

SLOW DOWN IN THIS HECTIC WORLD



We live in a hectic, fast-moving world. Things seem to be getting faster and faster, pressure and stress getting stronger and stronger as time goes by. It's a society, a culture, that is open for business "24/7", a world that seems to never shut down like it used to.

Research was done that concluded people now sleep 2½ hours less each night than people did 100 years ago. We're busier than we've ever been in the history of the world, and we keep trying to fit more into every hour and do it more quickly. Nowadays we measure time in nano-seconds. Another new word we use is "multi-tasking," trying to do several things at once. People look at TV sets with more than one channel displayed at one time, and you even see people with 2 cell phones, or a cell phone and a landline, and they're talking on both at the same time! They keep getting smaller and better, and whole computers can now be held in your hand, so you can work faster and get more done. When will it all end? Sometimes you feel like saying "Stop the world and let me get off!"

There's a restaurant now in Tokyo that doesn't charge for food. They only charge you for the amount of time you're at your table. The only way you can have a break and slow down these days is to get stuck on Auckland's motorways! I'm only kidding, but why are the roads so choked up? Because everyone is going further and faster and trying to get places in a hurry. Isn't it so true what was predicted thousands of years ago in the book of Daniel, that "Many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall be increased" (Daniel 12:4).

Another interesting scripture is Ecclesiastes 7:29 "This only have I found: God created mankind upright, but they have gone in search of many schemes."

One version says: "God made us plain and simple, but we have made ourselves very complicated."

Job described it in Job 9:25, "My days go by faster than a runner, they fly away without my seeing any joy, they skim past like boats of papyrus, like eagles swooping down on their prey."

We can live life at breakneck speed, too fast to stop a moment and rest awhile and gain some perspective. If you read about Jesus' life on earth, you find that He was never in a hurry. Yet we rush around all over the place. Let's have a look at a few scriptures from God's perspective, that have the theme that we should slow down the pace of our lives.

That's one of the good things about coming to Church each week. We can tend to get lost in the rush of keeping up with this hectic society during the week, so it's good just to stop, worship God, listen to Him and rest awhile, and regain our perspective of what is important in life.

Let's notice God's perspective in 1 Kings 19:9-11 ⁹"There he went into a cave and spent the night. And the word of the LORD came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" ¹⁰He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am

the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.” ¹¹ The LORD said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.”

In our culture we have a saying “Don’t just stand there, do something! God said the opposite to Elijah: “Don’t do something, just stand there and watch me.”

Elijah was in a time of great stress. He had just been involved in the destruction of 850 prophets of Baal through God’s power, but now Jezebel was out to get him, so he ran for his life. God shows that He is not necessarily in the spectacular, big, fast and furious things, but He came in a “gentle whisper,” a “still small voice.”

Jesus came to earth with a big job to do—to reveal the Father to mankind, to save the world, to teach the disciples His Way, to start His Church. There was so much to accomplish, to do, but He was never in a hurry.

Here’s a quote from Richard Foster’s “Celebration of Discipline”, the chapter on Solitude:

“He inaugurated His ministry by spending forty days alone in the desert (Matthew 4:1-11). Before He chose the twelve, He spent the entire night alone in the desert hills (Luke 6:12). When He received the news of John the Baptist’s death, He ‘withdrew from there in a boat to a lonely place apart’ (Matthew 4:13). After the miraculous feeding of the five thousand Jesus ‘went up into the hills by Himself...’ (Matthew 14:23). Following a long night of work, ‘in the morning, a great while before day, He rose and went out to a lonely place...’ (Mark 1:35). When the twelve returned from a preaching and healing mission, Jesus instructed them, ‘Come away by yourselves to a lonely place’ (Mark 6:31). Following the healing of a leper Jesus ‘withdrew to the wilderness and prayed’ (Luke 5:16). With three disciples He sought out the silence of a lonely mountain as the stage for the transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-9). As He prepared for His highest and most holy work, Jesus sought the solitude of the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-46). I could go on, but perhaps this is sufficient to show that the seeking out of solitary places was a regular practice for Jesus. So it should be for us.”

