

The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry

Session 1: The Case for an Unhurried Life

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: We must re-assess the way we spend our time so that we can find a healthier, holier lifestyle.

Head Change: To know that hurry sabotages our ability to give and receive love with God and our neighbors.

Heart Change: To feel a desire to slow down, matching the rhythm of life Jesus modeled.

Life Change: To manage our daily activities in a way that makes space for loving God and loving others.

OPEN

- What do you do to rest?
- What would you do if you had more time to rest?

We live with a hustle mentality—from jam-packed schedules, workaholism, and addiction to our phones, our lives are filled to the brim every moment of the day. Even when we find time to rest, our go-to form of relaxation consists of scrolling through social media platforms, bingeing television, and replying to the millions of notifications on our phones.

- So, how does living a busy lifestyle impact our ability to commune with and to be content in Christ?

In this series, pastor and author John Mark Comer is going to walk us through why eliminating hurry from our lives is the key to enhancing our spiritual lives. We will explore how to find rest through four practices of Jesus: silence and solitude, sabbath, simplicity, and slowing.

VIEW

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in John Mark Comer's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

- What is hurry sickness? What are the negative results of hurry sickness?
- How does a hurried lifestyle impact our relationship with God? What happens to our spiritual lives when we're way too busy?
- How do escapist behaviors like constant scrolling through social media and bingeing television add to the problem of busyness?

Watch Session 1: The Case for an Unhurried Life (11 minutes).

REVIEW

John Mark started the session by explaining how he was a burnt-out megachurch pastor on the verge of a midlife crisis. He then realized that his busy schedule was contributing to his diminishing relationship with Jesus.

- Do you ever feel like you are overwhelmed with hurry, unable to complete everything on your to-do list?
- What in your life keeps you the busiest?

Chronic busyness can sideline our relationships with God.

- In what ways have you seen busyness negatively impact your relationship with God?
- In what ways has a full schedule stripped time away from activities like prayer and reading the Bible?

John Mark explained that when he was first introduced to the idea of eliminating hurry, he was dealing with workaholism, jam-packed schedules, and addiction to his phone.

- In what ways can you relate to him?

- How difficult has it been to try and eliminate hurry-inducing activities from your schedule?

Some of us live in places that contribute to our rushed lifestyles. John Mark explained his home city of Portland, Oregon is one of the most secular and fast-paced cities in the nation.

- What are some specific things contributing to hurry-culture where you live?

We learned that psychologists have diagnosed people with something called “hurry sickness”—a feeling of being chronically short of time and a need to perform every task faster than necessary.

- Are you experiencing the effects of hurry sickness John Mark described?
- In what ways are they affecting your physical and spiritual well-being?

John Mark explained that there are both unhealthy and healthy types of busyness. Healthy busyness is when we have a lot to do but not “too much.” The unhealthy type of busyness is when there’s too much to do and not enough time to do it.

- Which type of busyness best reflects your life? Why?

Unhealthy busyness can negatively affect our mental health, causing increased irritability, hypersensitivity, and stress.

- What other negative effects can busyness have on our mental health?
- Which, if any, have you had to wrestle in your own life?

John Mark taught us the result of a hurried life and compulsive overworking is emotional numbness—using escapist behaviors like scrolling through Instagram and bingeing TV shows as distractions from our hurriedness instead of cultivating true rest.

- What kind of escapist behaviors tempt you when you need to disconnect from the busyness of life?
- In what ways have these escapes distracted you rather than giving you the rest you need?

- What could it look like for you to readjust your busiest day next week?
- What activities or demands could you cut out of your schedule?

BIBLE EXPLORATION

When we're used to over-extending ourselves, sitting down to relax or live in the moment can feel virtually impossible—especially when there's still plenty to get done.

Read Luke 10:38–42.

- What were the differences between Mary and Martha's behavior while Jesus was around?
- In what ways do they reflect the healthy and unhealthy busyness John Mark talked about?

In this passage, Martha was distracted by all the preparations while Mary took advantage of her time by sitting with Jesus. It is easy to be like Martha, annoyed with Mary. After all, there are a lot of chores and responsibilities in our lives that can't be neglected. But, in this story, Jesus wants to teach us what is most important in our lives: spending time with him.

- Do Mary's actions bother you? If so, why?

