

THE RUTHLESS ELIMINATION OF



HURRY

A Book Club by CitizensLA

WEEKLY BREAKDOWN



01 Prologue + Part 1: The Problem

02 Part 2: The Solution + Intermission

03 Silence and Solitude + Sabbath

04 Simplicity + Slowing Down

Prayer Exercise

Rather than just simply reading about how important it is to slow down, let's actually put it into practice. Each week we will be entering this space with a full day's worth of interactions, thoughts, workload etc. Each week let's allow the different prayer exercises to center us, release our anxieties, and sit in the presence of our loving Savior.

Breakout Groups

Each week you will be placed in a different group. This is purposeful and the hope is that you will have had an opportunity to meet and connect with everyone at one point during our time together. Each week you will be given a different colored post-it . On that post-it you will write down one quote from the reading assignment. Those who share the same post-it color as you will be the people in your group.

Whole Group Debrief

At the end of each session we will get back together as a whole group. This is an opportunity for us to reflect collectively. The debrief questions will always be the same each week:

What was something new you learned?

What was shared in your group that you would like to share out with everyone else?

What is one practical application you can take from the reading and/or your group discussion?

NORMS + AGREEMENTS

Stay Present

Be Curious

Step up, Step Back

PRAYER: EXAMEN

What is it?

In his spiritual exercises, St. Ignatius Loyola urged that all be taught the Examen, a daily prayerful reflection on our responses to the events of the day. The purpose of this reflection was to see God's presence and to discern God's direction for us. Ignatius believed that the key to a healthy spirituality was to find God in all things and to work constantly to cooperate with God's will. Our responses to daily events fall into two categories: our consolations (what connects us to God, others, and ourselves) and desolations (what disconnects us). Ignatius believed that God would speak to us through these two feelings.

Purpose

- To encourage us to notice God's grace throughout the day
- To acknowledge sad or painful feelings and hear how God is speaking to us through them
- To tell the truth about who we truly are and what we need, rather than who we think we should be
- To become aware of seemingly insignificant moments that ultimately can give direction for our lives

Format

1. Enter into a time of silence (1 minute or so) to prepare to hear from God. During this time move into a comfortable, relaxed position.
2. Ask God to bring to your awareness a moment in the past 24 hours for which you are most grateful. If you could relive one moment, which one would it be? When were you most able to give and receive love today? Ask yourself what was said and done in that moment that made it so good. Sit in 1-2 minutes of silent reflection. Thank God for what you felt and received life again from that moment.
3. Feel free to use this opportunity to journal your thoughts if you'd like.
4. Move again into a time of silence (1 minute or so) to prepare to hear from God.
5. Ask God to bring to your awareness a moment in the past 24 hours for which you are least grateful. When were you least able to give and receive love? Ask yourself what was said and done in that moment that made it so difficult. Relive the feelings without trying to change or fix it in any way. Sit in 1-2 minutes of silent reflection. Let God's love fill you just as you are.
6. Feel free to use this opportunity to journal your thoughts if you'd like.
7. Say a final prayer of thanksgiving for whatever you have experienced.

PROLOGUE + PART ONE: THE PROBLEM

Think of these discussion questions as an a la carte menu. Feel free to reflect and respond to the questions that resonate with you the most.

1. Share out your quote. Why did you select it?
2. How would you describe your current pace of life?
3. The book quotes John Ortberg and says this: "For many 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." How in Los Angeles are we primed for this type of spiritual mediocrity and oblivion? Given this context, what do you think is your greatest distraction?
4. John Mark Comer defines "hurry sickness" as:
 - a. A behavior pattern characterized by continual rushing and anxiousness.
 - b. A malaise in which a person feels chronically short of time, and so tends to perform every task faster and to get flustered when encountering any kind of delay.
 - c. A continuous struggle and unremitting attempt to accomplish or achieve more and more things or participate in more and more events in less and less time.

The ten symptoms of hurry sickness are (pg.48-51):

- Irritability
 - Hypersensitivity
 - Restlessness
 - Workaholism (or just nonstop activity)
 - Emotional numbness
 - Out-of-order priorities
 - Lack of care for your body
 - Escapist behaviors
 - Slippage of spiritual disciplines
 - Isolation
- o Which 2-3 symptoms ring most true to you?
 - o Are there any examples of these symptoms that you can think of in recent memory?
 - o What do you think is causing these symptoms in your life?
5. What are the current demands of life that are surrounding you? What are some things you need to step away from? Why do you think it has been difficult to do so and what would stepping away look like practically?

