

Study Guide

Series: Antidotes for an Out of Control Life
“Living in a Hurry Up World”

Monday - John 10:1-11. Jesus chose the metaphor of “the good shepherd” to describe himself. His main point was simple: a good shepherd always wants what is best for his sheep. Jesus came to offer us the best possible life, life “to the full.” Writing about John 3:16, Craig Keener noted, “*Eternal life is literally the ‘life of the world to come’; John’s present tense (‘have’) indicates that those who trust Jesus begin to experience that life already in the present time.*” What helps you enter into “the life of the world to come” today, rather than waiting for some distant future time? Jesus’ shepherd image assumes a bond of deep trust. Sheep must trust their shepherd for wellbeing and safety. How much of life’s hectic pace grows from efforts to be sure we and those we love are safe and can succeed? In what ways can defining safety and success in terms of “the life of the world to come” help make life now less frantic?

Tuesday - Luke 10:38-42. Martha was very busy—doing good, legitimate things! She wanted to be a generous host to Jesus, to offer him a good meal and, quite possibly, comfortable lodging. Especially in church settings, we often face Martha’s problem. We feel hurried and stressed, not because we’re doing bad things, but because we’re trying to do too many good things. This story would have shocked many of Luke’s readers. To listen at a rabbi’s feet was for the rabbi’s main followers—an honor their culture kept for men. (They truly thought women’s place was “in the kitchen.”) Jesus did not put down Martha’s caring. He just said “Mary has chosen what is better.” As you reflect upon your life, how can you put “listening to Jesus” above even mowing the lawn or increasing your 401K balance? Another time, Jesus told a story about seed falling among thorns. In some lives, he said, “the worries of this life...come in and choke the word” (Mark 4:19). What distractions or worries most often seem to choke out your sense of God’s presence?

Wednesday - Romans 12:1-2. Paul called Christians to “be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” The Greek verb for “transform” (*metamorphoo*) meant, not a surface change, but the kind of total change that turns a caterpillar into a butterfly. Change like that takes time—in caterpillars or in us. And Paul said “be transformed,” not “transform yourselves.” This only happens if we open ourselves to God, who alone can do the deep transforming work in us. “Do not conform to the pattern of this world,” Paul wrote. Yet human cultures tend to highly value “fitting in.” Are there values or actions you learned from your culture as “the way things are” that have changed since you became a Christ-follower? Do you see the “rat race” to get “more” as an accident, or a “pattern” in American culture? To “offer your bodies” as “your true worship” meant to offer every activity, all that we do with our bodies, to God. How might it change your life pace if you saw all your work or study, your play, even your driving or shopping as an act of worship to God?

Thursday - Matthew 11:28 – 12:14. For devout Hebrews in Jesus’ day, keeping the Sabbath was a key way to let God govern life’s pace. (In today’s 24/7 world, the Bible principle of taking a day for spiritual and physical rest often feels unworkable and absurd.) But at times, the spiritual point of the Sabbath got lost in a blizzard of regulations. Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, hated that. The point of Sabbath rest, he said, was not busily following “the rules,” but resting in his

grace and caring. In *The Message*, Eugene Peterson paraphrases a part of Jesus' invitation as "Learn the unforced rhythms of grace." When have you lived in "the unforced rhythms of grace?" How present are they in your life now? How will you open yourself to God, and let God's living presence transform your life from "duty and works" to "joy and peace"? Matthew seems to have wanted his readers to see the contrast between Jesus' "easy" yoke, and the burden of a system that censured a kind act of healing. What can make the integrity and convictions of your faith a well-fitting yoke, easy and light to bear?

Friday - Hebrews 4:9-16. This section starts in Hebrews 3:7. The writer drew on Genesis 2 and Psalm 95 to say that living in the physical Promised Land did not fulfill what God had promised. God's rest is inward, and transforms "the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." We find rest as we release our need to control every outcome, and trust God to rule the universe better than we could. As we trust Christ, "we...receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." Dr. Louis Evans wrote, "How many times are hypertension, migraine headaches, a peptic ulcer, arthritis, nervous exhaustion, illness, insomnia, overweight and irascibility evidences of a life not at peace with the will and pace of God?" Can you trust, down deep, that if you live at "the will and pace of God" you'll be more truly productive?

Saturday - Psalm 46:1-11. In *A Testament of Devotion*, Thomas Kelly wrote, "*People nowadays take time far more seriously than eternity.*" This psalm focuses us firmly on eternity. "Nations are in uproar," the psalmist said (a condition that has continued pretty much without interruption ever since). But running faster, trying to keep up with (or outrun) the uproar, is not the answer. Instead God, through the psalmist, invites us to "Be still, and know that I am God." When was the last time you created a time and space of stillness (no computer, radio, TV, cell phone, other people, etc.) in which to "be" with God? How might you build short times of stillness (outer and inner) into your everyday routine? Can you identify what fears or inner resistance such stillness triggers? In what ways do you think it could deepen your friendship with Christ, and make you a greater blessing to others?