Martha's neglect of Jesus shows us how a busy schedule can disconnect us from what's important. Her hurry might have felt necessary, but she missed Jesus.

- What could it look like for you to leave the things on your schedule alone for a day, and spend time in prayer?

Many people struggle to slow down due to the anxiety and guilt that comes from not being productive every moment of the day. But we have to remember that God can replace our anxiousness with peace and rest.

Read Philippians 4:6–7.

- What is your initial response to hearing "be anxious for nothing"?
- What do you typically worry about?

- What does Paul suggest we do instead of being anxious in these verses?
- What does he say the outcome will be?

For many of us, stopping to pray while rushing around can be difficult because we're both distracted and moving too fast.

- In what ways is it difficult, or easy, to pray and give thanks to God when you're anxious and in a rush?

Verse 7 says that the peace of God will guard our hearts and minds in Christ. This peace comes from God and is felt despite what's going on around us.

- What could it look like for you to ask God for peace the next time your busy schedule is causing anxiety?
- When you are busy this week, what could you do to make space for spending time with Jesus?
- What responsibilities can wait until you've spent time with the Lord?

LAST WORD

For many of us, being busy is normal—we've got work, family, friends, and even hobbies we like to tend to. But when we become so busy that our time spent with God decreases, our spiritual lives and relationship with him will start to deteriorate.

Think about what a typical week in your life looks like and assess how much of your time is filled with "things to do." Based on what you learned from John Mark in this session, ask God to help you become more aware of how you spend your time and what changes he wants you to make.

DEEPER WALK

Read: Read Part Two of John Mark's book *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*. This section of John Mark's book will outline a path toward Jesus and out of our hurried lives.

Pray: Pray over your schedule. Ask God to help you make wise decisions regarding your time and responsibilities so that you can remove constant busyness from your lifestyle.

Talk: Take some time to talk with a close friend or family member about your busyness and ask that they hold you accountable to your goals.

Memorize: Memorize Philippians 4:6–7, “Don’t worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”

Session 2: Silence and Solitude

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: Practicing silence and solitude—especially when we are busy—is essential to experiencing a healthy spiritual life.

Head Change: To know that the busier we are, the more we need to withdraw to be with God.

Heart Change: To feel a desire to spend uninterrupted quiet time with God, no matter how busy we are.

Life Change: To incorporate a practice of intentional withdrawal into your weekly routine.

OPEN

- Do you like being alone? Why or why not?
- How would you feel about being alone and quiet—no phone, music, TV, or added background noise?

Living an unhurried lifestyle is more than taking a break from physical work and busyness—it's also about quieting our minds. But finding silence and solitude can be difficult, especially when we're used to constantly having noise in the background.

In session two, John Mark is going to teach us how we can enrich our relationship with God by withdrawing to be alone with him through silence and solitude.

VIEW

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in John Mark Comer's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

- According to John Mark, what is the difference between isolation and solitude?

- Why did Jesus withdraw to quiet places?
- In what ways does our Western world deepen our need for silence and solitude?

Watch Session 2: Silence and Solitude (14 minutes).

REVIEW

John Mark said when he's burdened with busyness, whether at work or in his family, the last thing on his mind is practicing silence or solitude.

- What priorities keep you too busy to practice silence and solitude?

John Mark explained that there are two kinds of silence: internal and external. External silence is the absence of noise—no music, roommates, or TV in the background.

- What do you think makes external silence hard to find?

In many cases, God's voice is a whisper, not a shout, which makes hearing him over the loudness of our secular, urban, digital lives more difficult.

- What noise in your life makes it difficult to focus?
- How does a lack of focus affect your time with God?

Television, social media, and podcasts keep our minds running even when we're physically resting.

- What could it look like for you to limit things like TV and social media when you have downtime?
- What are some other ways you could turn down the noise in your life?
- What specific effects would silence have on your prayers, meditation, or ability to hear God's voice?

John Mark described internal silence as being able to quiet the thoughts, worries, and questions rolling around in our minds. But silence can be difficult to find when our hearts and minds feel troubled. Even in short prayers, it can be difficult to remain

focused on God without thinking about errands that need to be run and emails that need our attention.

- What would make internal silence difficult for you to pursue?

The “what ifs” of life can cause anxiety and restlessness, contributing to our lack of internal silence.