BREATHING PRAYER

What is it?

In silence and solitude, we attempt to quiet both external noise and internal noise. But internal noise is by far the hardest to quell. Often, when we come to quiet, our mind just runs wild, as Henri Nouwen once said, "Like monkeys in a banana tree." In this exercise, we focus on our breathing to calm our mind, and let it "descend into the heart" in God.

Format

1. Put away your phone and any other distractions, settle into your time/place, and get comfortable.
2. Watch your breathing.
 - a. Sit in an upright, but relaxed position.
 - b. Close your eyes.
 - c. Take slow, deep breaths
 - d. Feel the sensations in your body—stress, heart rate, tightness, calmness, pain, lightness, etc. Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and it's a good gift. By becoming present in our body, we become present the moment, and eventually, in God himself.
 - e. Just "watch" your breath enter and exit your body. Pay attention to it and nothing else.
 - f. Your mind will seize this opportunity to run wild with thoughts, feelings, memories, to do's, and distractions. That's okay. It's used to constant chatter, not stillness. Don't judge yourself, feel like a failure, or give up. Just let each thought go as quickly as it comes. When you notice your mind start to wander, just re-center with a quick prayer, like, "Father" or "Jesus" or "Peace" or the ancient, "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner," and come back to your breathing.
 - g. Let the Spirit generate from deep within you a compassionate heart toward yourself and each thought that you gently release.
3. Pray
 - a. This isn't new age, hypnosis, or magic; it's just a way of resting in God's love, being present to him, slowing down to let Jesus set the pace and agenda of our day.
 - b. Once you settle into a rhythm, begin to turn each breath into a prayer. One breath at a time, imagine yourself breathing out:
 - i. Anger, sadness, anxiety, despair, fear, the need to control, discontentment
 - c. And then imagine yourself breathing in its opposite:
 - i. Love, joy, peace, hope, trust, detachment, contentment
4. Abide
 - a. Before you end this exercise, spend a little while just "abiding in the vine;" simply sit in loving attention on God. Watch God watching you in compassionate love. This is the core of all transformation into Christlikeness. Through resting under God's loving attention toward us by the Spirit, we are transformed.
 - b. As St. John of the Cross once said, "What we need most in order to make progress is to be silent before this great God... for the language he best hears is silent love."

PART TWO: THE SOLUTION + INTERMISSION

Think of these discussion questions as an a la carte menu. Feel free to reflect and respond to the questions that resonate with you the most.

1. Share out your quote. Why did you select it?
2. The book reminds us that we are both made of image and dust. Potential and limitations. It says, "One of the key tasks of our apprenticeship to Jesus is living into both our potential and our limitations." We are reminded that our limits are also given to us by God. Embracing what you can't do allows you to embrace what you can do. What do you feel are your limitations in your life? What are your limits revealing about yourself?
Here are a few limits John Mark Comer lists out for us in case we need a starting point (refer to pg. 65-68):
 - Our physical bodies
 - Our minds
 - Our giftings
 - Our personalities and emotional wiring
 - Our families of origin
 - Our socioeconomic origins
 - Our education and careers
 - Our seasons of life and their responsibilities
 - Our immortality
 - Our God given calling
3. What's the lie that leads us to a life of hurry? Where do you think that lie comes from? What truth does Jesus offer and invite us into?
4. When we abide in Jesus, we "organize all of your life around the practice of the presence of God, to work and rest and play and eat and drink and hang out with your friends and run errands and catch up on the news, all out of a place of deep, loving enjoyment of the Father's company." At your core, do you believe this kind of life, experiencing heaven on earth, the fullness of joy that God intended for us is possible?
5. What personal example do you have of the idea that "every yes is a thousand no's?" Are the things you are saying yes to aligned with what you believe are the priorities and values of your life? In other words, are the things you are saying yes to (in regards to your time, energy, resource, sacrifices you have to make etc.) important or just urgent?
6. The book describes a type of faith that a lot of us may have experienced at one point or another. We go to church and are reminded of the kind of life our souls are aching for and the emotional/spiritual health we desire. But the moment we head back to our "actual lives" we go back to living the same lifestyle with no changes. We want the life of Jesus but we find it difficult to adopt the lifestyle of Jesus. Is there any discrepancy you are noticing between the life of Jesus that you may be longing for and the lifestyle of Jesus we are invited to experience for ourselves?

FEELING AND LISTENING PRAYER

What is it?

