

*"If you can't take time to do nothing, you're a slave to doing.
Doing nothing is a radical, revolutionary act. It frees you from
the universal slavery of our age: slavery to the clock.
The clock measures doing but not being."*

PETER KREEFT

SLOWING

Desire	to curb my addiction to busyness, hurry and workaholism; to learn to savor the moment
Definition	Slowing is one way to overcome inner hurriedness and addiction to busyness. Through slowing, the sacrament of the present moment is tasted to the full.
Scripture	<p>"Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.'" (Mark 6:31)</p> <p>"Be still, and know that I am God." (Psalm 46:10)</p> <p>"Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." (Psalm 90:12)</p>
Practice Includes	<p>deliberate slowdown techniques that provide relief from frantic activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • driving in the slow lane • getting enough rest • speaking more slowly • looking people in the eyes • chewing slowly • sitting longer at the table • planning buffer time between meetings
God-Given Fruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • keeping company with Jesus as you live at a saner pace • freedom from an addiction to hurry or spiritual shortcuts • patience—waiting with grace • living the present moment to the full • trusting God's unhurried time schedule • freedom from an addiction to cell phones, email, instant messaging and all that speeds you up • living the truth that love and hurry are fundamentally incompatible • receiving interruptions graciously • realizing the work of the Spirit is not an "instant" work

SLOWING

A FRIEND OF MINE TELLS of how the word of God came to her one day through her four-year-old daughter. The mother was busy hurrying her daughter out the door when the little girl replied, “Mommy. Stop! Why are we always in a hurry when we never go anywhere important?” The little girl intuitively knew that hurry got in the way of what was important. Life is too precious to miss, and the faster we go the more likely we are to miss what really matters.

We can get so busy doing urgent things and so preoccupied with what comes next that we don’t experience *now*. Afraid of being late, we rush from the past to the future. The present moment becomes a crack between what we did and what we have yet to do. It is virtually lost to us. We don’t get to our futures any faster if we hurry. And we certainly don’t become better people in haste. More likely than not, the faster we go the less we become.

Slowing is a way we counter our culture’s mandate to tend to the bottom line, to move it or lose it, to constantly be on the go. It is a way we honor our limits and the fact that God is found in the present moment. Through slowing we intentionally develop margins in our lives that leave us open to the present moment. Slowing ourselves down doesn’t happen automatically. We may need to incorporate some practices that make us conscious of our haste. Perhaps we drive in the slow lane for a week. Or we may try to eat more slowly. Buffering in five to ten minutes between appointments can also slow us down. Sometimes I choose to stand in the longer line at the checkout counter. When I do this, I become aware of the internal compulsion to hurry and how it can rob me of the now. As I slow down I see the young mom with her kids in tow and send up a prayer. Or I notice the old woman who can’t get her change right and help out. Ask God to help you live in the now. The present moment is the only moment we ever have to live. It is here, and it will never come again.

Hurry particularly affects the way the church does ministry. Expediency and efficiency and desire for quick results can take precedence over the slow, painstaking nature of spiritual growth. Knowing something in the head does not mean it is activated in the heart and life. Growth takes time. Hurrying people along their discipleship journeys can set them up to pretend they are further along than they are. Jesus gave his disciples time and space to grow. He was patient with the process. Dallas Willard suggests that though Jesus saw his work in the lives of others as urgent, he pursued it patiently. *Urgent* and *patient* may not seem like words that go together. But in the Christian journey a sense for both are absolutely necessary.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Are you addicted to hurry, rush and adrenaline? Explain.
2. How do you feel about being stuck behind cars that go slowly?
How do you react to a slow sales clerk?
What is your response to children who dawdle?
3. What is it like for you to choose to do things slowly?
4. When do you rely on adrenaline or caffeine to get through a tough part of the day?
5. What is it like for you to eat slowly rather than snarfing down your food?
6. How have deadlines, timelines and bottom lines affected the pace of your life?
What sort of power have you given to these imaginary lines?
What options do you have?

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

1. Before you begin a meeting, allow time for people to become present. Say something like, "I want to give you a moment of silence to leave behind what you are coming from. I want us to be present to each other in our discussion together. Take some deep breaths and relax. We will start in one minute." • If you are meeting with Christians, ask them to place in the Lord's hands the things they are hurrying from. Then have them offer their next engagement to the Lord. Slowly and intentionally invite the entire group to be totally present to the moment, to each other and to the Lord. • After you have deliberately attended to becoming present, it is time to begin.
2. People who are rushed often feel anxious about their lives. So when you wake up, before your head leaves the pillow, offer God three central concerns of the day. Ask him to care for these things as you go about your daily tasks. • When your worries creep in, return to the moment when you handed God your concerns.
3. Enter into prayer in a leisurely way. You may wish to use "palms down, palms up" (see the "Contemplation" exercises).
4. Intentionally drive in the slow lane. Intentionally choose the longest line at the bank or grocery store. Intentionally sit longer over your meal. Intentionally chew your food. Intentionally take a longer shower. Relish the time. Be in the presence of God. • What rises to the surface of your mind? • What does this tell you about yourself?
5. Insert margins of rest and relaxation into your day. Remembering that it is better to be unavailable than inattentive, build some buffer times into your life:
 - shorter appointments
 - no back-to-back appointments without a break
 - take some deep breaths before you pick up the phone
 Ask God to make you present to the moment. • When people ask, "So how are you?" refrain

from a litany about how busy you are. This simply reinforces that a revved-up existence is what matters.

Counter gut reactions that arise from feeling threatened or insecure by breathing slowly and deeply. Breathe in Christ's presence. Breathe out your anxiety and fear. • Breathe deeply several times before you speak and respond.

6. Read slowly. Read for transformation rather than information. When a word stands out or lights up, stop. Let the word roll around in your heart. Do not read any more. Meditate on what you have read.

RESOURCES ON SLOWING

Addicted to Hurry: Spiritual Strategies for Slowing Down by Kirk Byron Jones

Adrenaline and Stress by Archibald Hart

The Life You've Always Wanted (DVD) by John Ortberg, Stephen Sorenson and Amanda Sorenson

An Ordinary Day with Jesus, a video series by John Ortberg and Ruth Haley Barton

Slowing Time: Seeing the Sacred Outside Your Kitchen Door by Barbara Mahany

Too Busy Not to Pray: Slowing Down to Be with God by Bill Hybels