- Historically, how has worry had an impact on your ability to rest?
- What kind of questions or regrets do you ruminate over regularly?

Solitude isn’t the same as loneliness or isolation. Solitude is a chosen separation from busyness so that you can be quiet in the presence of God.

- What has quality time with God typically looked like for you?

Take a moment to examine some of your closest relationships—like a spouse, best friend, or family member who lives with you.

- How would a lack of quality time affect those relationships?
- In what ways does quality time cause those relationships to flourish?

John Mark reminded us that when it comes to practicing solitude with God, we should begin wherever we are without stressing about where we want to be. Solitude can be as simple as spending five minutes in prayer before bed or reading Scripture during a few minutes of quiet.

- What could it look like for you to take a step toward finding solitude with God this week?

BIBLE EXPLORATION

Everything on our to-do list can feel equally important and it can be difficult to gauge what is most important. In the book of Mark, we see Jesus being busy while prioritizing time alone.

Read Mark 1:29–37.

This passage describes a busy day in Jesus's life. He was slammed with demands on his time, essentially working all day. And the very next morning, his disciples found him and wanted to add more to his plate (1:37). Why do you think Jesus had to leave the house to find quiet time?

It seems counterintuitive, but the more in demand Jesus was the more he withdrew in prayer.

- What can we learn from Jesus about taking time away from the demands of life?
- What benefits could withdrawal and prayer have in your life, especially when you feel slammed with responsibilities?

The way we spend our time in solitude is critically important.

- What could you do with your time alone to foster your relationship with Jesus?
- What would it look like to build more of this time into your weekly schedule?

Overworking can be a sign of internal unrest.

- How will we pay a certain bill, finish a complicated project, or impress our boss if we spend less time working?
- But, in the end, overworking is just a way of trying to take what God controls into our own hands.

Read Matthew 6:25–34.

This passage reminds us God will provide for us in the same way that he provides for the birds of the sky. You are worth more to him than the birds—he will take care of you.

- What needs are you afraid won't be met if you take time to be alone with God?
- What could it look like for you to trust him more in that particular area of your life?

Sometimes we fill our schedules leaving no room for rest because we're afraid that if we don't do enough, we won't have enough.

- How often do you experience worry?

- What steps do you take to eliminate or cope with anxious thoughts?

As Christians, we must remember that no matter the amount of work we put in, God is the one who gives us what we need. Overworking only reveals the level of our trust in him.

- What would it look like to trust God when you feel like you aren't being productive?
- What steps could you take to trust God with your rest?
- What could it look like for you to bring all your anxious thoughts to God this week?

LAST WORD

Sitting in silence allows us to not only address our over dependence on productivity but also gives us a chance to spend time in God's presence. Our relationship with God flourishes with quality time, just like our relationships with friends and family do.

Remember John Mark's advice to start where you are, not where you feel like you should be. This week, if all you can manage is five minutes when you first wake up, start there and watch what God does with your time.

DEEPER WALK

Read: Read the chapter "Silence and Solitude" in Part Three of John Mark's book *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*.

Pray: Choose a particular time of the day that works best and pray in a secluded place. Pray and ask God to help you find ways to spend time with him more often.

Meditate: Practice silence and solitude this week by picking a short passage of Scripture to meditate on like Matthew 6:25–34 or Mark 1:29–37. Meditate on the passage repeatedly during your quiet time throughout the week.

Memorize: Memorize Mark 1:35, "In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there."

Session 3: Sabbath

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: Honoring the sabbath is a decree from God that allows us to rest and recharge without guilt.

Head Change: To know that sabbath is a divinely ordained rhythm we're called to practice.

Heart Change: To feel peace rather than guilt when we decide to rest for a day.

Life Change: To worship God through keeping the sabbath on a regular basis.

OPEN

- How do you typically spend your days off?
- How do you fill up your days when you don't have to work?

For many people, taking a day off means running errands, working on personal projects, or possibly working more. Unfortunately, our culture tells us that staying busy is much better than doing nothing and makes us feel guilty for resting.

In this session, John Mark is going to discuss what the sabbath really is and why practicing the sabbath will help us be present with Jesus and enjoy the life he has given us.

VIEW

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in John Mark Comer's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

- What word did John Mark say is the most literal translation of sabbath?