Emotional pain isn't something to avoid or deny. Rather, emotions are a place to meet God and open ourselves up to Him in new ways. Emotions are the language of the soul. Often, they are God's way of coming to us with direction or discipline; or they are our way of drawing near to God, meeting Him in our aches and pains.

Format

1. Put away your phone and any other distractions, settle into your time/place, and get comfortable. You may want to take a short walk first, or light a candle, or stretch, as a way of easing your soul into a new mode.
2. Let yourself feel.
 - o What emotions rise to the surface of your heart, big or small?
 - o Don't run away from your "negative" feelings. In the Father's presence, face each emotion head on, the good, the bad, the ugly. And don't just think about what you are feeling. Rather, let yourself feel each one, deeply.
 - o Name each emotion and then let it pass through you..
3. Pray
 - o Get it all off your chest. Give whatever you are feeling over to God- the good, the bad, the ugly. No filter. The point here isn't to be good, but to be honest. Different emotions call for different kinds of prayer.
 - o If you're happy-celebrate and be glad.
 - o If you're grateful, express your appreciation to God.
 - o If you're anxious, give your worry over to the Father and ask for His peace.
 - o If you're sitting in unanswered questions about your life or future, hold that tension before God. Tell Him how it feels not to have an answer. Don't force clarity where there is none. Just be patient before God with all that is unclear in your life and unresolved in your heart.
4. Listen
 - o The Spirit of God has direct access to your mind and imagination. He's more than able to implant thoughts, images, feelings, and desires into the core of your being.
 - o Now that you're quiet before Him, ask Him to speak into your life.
 - Is there anything you want to say to me today?
 - Is there anything you want me to do today?
 - Is there anyone you want me to bless today? In what way?
 - What would be pleasing to you today, Father?
 - What lies am I believing? Then, after you wait and listen, ask the follow up question: What is the truth you want to replace that lie with?
 - How do you see me, Father?
 - Sit in questions like these before God, and just see what comes.
 - If nothing clear comes to the surface of your mind, simply meditate on a Scripture that speaks of God's compassionate love for you, such as Psalm 23, John 15 or 17, or Ephesians 1.
 - Close with a prayer of gratitude and commit your day (or if it's evening, your rest) to God.

PART THREE: SILENCE AND SOLITUDE + SABBATH

Think of these discussion questions as an a la carte menu. Feel free to reflect and respond to the questions that resonate with you the most.

1. Share out your quote. Why did you select it?
2. The book describes two different types of silence—external and internal. The external noise is the outside noise that we need to step away from. The internal noise is described as the mental chatter, running commentary, hypotheticals, or clutter that fills our minds. What, in your own lives, do you find to be the loudest noise or distraction? Which type of silence do you find missing in your life?
3. Solitude is when you are alone, with God and with your own soul. It is to spend time connecting with the Father. Combining the two, what is one practical way to practice silence and solitude in your life today?
4. On pages 137-138 we see the consequences and rewards of a life with/without silence and solitude. Share about an example in your own life when you've either experienced the consequences of a life without silence and solitude or the rewards of a life with silence and solitude.
5. Sabbath, or Shabbat, means to stop, to stop working, stop wanting, stop worrying etc. It means to live in the spirit of restfulness that comes from abiding. The result of not incorporating Sabbath in your life leads to a spirit of relentlessness. What keeps you away from Sabbath?
6. Sabbath is rest and worship. Practicing Sabbath is an act of resistance. The book poses the question: What if ordinary life is enough? It continues and says, "Drink deeply from the well of ordinary life: a meal with friends, time with family, a walk in the forest, afternoon tea. Above all, slow down long enough to enjoy life with God, who offers everything that materialism promises but can never deliver on—namely, contentment." How do you feel about living an "ordinary life"? Why do you think you feel this way?
7. If you were given an opportunity to have a day of complete rest—no work, no responsibilities, no distractions, what would bring you a deep sense of joy, rest, and delight?
8. What is one new thing you learned about Sabbath? What can you do to practice Sabbath in this season of your life? What do you need to do or work on to rest well?

PRAYER: LECTIO DIVINA

What is it?

Lectio Divina (Latin for "spiritual reading") is a way of reading Scripture with the specific aim of hearing God's voice over your life. There are four basic movements, but the mechanics are not as important as many people think. It's less of a technique, and more of a heart posture and pace. The basic idea is simply to find a quiet place to read Scripture slowly with your ear open to God's voice through the text. Unlike Bible study (another wonderful practice) the goal is less to hear what he was saying to them (the original audience), but to take the next step and hear what He is saying to you.

