

**John
Mark
Comer**

**The
Ruthless
Elimination
of
Hurry**

How to stay emotionally healthy
and spiritually alive in the chaos of
the modern world.

TheLantern

PROLOGUE

'Hurry is the great enemy of spiritual life in our day. You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life' – These were the words of Christian writer and philosopher Dallas Willard to his mentee John Ortberg - who in turn mentors John Mark.

Why is 'hurry' so important? Well, listen to his talk or read his book if you don't already know. In short 'hurry' is incompatible with 'love'. It has been said that we are simply *"too busy to live an emotionally healthy and spiritually rich life."* Hurry kills our ability to receive and give love in relationship with God and others. This is important stuff!

In this series we're going to be going through a book called *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry* by John Mark Comer and also following his series of talks on the subject that he preached to his own church, called Bridgetown church in Portland back in the Autumn last year. With this series as our teaching companion during this season of 'enforced sabbath', we believe we have the chance to see some **REAL CHANGE**, as God grows us as disciples, despite lockdown, such that when we emerge for this time, we emerge transformed, with a rule of life and spiritual disciplines to stand us in good stead for the rest of our lives.

To make the most of this series we would like to encourage you all to:

- Buy the book and read along

(You can buy the book here: <https://www.eden.co.uk/the-ruthless-elimination-of-hurry-john-mark-comer/>)

- Listen to the podcast talks each week

(You can listen here <https://bridgetown.church/series/unhurrying-with-a-rule-of-life/>). **We will not be doing weekly sermons on Sunday**, so the podcast will act as our weekly sermons and we'll be having supporting discussion during our Sunday Services to help draw out some highlights.

- Join your Life Group discussion each week to dig deeper into how we can implement all we are learning into our day to day life and also, and this is where it could get really powerful for you - begin to work through this John Mark Comer's complimentary, super practical, "How to Unhurry", a "Rule of Life Workbook": <https://johnmarkcomer.com/blog/unhurry>

WEEK ONE: HURRY

Ask people to read 'Part 1' of the book and listen to 'The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry' podcast and make notes before you meet as a Life Group. This will mean people will come having already reflected and thought about it which will enrich the discussion.

Read Matthew 11:28-30:

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 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. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."
What stands out from the passage?

This short passage is important for this series. Jesus wants to free us from the burdens of a hurried life that many of us find ourselves living in the West, and the weariness that can come from overly full diaries. He wants to teach us his ways and his rhythms, removing the heavy yoke from us and replacing it with his own, which is easy and light.

Read Luke 10:38-42:

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Questions

- What might this story tell us about what God thinks of hurry?
- Do you see hurry as an issue? Why or why not?
- What are the potential negative consequences of living a hurried life?
- Do you think that hurry in life stunts growth in spiritual maturity? Why do you agree or disagree?
- What does this story tell you about Jesus?
- Where do you see hurry in the world around you, and in your own life?
- Do you think some people actually like to live hurried lives, or perhaps could be addicted to it? Why or why not? Do you see that in your own life?
- What is God saying to you, and what are you going to do about it?

Pray for each other.

Let people know what next week's podcast is: 'Developing a Rule of Life' and to start reading through 'Part 2' from the book, so they can read or listen before you next meet.

WEEK TWO: DEVELOPING A RULE OF LIFE

Remind people to start reading through 'Part 2' of the book and listen to the 'Developing a Rule of Life' podcast and make notes before you meet as a Life Group. This will mean people will come having already reflected and thought about it which will enrich the discussion.

Read John 15:1-10:

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love.

Questions

- What does remaining or abiding in Jesus look like?
- What does this story tell you about Jesus?
- What happens as we remain in Jesus?
- What stood out to you from the podcast or book this week?
- What are your initial thoughts about developing a rule of life?
- How does a rule of life help with remaining with Jesus?
- Take a few minutes of quiet in the group to let each member have a bit of time to think about what they would include in a Rule of Life. Ask them to name a couple or a few of the most important things once people have had a chance to think about it.

Going Forwards

- Encourage your group to write out what they would like to develop as a Rule of Life, in their own lives.

- Then encourage them to take that away this week and pray about ways they can develop and implement this rule.