- According to John Mark, what are the four movements of sabbath, and why is each one important?
- How does taking a sabbath impact our spiritual lives?
- Why is sabbath about much more than refusing to work?

Watch Session 3: Sabbath (11 minutes).

REVIEW

We're used to associating sabbath with the idea of rest.

- What comes to mind when you think of the sabbath?
- How have you participated in the sabbath in the past?

We live in a culture that values the grind. Never taking a day off is respected—almost a sign of success. Taking a day off sounds like a bad idea to many people.

- In what ways have you ever felt guilty for taking days off from work?
- How do you feel when you have unfinished work but try to rest anyways?

John Mark walked us through four definitions of *sabbath*, each of which gives us an idea of what it means to truly rest. The most literal translation of *sabbath* is “to stop.” The sabbath is a day we stop working and stop hustling.

- What makes it difficult for you to stop, even for a couple of hours?

The second translation of *sabbath* is rest—physical, mental, and emotional rejuvenation. Rest does include sleeping, but it is more than that. True rest is actively trusting God with your worries, setting aside problems that need solving. “When I rest, I’m not wasting time,” John Mark said. “If I am, I’m wasting time on God and resting in him.”

- When was the last time you took a day away from your schedule and pressing responsibilities?
- What do you think it would look like for you to actively rest in Jesus?

The third translation of *sabbath* is “delight.” The sabbath is meant to be a celebration, a party, or a holiday. It is a day where you can enjoy life to the fullest.

- Consider the question John Mark asked us: “What could you do for a 24-hour period that would bring you deep, soul-level, throbbing joy?”

John Mark explained that he and his family “pleasure stack” on the sabbath, using the day to eat fun foods, play games, or prioritize special experiences together.

- What could it look like for you to “pleasure stack” on your next sabbath?

The last translation of *sabbath* John Mark shared was “worship.” For this reason, Sunday may be the best day for you to practice the sabbath.

- No matter which day you choose, John Mark encouraged us to think of the sabbath as a day dedicated to God. Besides attending church, what would it look like for you to dedicate a day to God?
- What do you think worship looks like outside of your church worship service?

The sabbath is important because it removes distractions, allows us to be sensitive to the Spirit, and gives us a day to experience the beauty of life.

- What could it look like for you to intentionally carve out a sabbath day once a week?
- What are you most excited to do on your next sabbath?

BIBLE EXPLORATION

Sometimes, we think of the sabbath as an optional practice or we put it at the bottom of our list of priorities. But the sabbath is a gift that God prioritizes and has called us to experience.

Read Genesis 2:1–3.

- What are some of the adjectives used to describe the sabbath in these verses?
- What makes the sabbath different than all the other days?

Whether we honor the sabbath or not, this day has been set apart by God as holy.

- Is the sabbath a special part of your week?
- In what ways do you treat sabbath as special or set apart?
- In what ways does God resting from his work help you understand the importance of humankind resting from work?

Of all the days God created, he only blessed and set apart the sabbath day. It was important to him that one day be rejuvenating.

- What could it look like for you to trust in God's blessing of honoring the sabbath?

Finding time to observe the sabbath is important. It should be a normal part of our lifestyle—but we should remember that it is a gift rather than a new way to be legalistic.

Read Matthew 12:1–14.

The Pharisees believed that all labor of any kind was forbidden on the sabbath, even if it helped people in need. In this passage, they asked Jesus if a life-giving activity on the sabbath was acceptable to God.

- What reason does Jesus give for good deeds being lawful for the sabbath?

Jesus understood that the sabbath was meant to bless humanity, not keep them from God's provision. There's no need to feel guilty if an emergency arises on your sabbath.

- In what ways can being too strict on your off-day cause problems and stress?
- What do Jesus's actions show us about the intent of the sabbath?

The Pharisees had defined the sabbath so strictly that they would have rather allowed someone to suffer instead of seeing them whole and healthy. Their effort to protect the sabbath had become a cold, legalistic list of rules. While it is helpful to set up some boundaries to protect your sabbath, you should not become so strict that it creates anxiety in you or pain in others.

- In what ways could you protect your sabbath from the demands of life?

- How could you guard yourself against legalism so that you and those around you could enjoy the blessing of the sabbath?

Jesus reminds us that the sabbath is made for our good and his glory. We should not approach the sabbath thinking that if we practice it wrongly, God will be disappointed or angry with us. God loves us and has blessed us with a day of rest, delight, worship.