A Four-Part Exercise

- Reading/Listening
- Meditating (Reflecting)
- Praying (Responding)
- Contemplating (Resting)

Format

1. Put away your phone and any other distractions, settle into your time/place, and get comfortable. You may want to take a short walk first, or light a candle, or stretch, as a way of easing your soul into a new mode.
2. Pick a Scripture to read.
 - a. If you're on a Bible reading plan, just open to whatever is next, but pick a short section of Scripture. One chapter at most.
 - b. If you're not on a reading plan and nothing comes to mind, here's a few recommendations for Scriptures to start with: Psalm 23, Psalm 37, Psalm 40, John 15, John 17, Galatians 5, Ephesians 1.
3. Slowly work through the four movements of Lectio Divina:
 - a. First, come to quiet. Turn your attention and desire over to God. Feel free to rest for a few moments, as you slow your mind down to the pace of the Spirit. Then..
 - b. **Read/lectio:** Read or listen to the text slowly and clearly. Sit with the passage in silence.
 - c. **Meditate:** As you read or listen to the text a second time, think of a word or phrase from the text that catches your attention. Silently repeat that word or phrase to yourself. Stay present to God with whatever comes and try not to overthink it. After the silence, feel free to say the word or phrase aloud without comment.
 - d. **Responding:** Before rereading a third time, as you meditate on the word or phrase from the previous reading invite the Holy Spirit in and ask: What is it in my life that needed to hear this word or phrase today? Now read or listen to the text a third time. After, pause again for silence and listen to your internal response to the reading and bring it before God. Reflect on whether or there is an invitation from God for you to do or be something. Feel free to share the invitation you feel God sharing with you in a single phrase or sentence.
 - e. **Contemplating:** For the fourth and final reading or listening, simply rest in God with the invitation given to you or whatever you have received so far. God is the one who will enable us to respond faithfully to whatever you have heard. Read/listen to the text a final time. Leave 1-2 minutes of silence following the final reading.
 - f. When you are finished, write down or reflect on your thoughts in greater depth.

Think of these discussion questions as an a la carte menu. Feel free to reflect and respond to the questions that resonate with you the most.

PART FOUR: SIMPLICITY AND SLOWING DOWN

1. Share out your quote. Why did you select it?
2. Jesus says, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:21) If someone were to look through your spending habits, what would they conclude about what you prioritize, care most about, and ultimately desire?
3. John Mark Comer writes about how we, especially those living in America, were deliberately and strategically taught to desire. Every advertisement, sponsored post, and influencer is teaching us to believe that we need something to make us happy. How has this consumeristic mindset shaped not only what we buy but our perspectives, attitudes, and posture?
4. We see Jesus living in the tension of seeing that "the world and everything in it are 'very good' and meant to be enjoyed and shared with those in need" and understanding that "too much wealth is dangerous." Jesus lives in the "carefree unconcern" zone and exemplifies a life of grateful enjoyment, generosity, and simplicity. Where do you stand in this tension? What is stopping you from the truth that what you have is disconnected from deep contentment that Jesus can provide?
5. The book offers us twelve practical principle. Which principle do you find most difficult to accept or apply in your own life? Why do you think it is difficult? Which one is God inviting you to consider?
 - Before you buy something, ask yourself, What is the true cost of this item?
 - Before you buy, ask yourself, By buying this, am I oppressing the poor or harming the earth?
 - Never impulse buy.
 - When you do buy, opt for fewer, better things.
 - When you can, share.
 - Get into the habit of giving things away.
 - Live by a budget.
 - Learn to enjoy things without owning them.
 - Cultivate a deep appreciation for creation.
 - Cultivate a deep appreciation for the simple pleasures.
 - Recognize advertising for what it is-propaganda. Call out the lie.
 - Lead a cheerful, happy revolt against the spirit of materialism.
6. What are some of the formative habits that pull us back into "hyperliving-skimming along the surface of life." If Ortberg describes slowing down as "cultivating patience by deliberately choosing to place ourselves in positions where we simply have to wait," what do we do or what habits did we develop to prevent us from having to wait? What do we mindlessly do to fill our time? How is this affecting your soul?
7. The book lists out some practical ways for us to live with slow, unhurried pace. Are there any that you want to implement in your own life? Are there any other ways you can think of that can help with slowing down as it relates to your own life?