In a fast-paced world, we need to slow down and be still and spend time with God. That’s what is beautifully put in Psalm 46:10: “Be still, and know that I am God”.

Sometimes it’s hard in our busy, frantic lives to stop and put time aside and be alone with God. If I stopped talking now and we had a couple of minutes of silence, it would be hard for some of us to take—we would start squirming and fidgeting and not know how to respond to silence!

People these days have TV sets on in their homes all the time—there isn’t any time when there is no noise and activity. But Jesus said to His followers “Come away by yourselves to a lonely place and rest a while” (Mark 6:31). Even Jesus, the Son of God, withdrew from the busyness of this life to be alone with His heavenly Father, to listen to Him, and be renewed.

This principle is so important that God included it in the great 10 Commandments He gave Moses.

Exodus 20:8-11 ⁸“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labour and do all your work, ¹⁰but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. ¹¹For in six days the

LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but He rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”

Even God rested after working. It’s good for us to rest—this is a principle God gives us to show us it’s not good to keep going 24/7, never resting. Life is not just to be a continual striving after productivity and work—we need time to stop, be refreshed and renewed.

Ecclesiastes 4:6 puts this in an interesting way. Ecclesiastes talks about life as being vanity, or a “striving after wind.” Eccl. 4:6 says it is better to be content with little than to keep striving for more, and never be happy.

People who pursue wealth and prosperity always want more, and can get on to the treadmill of never being happy with what they have.

Eccl. 4:7-8 ⁷“Again I saw something meaningless under the sun: ⁸There was a man all alone; he had neither son nor brother. There was no end to his toil, yet his eyes were not content with his wealth. “For whom am I toiling,” he asked, “and why am I depriving myself of enjoyment?” This too is meaningless—a miserable business!”

We can get caught up in the rat race, because we are worried about what other people think of us, and that we should have what they have.

If we don’t stop sometimes and be quiet and listen, how can God tell us what He wants us to do? Even our prayers can be like that, a continual torrent of words, questions and requests—shouldn’t we stop and be still for a moment, and let God speak to us”. “Be still, and know that I am God.” Slow down enough to really connect with God.

There’s no need to rush everywhere. A few years ago I remember I used to always drive at 105-110 kph, until one day I thought, why don’t I just slow down and drive at 100 k’s? So I did that, and I relaxed, and have driven at a slower pace ever since. There’s no need to go at top speed all the time. Relax and enjoy life. Stop and smell the roses! It’s an attitude of mind we can choose to live by.

Notice another scripture:

Isaiah 30:15 “This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: “In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it.”

Another version: “In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength.”

But verse 16 shows the people wanted to rush on and do things their way—instead of just quietly waiting on God. God doesn’t mind waiting, and there are many times in the Bible where we are advised to be willing to wait on Him! For example—

Psalms 37:7 “Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for Him; do not fret when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.”

Rather than rush around seeking materialism and being tempted to do evil, live a good life and wait on God. God’s view of time is different to ours—with Him 1,000 years is just a day,

so He has all the time in the world. We're going to have eternal life with Him too, so why rush to do everything now!?

On the wall at El Rancho Camp in Waikanae is "A Psalm for Busy People" that helps us with our perspective on time.

A Psalm for Busy People by Japanese poet Toki Miyashina:

The Lord is my Pacesetter, I shall not rush. He makes me stop and rest for quiet intervals. He provides me with images of stillness which restore my serenity. He leads me in ways of efficiency, through calmness of mind, and His guidance is peace. Even though I have a great many things to accomplish this day, I will not fret, for His presence is here. His timelessness, His all-importance, will keep me in balance. He prepares refreshment and renewal in the midst of my activity by anointing my head with the oil of tranquility. My cup of joyous energy overflows. Surely harmony and effectiveness shall be the fruits of my hours, for I shall walk in the place of my Lord, and dwell in His house forever.

Let's close with some wonderful words of Jesus, in Matthew 11:28-29:

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."

One of the chief blessings, benefits and outcomes God wants to give us is rest, peace, stillness and quiet. So let's not get too trapped up in the hectic pace of modern life. Let's take time to just be quiet, to relax from the rat race, to develop a rich relationship with God, to "Be still, and know that He is God."