- What could you do to remind yourself that the sabbath is a gift for you?

LAST WORD

Keeping the sabbath is not just a good idea; it's a command from God. God wants us to rest after a long week of work and to trust him with all our time.

Integrating the sabbath as a normal part of your week might be difficult at first, especially if you're not used to regular rest. Start slow and do everything you can to ensure that your next sabbath is as successful as it can be—and if it's not, that's okay. Just try again the following week to enjoy God's day of rest.

DEEPER WALK

Read: Read the chapter "Sabbath" in Part Three of John Mark's book *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*.

Discover: Explore the ways you and your family or friends could enjoy the sabbath. How would each of you want to enjoy that day?

Act: Commit to taking a day of sabbath sometime in the next week and, as best as you can, refrain from working and guard your time from mindless distractions.

Memorize: Memorize Mark 2:27, "And he said to them, 'The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath.'"

Session 4: Simplicity

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: Cultivating simplicity will give us the margin to receive the love of God and, in turn, give that love to the people around us.

Head Change: To know that a life of giving is happier than a life of getting.

Heart Change: To feel less inclined to accumulate new things and more inclined to practice generosity.

Life Change: To limit our possessions and obligations to the point that we are free to live freely and joyfully in the kingdom with Jesus.

OPEN

- What was the last “fun” purchase you made?
- Did it make you feel complete? Why or why not?

Things are not evil, but our society is designed to value accumulation. We feel we need more or at least need the newer, bigger, and better version of what we have. Whether it's the next phone upgrade, the newest pair of shoes, or even vying for more followers on social media, our drive for accumulation seems ever-present. The things we chase may not be bad, but when our desires go unchecked, our hearts will be consumed by the hunt for “more.”

In session four, John Mark will show us a better way forward: imitating Jesus's lifestyle of simplicity leads us to live a lifestyle of contentment.

VIEW

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in John Mark's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

- According to John Mark, what percentage of Jesus's teachings are about money and possessions?
- In what ways does the drive to have and own more lead to a lack of peace?
- What is the basic idea of simple living?
- How did John Mark describe the idea of a simple lifestyle?

Watch session 4: Simplicity (9 minutes).

REVIEW

- John Mark began the session by asking us if what we have is more than enough, why do we still want newer, better, or cooler things?
- How would you answer his question?
- Do you consume or accumulate new things that you don't necessarily need?
- Why do you think that is the case?

John Mark told us that the average American home has at least 300,000 items inside and that our country's storage units could house the entire nation.

- What do you think about our society's culture of greed and consumerism?

It can be easy to think of other people as frivolous, greedy, or consumeristic, but the church can also buy into the desire for more.

- Do you think of your habits as consumeristic or even greedy?
- Why or why not?

In Acts 20:35, Paul quotes Jesus saying that it is more blessed to give than to receive. John Mark told us that the Greek word for "blessed" can also be translated as "happy," revealing that a happy life is found in giving rather than receiving. Think of a time you were open and generous.

- How did it make you feel when you're able to provide someone with something they need?

Compare that experience to the last time you bought something for yourself.

- Do you think one experience was "better" than the other? How so?

If we want to live a happy life free from the insatiable desire for *more*, we must seek simplicity, also known as minimalism.

- What could simple living or minimalism look like in your own life?
- In what ways have you enjoyed, or not enjoyed, simple living?
- Why do you believe it's difficult for people in American culture to accept a simple lifestyle?
- What do you think the appeal of maximalism is?

The first step toward simplicity is to reduce your consumption. John Mark described it as "limiting the number of our possessions, expenses, activities, and social obligations, to a level where we are free to live joyfully in the kingdom with Jesus."

- How often do you buy things that you want as opposed to what you need?
- In what ways could limiting your intake give you freedom?
- What could it look like for you to limit what you typically buy in a regular month?

Being a consumer isn't just about buying stuff—it also applies to our activities and obligations. As hard as it is to believe, these activities can distract you from God.

- In what ways could extra activities or responsibilities be a distraction?
- How does your use of your resources—your time, energy, and money—reflect your priorities?

The second step to simplicity is practicing generosity, giving your money, belongings, or your time to others on a regular basis.

- What could it look like for you to be more generous with the resources God has given you?

