



Pastor's Update

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LUTHERAN
CHURCH OF **HOPE**

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By Pastor Merv Thompson

"May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." (2 Cor. 13:14).

Pastor John Ortberg previously was the Teaching Pastor at Willow Creek Community Church in suburban Chicago, now he pastors Menlo Park Presbyterian Church in Silicon Valley, California. Reading through a recent [Leadership Magazine](#) I found an article by Ortberg that seems to speak volumes about our lifestyles. I paraphrase from his article.

"Not long after moving to Chicago, I called a wise friend to ask for some spiritual direction. I described the pace of my present ministry. I told him of the rhythm of our family life; we are in the van-driving, soccer-league, piano-lesson, school orientation-night years. I asked him what I could do to be spiritually healthy. There was a long pause.

'You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life.'
'Okay, I have written that down,' I told him a bit impatiently, 'what else is there?' I had many things to do. Another long pause. 'There is nothing else,' he said, you must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life.' He is the wisest spiritual mentor I know. *I've concluded that my life and the well-being of the people I serve depends on following his prescription, for hurry is the great enemy of spiritual life in our day. As Carl Jung wrote, 'Hurry is not of the devil, hurry is the devil.'*

For most of us the great danger is not that we will renounce our faith. It is that we will become so distracted and rushed and preoccupied that we will settle for a mediocre version of it. We will just skim our lives instead of actually living them. Our world has become the world of the Red Queen in Alice in Wonderland—'Now here, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that.'

Jesus was aware of this constant problem and withdrew often from crowds and activities. If you want to follow someone, you can't go faster than the one

who is leading; following Jesus cannot be done in a sprint. Jesus was often busy, but he was never hurried. Being busy is an outer condition; hurried is a sickness of the soul.

As much as we complain about it, there is a part of us which is drawn to a hurried life. It makes us feel important. It keeps the adrenaline pumping. It means we don't have to look too closely at the heart of life. It keeps us from feeling our loneliness. 'The press of busyness is like a charm,' Soren Kierkegaard wrote, 'its power swells...it reaches out seeking always to lay hold of ever younger victims so that childhood or youth are scarcely allowed the quiet and the retirement in which the Eternal may unfold a divine growth.'

Ortberg asks, 'How do you know if you are suffering from hurry sickness? Here are symptoms.

Speeding Up *You are haunted by the feat that you do not have enough time to do what needs to be done. You chafe when you have to wait. At a stoplight, if there are two lanes and each contains one car, you read the year, make and model of each car to guess which will pull away most quickly. At a grocery store, if you have a choice between two check-out lanes, you note the number in each line and multiply this number by the number of items in each cart.*

Multiple-Tasking *You find yourself doing or thinking more than one thing at a time. Psychologists call this polyphasic activity. The car is a favorite place for this. Hurry-sick people may drive, eat, drink coffee, listen to tapes, shave or apply make-up, direct business on the car phone, all at the same time. Or at home they may try to watch TV, read a magazine, eat dinner and carry on a phone conversation simultaneously.*

Clutter Take a look at your desk (horrors). One researcher noted that the average desk worker has 36 hours of work on the desk and spends three hours a week just sorting through it. The hurry-sick lack simplicity. They often carry around a time organizer the size of Montana.

Sunset Fatigue We come home after work and those who need our love the most, those to whom we are most committed, end up getting leftovers. This is sunset fatigue, all those end-of-the-day behaviors that signal hurry-sickness. We rush around home even though there is no reason to do so. We speak sharp words to our spouse and children even when they have done nothing to deserve them. We hurry our children along.

We tell our family that everything will be okay in just a week or two. A pastor friend says how, in a busy season, he found himself living for 'two weeks from Tuesday,' because then his schedule would lighten up, at least for a few days. But he realized this became a way of life; he was always living for 'two weeks from Tuesday.' Or we indulge ourselves in self-destructive escapes, watch too much TV, eat too much, or drink too much. And so we flop into bed with no sense of gratitude and wonder for the day, just fatigue."

Ortberg says we don't have to live this way. "The hurried can become unhurried. But it will not happen by trying alone, nor will it happen instantly. We need to enter a life of training. One useful practice might be called 'slowing.' This involves cultivating patience by deliberately choosing to place ourselves in positions where we have to wait. For instance, over the next few weeks, try some of these:

Deliberately drive in the slow lane on the highway. It may be that not swerving from lane to lane will cause you to arrive four minutes and thirty seconds later. But you will find that you do not get nearly so angry at other drivers. Instead of trying to pass them, say a prayer for them asking God to bless them.

Declare a fast from honking. Put your horn under a vow of silence. Eat your food slowly. Force yourself to chew at least 15 times before each swallow.

At the grocery store, discover which checkout lane is the longest and get in it. Then let one other person go in front of you.

Reread a book. In our day we have largely traded wisdom for information. We keep reading more and thinking less. Take an hour just to be with God. Don't use this time to do anything. Simply be with God. Find ways to choose waiting deliberately that make hurry impossible.

Its time to learn another way to live. To do that we must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from our lives."

I would agree with Ortberg, and I would consider his suggestions, but right now I am too busy to think about it. Maybe later, maybe two weeks from next Tuesday.

Editors Note: Beginning in November, the Update will be issued just twice a month instead of each week. The normal dates will be the first and third weekends of each month.