This will, of course, take more than a week to do. Take your time, there's no hurry! But get started with this as soon as you can. Perhaps check in with your groups to see how they're getting on with theirs, if they are up for doing one. When you meet next week as a group, ask people whether they've started on developing their own rule of life.

Pray for each other.

Let people know what next week's podcast is: 'The Case for Digital Asceticism' and to finish 'Part 2' of the book, so they can read or listen before you next meet.

Extra Notes:

Here is a link to a short digital companion with some tutorial vides and exercises to get you started on each of the four practices we will be covering over the next few weeks:

<https://johnmarkcomer.com/blog/unhurry>

We encourage you to send this out to your Life group, ask them to begin working through it in the next week as they start developing a rule of life.

WEEK THREE: THE CASE FOR DIGITAL ASCETICISM

Remind people to finish 'Part 2' of the book and listen to the 'The Case for Digital Asceticism' podcast and make notes before you meet as a Life Group. This will mean people will come having already reflected and thought about it which will enrich the discussion.

Check In

Start by checking in with people to see how they're getting on with their rule of life. Have they taken stock and looked at what their current rule of life is? Have they started to develop one?

Read Psalm 16 together:

*Keep me safe, my God,
for in you I take refuge.*

*I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord;
apart from you I have no good thing."*

*I say of the holy people who are in the land,
"They are the noble ones in whom is all my delight."*

Those who run after other gods will suffer more and more.

*I will not pour out libations of blood to such gods
or take up their names on my lips.*

*Lord, you alone are my portion and my cup;
you make my lot secure.*

*The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
surely I have a delightful inheritance.*

*I will praise the Lord, who counsels me;
even at night my heart instructs me.*

I keep my eyes always on the Lord.

With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

*Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
my body also will rest secure,*

*because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,
nor will you let your faithful one see decay.*

*You make known to me the path of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence,
with eternal pleasures at your right hand.*

Questions

- What stands out to you from the passage?
- What does David mean when he says that he keeps his ‘eyes on the Lord always’? How would we do that?
- What stood out to you from the podcast or book this week? What was encouraging, what was a challenge?
- In the podcast John-Mark says without the power of sustained attention, we cannot have a spiritual life, we will not grow to become people of love. Do you agree? Why or why not?
- How might technology be a distraction from our ability to keep our eyes on the Lord?
- The podcast talks about including a digital rule of life as you develop a broader rule of life, do you think that would be helpful?
- What are you going to do differently?

Going Forwards

Encourage your group to take stock of their current rule of life, and begin to develop a new one. Perhaps encourage them to download if they haven’t already the ‘How to Unhurry’ workbook from the ‘Extra Notes’ section last week and to spend some more time on that.

When you meet next week as a group, as people whether they’ve started on developing their own rule of life.

Pray for each other.

Let people know what next week’s podcast is: ‘The Power of Quiet in a World of Noise’ and to read ‘Silence and Solitude’ from the book, so they can read or listen before you next meet.

WEEK FOUR: THE POWER OF QUIET IN A WORLD OF NOISE

Remind people to read 'Silence and Solitude' from the book and listen to 'The Power of Quiet in a World of Noise' podcast and make notes before you meet as a Life Group. This will mean people will come having already reflected and thought about it which will enrich the discussion.

Check In

Start by checking in with people to see how they're getting on with their rule of life. Have they taken stock and looked at what their current rule of life is? Have they started to develop one?

Read Luke 5:15-16:

Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

Read Matthew 6:5-8:

"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Questions

- Throughout Jesus' ministry, we often see him withdrawing from people to spend time in prayer and solitude. Why do you think he does that?
- What can we learn about solitude and prayer from these passages?
- What stood out to you from the podcast of book this week? What was encouraging, what was a challenge?
- How easy or difficult do you find it to be alone, without any external distractions, and spend time with God?
- How often do you take time to pray in solitude?
- What is the fruit of time alone with God?

- If you'd like to, how can you use your time better to practice solitude and undistracted time with God?
- What are you going to do differently as a result of today?

Going Forwards

- Encourage your group if they don't already, to start spending some undistracted time with God each day. Start with a small amount, but make sure you make space in your day for time alone with God.
- Begin/continue to develop a rule of life, and make sure you add into it a regular rhythm of solitude and time alone to pray.

When you meet next week as a group, as people whether they've started on developing their own rule of life.

Pray for each other.