John Mark was honest about his feelings toward practicing generosity: it doesn't sound fun, but it is the way of Jesus. But even though simplicity may not sound exciting, it will bring you happiness and contentment.

- What in your life could you downsize or give away?
- What would it look like to try living with less for the next month?

BIBLE EXPLORATION

When ask our possessions to make us happy and satisfied, we are putting our hope and security in things that can be stolen, broken, or destroyed. The only secure place for our faith and hope is in Jesus.

Read Matthew 6:19–21.

These verses remind us that our possessions don't last forever. At any given time, they could be stolen, destroyed, or lost.

- How does knowing material goods fall apart change your view of your possessions?
- In what ways does it impact your view of accumulating new things?

Over-consumption reveals our disordered desires: instead of being satisfied with God, we try to find value and meaning in the things we own.

- What sorts of things do you buy when you are feeling down?
- In what ways might you be trying to satisfy your heart with something only God can provide?

When our treasure holds a higher position in our heart than God, it becomes an idol.

- Are there any possessions or consumeristic behaviors that compete with Jesus for your attention or even affection?
- Is there anything you are afraid Jesus will ask you to give up?

Our consumerism is a form of worship—but worship focused on things rather than God. We give our resources in return for peace, comfort, and status.

- When you are feeling unnoticed, anxious, or unloved, what could it look like for you to turn to Jesus?

LAST WORD

In a society shaped by consumerism, simplicity is a radical commitment to following the way of Jesus. But when we limit our possessions and commit ourselves to generosity, we will find the joy and fullness of life that Jesus promises.

As you examine your habits, consider what it would look like to limit your intake and increase your giving. Ask God to help you set some goals for this next week and discover the joy of simplicity.

DEEPER WALK

Read: Read the chapter “Simplicity” in Part Three of John Mark’s book *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*.

Pray: Pray and ask God to help you become a more generous person. Ask him to help you see the value in giving rather than grieving the loss of a possession.

Give: Take inventory of your belongings while thinking about the needs of your community. What surplus do you have that could meet a need? Take your opportunity to love God and serve others by being generous.

Memorize: Memorize Luke 12:15, “And he said to them, ‘Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the possessions.’”

Session 5: Slowing

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: Physically slowing down trains our souls to resist hurry and increases our capacity to be present with God and others.

Head Change: To know that our bodies are essential to who we are and physical discipline can help us connect more deeply to Jesus.

Heart Change: To feel peace in waiting while learning how to slow down.

Life Change: To incorporate focal practices that help you be present with God and those around you.

OPEN

- Do you prefer a fast-paced lifestyle or one that's slow? What do you like or dislike about the pace of your life?

In general, we all move at a fast pace. Life is busy and it's rare that we don't have someplace we need to be. And, let's face it, we've all experienced frustration when having to wait for something we want—whether it's for our food, long lines at the grocery store, or being put on hold with customer service.

But when we look at the life of Jesus, we find that he was not in a rush. He didn't get frustrated with waiting and, no matter where he was, he was totally present. To be more like Jesus, we need to slow down. In this final session, John Mark will discuss the ways physically slowing down helps us learn to be present with God.

VIEW

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in John Mark Comer's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

- In what ways are our bodies just as important as our souls?

- What were three of the focal practices John Mark discussed?
- What reasons does John Mark give for our phones being a major obstacle to an unhurried life?

Watch Session 5: Slowing (14 minutes).

REVIEW

John Mark started the session with the Hebrew word for “soul”: *nephesh*. It describes the entirety of a person, including their soul and body. This definition is different from our cultural idea that our souls—our “true” essence—have no real connection to our bodies.

- How would you define a soul?
- Why do you think it’s important to understand that God cares about our whole person, body, and soul?

You are not a soul with a body. In many ways, you are your body. For this reason, it is essential that we offer our physical activity to God.

- What do you think it looks like to, as Romans 12:1 says, present your body to God as a sacrifice?

If we want to resist hurry, we will have to physically slow down.

- John Mark defined “slowing” as “cultivating patience by deliberately choosing to place ourselves in positions where we simply have to wait.” What makes slowing down difficult for you?
- Do you think there could be benefits to slowing down?

John Mark mentioned multiple practical ways we can incorporate slowing into our lives. One way to begin the journey of slowing down is to change our relationship to our phones.

