

contents



ix	Acknowledgments
xiii	Introduction
1	The Idolatry of Speed
20	See Why We Run
32	Running Away from Aches and Fears
42	Running Away from Ourselves
52	Running Away from God
62	The Savoring Pace Alternative
73	Seeing More Clearly
83	Listening More Carefully
94	Thinking More Deeply
101	Savoring Pace Life Lines

introduction



The Need for Speed

FAST IS FUN! REMEMBER THE RUNNING GAMES YOU played as a child, like hide and seek, and those games that demanded quick movement, like dodge ball? I especially enjoyed football and its variations. My brothers, Fred, Wayne, and Vincent, and I used to play “running through.” The four of us would stand in the grass in the lot next to our house. One of us would then throw a football high into the air. The person who caught the ball was obliged to run with it until he was caught or fell to the ground of utter fatigue. I smile as I write about it. Running was a vital dimension of my childhood and maybe yours too. I can still hear Cousin Florida yelling at my playground football league games, “Run, Kirk, run!”

The pleasure power of speed is not limited to the days of youth. For example, I enjoy the fast rhythms of classic jazz bebop music by artists such as Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie. I also enjoy computer gaming, a hobby enhanced

by the presence of a fast graphics card, which allows games to operate more smoothly.

As we grow, we realize that fast is not just fun but necessary. How many times in the past few months have you swerved to the side to allow a police car, fire truck, or ambulance swift passage?

Haste is not just an important tool for emergency workers but also for many others, from the janitor who has a set number of offices to clean by a certain time to the diplomat working to prevent international conflict before time is up. In your job, how many instances can you think of in which haste helps you to fulfill your responsibility? I think we all would agree that the speed technology encased in computers, copiers, cell phones, and faxes has helped to make us more efficient and productive.

In my African American, Baptist worship tradition, fast can be a mighty worship force. I have in mind—and some of you know exactly what I am talking about—instances when a moving song concludes, only to have a “sanctified P.S.” added. Suddenly the organist and accompanying musicians will launch a fast, rhythmic praise beat, and the whole church explodes in ecstatic clapping, dancing, and shouting. This is high-octane worship! You either join in as best you can or get out of the way.

If fast is fun, necessary, productive, and even sacred, what’s the problem with speed? What’s wrong with hurry?

An Unhealthy Addiction

I had purchased a breakfast meal from a world-famous fast-food franchise. As I sat eating and welcoming the morning, I looked at the bag that I had not crumbled and tossed into

Introduction

the trash. It was still there standing before me. That's when I saw it, a large speedometer on the bag with the following designations: "fast," "really fast," "really, really fast," and at the end, the franchise's golden arches with a drive-thru sign underneath that I assumed stood for "really, really, really fast." Where do you think the indicator was on this marketing image designed to communicate speed of service? One notch *past* really, really fast. The message communicated to the masses is all too clear: "We are presently moving at a blazing speed, and we are striving to be even faster."

For a moment, imagine that you are present at the marketing meeting in which this idea is first being discussed. Why is this idea being offered? How do others present respond to it? Why do people think it's going to be effective? What are the chances of this concept making the journey from the boardroom to the bag with, quite possibly, little opposition? The chances are very good, aren't they? Why? Marketing personnel get paid to know the market inside and out, and they know that through and through ours is a culture addicted to speed. Marketing knows that many people will consciously and unconsciously appreciate the message of speedy service. Marketing knows that one of life's greatest common denominators across cultural, gender, and age lines is hurry. Hurry is not just a part of life; hurry *is* life.

When hurry becomes a chronic condition, when we run even when there is no reason to, when we rush while performing even the most mundane tasks, it may be said that we have become addicted to hurry. Thousands of us are addicted to hurry whether we admit it or not. *Denial* is not a river in Egypt.

Denying the addiction to hurry involves denying the costs of the addiction. As long as we are blind to the ways chronic

Addicted to Hurry

hurry harms us physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually, we can keep on running even when we are bone tired. As we face up to the unnecessary and unacceptable sacrifices that result from living as though we were being chased, we develop the tenacious intent needed to create a more humane, peaceful, and sustainable pace for ourselves and our world.