Let people know what next week's podcast is: 'Sabbath Summit' and to read 'Sabbath' from the book, so they can read or listen before you next meet.

WEEK FIVE: SABBATH

Remind people to read 'Sabbath' from the book and to listen to the 'Sabbath Summit' podcast and make notes before you meet as a Life Group. This will mean people will come having already reflected and thought about it which will enrich the discussion.

Check In

Start by checking in with people to see how they spent time alone with God in the last week. Ask how they used that time, and whether they noticed any difference in themselves from doing it.

Read Genesis 2:1-3:

Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

Read Exodus 20:8-11:

"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but 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. For 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.

Read Mark 2:23-28:

One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"

He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions."

Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

Questions

- What can we learn about the sabbath from these passages?
- What stood out to you from the podcast or book this week? What was encouraging, what was a challenge?

- Do you practice sabbath? If so, do you have any boundaries to what you do and don't do on that day?
- What are some of the barriers to practising sabbath? What are some of the challenges you've faced when practising it?
- What are you going to do differently as a result of today?

Going Forwards

- Encourage your group, if they don't already, to try and have a sabbath day this week. Take time to think about some of the things you'd like to do on it – what rhythms and boundaries would you like to establish?
- Begin/continue to develop a rule of life, and make sure you add into it a regular rhythm of solitude and time alone to pray.

When you meet next week as a group, as people whether they've started on developing their own rule of life.

Pray for each other.

Let people know what next week's podcast is: 'The Power of Margin in a World without Limits' and read 'Simplicity' and 'Slowing' from the book, so they can read or listen before you next meet.

WEEK SIX: THE POWER OF MARGIN IN A WORLD WITHOUT LIMITS

Remind people to read 'Simplicity' and 'Slowing' from the book and listen to 'The Power of Margin in a World without Limits' podcast and make notes before you meet as a Life Group. This will mean people will come having already reflected and thought about it which will enrich the discussion.

Check In

Start by checking in with people to see how people did with what they said they were going to do last week. Ask whether they took a sabbath? How did they use their time and how was it for them?

Read Genesis 1:27:

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Read Genesis 2:4-8:

This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens. Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground, but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed.

Read Genesis 3:1-7:

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the

eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Questions

- In the podcast, John-Mark Comer talks about how, as humans, we are both infused with potential (through God's image) and limitations (because we're made from dirt). When Eve and Adam eat the forbidden fruit, John-Mark Comer says that, in a quest to be more like God, they are attempting to move beyond the space that God has made for them and the limits that come with it. Do you agree with that interpretation? Why is there a desire in the human heart to not have limits?
- Why did God make us with limitations? What benefits are there to having limitations?
- What stood out to you from the podcast or book this week? What was encouraging, what was a challenge?
- John-Mark Comer describes margin as the difference between your load and your limits. How much margin is there in your life? What does that look like?
- What are the benefits of building margin into your life?
- What are you going to do differently as a result of today?

Going Forwards

- Encourage your group to think about where they could build margin into the next week? How will you use that time well?
- Begin/continue to develop a rule of life, and make sure you add into it a regular rhythm of solitude and time alone to pray.

When you meet next week as a group, as people whether they've started on developing their own rule of life.

Pray for each other.

Let people know what next week's podcast is: 'Joy' and finish off any of the book, so they can read or listen before you next meet.

WEEK SEVEN: SUMMARY

Remind people to finish off the book and listen to the 'Joy' podcast and make notes before you meet as a Life Group. This will mean people will come having already reflected and thought about it which will enrich the discussion.

Check In

Start by checking in with people to see how people did with what they said they were going to do last week. Ask whether built margin into their week? How did they use their time and how was it for them?

Looking Back

Spend time as a group looking back over the series, give each person space to share:

- What has been a highlight for you?
- How have you been encouraged?
- How have you been challenged?
- What have you done differently as a result of this series?
- What has been the fruit of this in your lives?

Looking Back

Spend time as a group looking ahead:

- What would you still like to grow in?
- Is there anything you'd like to do that you haven't started already?
What are you going to do about it?
- How are you going to ensure that what you've started doing in this series, you'll continue to do?

Pray for each other.

These notes have been adapted from Ivy Church Manchester
<https://ivygrowgroups.wordpress.com/2020/01/>