- On a typical day, how often do you fill your “empty” time with checking notifications, talking and texting on the phone, or watching television?

Many of us have an unhealthy relationship with our phones.

- John Mark encouraged us to “parent our phones” or put our phones “to bed.” In what ways could a “dumb phone”—a phone without apps or constant access to the internet—help break our dependence on our screens?
- What worries you about turning off your notifications?
- What would it look like for you to parent your phone more effectively?

John Mark encouraged us to find a focal practice like painting, playing music, gardening, or exercising to counter our digital distractions and multi-tasking. These practices help us center our minds and attention while grounding ourselves in the moment.

- What is a focal practice you could incorporate into your current lifestyle?
- What would it take for you to begin this focal practice within the next week?

By learning how to be present in the moment and centering our attention through focal practices, we can also increase our soul’s capacity to be present to God in prayer.

- Is it difficult for you to remain present during prayer?
- What distractions grab your attention the most?
- Which could focal practices improve your prayer life?
- What would it look like to implement those practices into your daily life?

BIBLE EXPLORATION

Sometimes we’re put in situations that force us to slow down and wait. When slowing down is the only option, it can have a great impact on our ability to remain patient.

Read James 5:7–8.

Farmers have to wait for rain without any guarantee of when it will come. Their entire livelihoods hang on something they cannot control.

- What need in your life is beyond your control?

- What would it look like to be present with God rather than spending energy worrying about the future while you wait?

In many cases, waiting patiently is hard because we have no idea how long we'll be waiting. But just like the farmer knows it will rain at some point, we know that God will come through for us in our waiting.

- How have you typically responded to God's timing in the past?
- In what ways does God's timing help us learn to slow down?

James reminds us to be patient by strengthening our hearts because Christ's return is coming sooner than we think. But, for many of us, it seems like God is slow in returning. (Second Peter 3:9 can be helpful if you find yourself thinking God is slow in fulfilling his promises.)

- In what ways might our sense of hurry skew our view of God's perfect timing?

Forcing ourselves to wait may be hard, but when God asks us to wait, it can make us angry with him.

Read Psalm 33:13–22.

There are times when we might feel like God isn't listening because he is not working fast enough. We want our prayers answered quickly and don't like waiting on his timing.

- How do you feel when God makes you wait? What is your reaction to God when he makes you sit in an uncomfortable situation?

As we're learning how to be patient, we wonder if God sees us in our waiting. But in verses 13–15, the psalmist explains that God sees it all—there is nothing he cannot see, and no person he has overlooked.

- In what ways is it comforting to know that God sees your waiting?
- How does God being all-seeing impact your ability to be patient?

When we truly believe that God watches over us, it becomes easier to believe that he will come through for us. He is not a God that chooses to ignore us as we wait for him to fulfill his promises.

- What have you been waiting patiently for?
- How could you remind yourself that God does not ignore you, but will come through for you in his timing?

This passage changes from personal to general, exclaiming that our soul waits for the Lord, and he is our help and our shield. Waiting on God is a common and collective occurrence for all believers.

- What could it look like for you and your friends to support one another while you wait on God?
- Is it possible that you are the answer to a friend's prayer?

LAST WORD

Learning to live at a slower pace expands our ability to be present with God and patient with our circumstances. But patience doesn't come easy—we must practice slowing down through intentional methods as we've learned in this session.

Think about your current spiritual life and how it has been impacted by a hurried lifestyle. The practices of silence and solitude, the sabbath, simplicity and slowing, will not only help you rest and give you peace but also will connect you intimately with Jesus.

- Which of these four practices can you add to your weekly schedule?
- What would it look like to practice all four?

DEEPER WALK

Read: Read the chapter "Slowing" in Part Three of John Mark's book *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*. If you have time, you can also check out John Mark's workbook *How to Unhurry* for practices to help you apply what you have learned in this series. You can find it in the chapter titled "Exercises."

Pray: Ask God to help you figure out what distractions in your life are hindering your overall ability to slow down. Pray for the courage needed to address those areas head-on.

Slow: Use what you've learned in this series to practice slowing down. Pick one or two focal practices to try this week.

Challenge: Accept John Mark's challenge to "level up" by getting an old school alarm clock to replace your phone alarm clock. Use the time in the morning you would normally devote to your phone to be present with Jesus in prayer or through reading a passage of Scripture.