> The solution	
61	Hint: the solution isn't more time
75	The secret of the easy yoke
89	What we're really talking about is a rule of life
99	<b>Intermission:</b> Wait, what are the spiritual disciplines again?
<b>Part three:</b> Four practices for unhurrying your life	
119	Silence and solitude
143	Sabbath
177	Simplicity
219	Slowing
245	Epilogue: A quiet life
259	Thanks
263	Exercises
265	Notes
287	A little about me

**Come to me,  
all you who are weary  
and burdened,  
and I will give you rest.  
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.  
For my yoke is easy  
and my burden is light.**

**–Jesus in  
Matthew 11v28–30**

# Foreword

The smartest and best man I have known jotted down some thoughts about hurry; I think they were posted in his kitchen when he died. "Hurry," he wrote, "involves excessive haste or a state of urgency. It is associated with words such as *hurl*, *hurdle*, *hurly-burly* (meaning "uproar"), and *hurricane*." He defined it as a "state of frantic effort one falls into in response to inadequacy, fear, and guilt." The simple essence of hurry is *too much to do!* The good of being delivered from hurry is not simply pleasure but the ability to do calmly and effectively—with strength and joy—that which really matters. "We should take it as our aim," he wrote, "to live our lives entirely without hurry. We should form a clear intention to live without hurry. One day at a time. Trying today."

We should form a mental picture of our place in the world before God. This places us in a different context. Psalm 23

does not say “The Lord is my shepherd, therefore I gotta run faster.” Shepherds rarely run. Good ones, anyway. He said to begin to eliminate things you “have” to do. He said it was important to not be afraid of “doing nothing.” He said to plan on such times. He said it would be important to deal with the panic of not being busy. To allow yourself to be in the panic, feeling it roll over you, and not going for the fix.

John Mark Comer has written a prophetic word for our day. He is engaging and honest and learned and fun and humble. He guides us to a great crossroads. To choose to live an unhurried life in our day is somewhat like taking a vow of poverty in earlier centuries; it is scary. It is an act of faith. But there are deeper riches on the other side. To be in the presence of a person where hurry has (like Elvis) “left the building” is to be inspired about the possibility of another kind of Life.

I was struck by the gifts of wisdom studded throughout this book: “All my worst moments . . . are when I’m in a hurry.” “Love, joy, and peace . . . are incompatible with hurry.” “The average iPhone user touches his or her phone 2,617 times a *day*.” (By way of contrast, the psalmist said, “I have set the LORD always before me” [Psalm 16v8, ESV]. What would my life be like if God touched my mind as frequently as I touch my phone?) Freedom perhaps never comes without great cost. And John Mark is someone who has made choices that involved a price, to pursue the life that is beyond price. He knows both the struggle and the choice, and so can speak to those of us who hunger and thirst.

Twenty centuries ago another wise man said, “[Make] the

best use of the time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5v16, ESV). I used to think that meant the days are full of sensuality and fleshly temptation. And of course, they are. But I think it mostly means that the life we were intended to live must be lived in time. And we are so used to spiritually mediocre days—days lived in irritation and fear and self-preoccupation and frenzy—that we throw our lives away in a hurry.

So, in these pages lies the Great Invitation. Take a deep breath. Put your cell phone away. Let your heart slow down. Let God take care of the world.

—John Ortberg

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# Prologue: Autobiography of an epidemic

It's a Sunday night, 10 p.m. Head up against the glass of an Uber, too tired to even sit up straight. I taught six times today—yes, *six*. The church I pastor just added *another* gathering. That's what you do, right? Make room for people? I made it until about talk number four; I don't remember anything after that. I'm well beyond tired—emotionally, mentally, even spiritually.

When we first went to six, I called up this megachurch pastor in California who'd been doing six for a while.

"How do you do it?" I asked.

"Easy," he said. "It's just like running a marathon once a week."

"Okay, thanks."

Click.

Wait . . . isn't a marathon really hard?

I take up long-distance running.

He has an affair and drops out of church.

That does not bode well for my future.

Home now, late dinner. Can't sleep; that dead-tired-but-wired feeling. Crack open a beer. On the couch, watching an obscure kung fu movie nobody's ever heard of. Chinese, with subtitles. Keanu Reeves is the bad guy.<sup>1</sup> Love Keanu. I sigh; lately, I'm ending most nights this way, on the couch, long after the family has gone to bed. Never been remotely into kung fu before; it makes me nervous. Is this the harbinger of mental illness on the horizon?

"It all started when he got obsessed with indie martial arts movies . . ."

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 a nonstop anxiety that rarely goes away, and a tinge of sadness, but mostly I just feel blaaah 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?

Anybody? I can't be the only one . . .

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 like most millennials I get bored way too easily. Me in a lot of meetings is a terrible idea for all involved. But our church grew really fast, and that's part of the trouble. I hesitate to say this because, trust me, if anything, it's embarrassing: we grew by over a thousand people a year for seven years straight. 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?

Speaking of Jesus, I have this terrifying thought lurking at the back of my mind. This nagging question of conscience that won't go away.

*Who am I becoming?*

I just hit thirty (level three!), so I have a little time under my belt. Enough to chart a trajectory to plot the character arc of my life a few decades down the road.