Hurry is often cited as a contributing factor in tragedies resulting in accidents and loss of life. How many car accidents happen each year due to speeding? Sometimes cars aren't involved. Just a few days ago a twenty-one-year-old woman was killed in Massachusetts trying to board a train. She misjudged the distance of an oncoming train as she fixed on obeying the command of family members who had gone before her and told her to "hurry up." Even when hurry is not so directly linked to fatalities, it is a suspected culprit. Such was the case a few years ago when a man left his child in a locked, hot automobile all day long. He thought he had dropped her off at the nursery. He did not notice his tragic error until he went to the nursery to pick up his child.

Tragedies can wake us up to the monumental costs of hurry in an instant. They can also cause us to think more deeply about hidden ways hurry harms us on a daily basis. As I write this on October 9, 2002, there is a sniper loose in the Washington, D.C., area. This person has killed seven persons and wounded two others. The latest victim is a thirteen-year-old boy who was getting out of his mother's vehicle at school. Residents, especially children and parents, are filled with anxiety and fear. One picture I saw online showed a mother lovingly clutching her visibly distraught son. As I observed the picture, I grieved for the violent slaughter of the innocent and for our need for tragedies to remind us how precious our children are. Unintentionally but sadly, we go about our frenzied

Introduction

multitasking and leave children to accept our complete absence or our divided attention when we are present. There is a grave unsung crisis in the land: *being too hurried to give serious attention to our children between crises.*

An Overview

My first objective in this book is to show how chronic speed is constantly diminishing our lives relationally, emotionally, and spiritually. Second, I want to suggest to you an anti-rushing, pro-relishing way of living that can help you to stop rushing and to start savoring life more. Seeds for both objectives were planted in my first book, *Rest in the Storm: Self-Care Strategies for Clergy and Other Caregivers*. Many insights presented in this book were nurtured in discussions surrounding that initial attempt to address the malady of overdriven, overcommitted living in service to a laudable cause. Thomas Merton's characterization of such living as a form of violence deserves to be voiced again: "There is a pervasive form of contemporary violence . . . [and that is] activism and overwork. The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form, of its innate violence."

This book is divided into two sections: diagnosis and prescription. I begin by discussing our cultural addiction to speed. Some findings from sociologists may surprise you. In chapter 2, I identify various reasons for our running. In chapters 3 through 5, I present what I believe are the three deeper forces behind living in a hurry: fear of hurt, fear of ourselves, and fear of God. At the end of this diagnosis section, I want you to believe that the second worst response to hurry is making light of it. The worst response is accepting it. We must come to accept something else about chronic hurry: Hurry is not an

innocent and inevitable consequence of modern life. Chronic hurry is a serious malady of mind, heart, and soul putting at risk our relationship with God, each other, and ourselves.

The theologian Richard J. Mouw writes in an article entitled “Humility, Hope, and the Divine Slowness” that “we have God’s permission to take our time.” Can we imagine that this statement is true, and if so, can we give ourselves the same permission?

Chapter 6 shifts our focus from problem to solution. In this remedy section, I will challenge you to envision an achievable alternative to hurry: cultivating your own sacred, savoring pace. I will offer my testimony of how a new appreciation for the sacred pace of Jesus and an Alaskan vacation experience inspired me to a savoring pace way of life. Most importantly, chapters 6 through 10 will teach you how to live at a sacred savoring pace: to see more clearly, listen more carefully, and think more deeply. Savoring pace is about taking the time to notice more. While we cannot notice everything, *believing that everything is worth noticing* can dynamically enliven life.

Along the way, you will learn that savoring pace is not simply about slowing down. Jesus did not promise life in slow motion (sustained slowness is not very compelling); he promised life more abundantly. While slowing down is helpful, beating hurry addiction is more than a matter of merely slowing down. Remember, there are things about hurry that we enjoy. Because of this, many of us will subconsciously view slowing down as an irritant at best and a threat at worst. We don’t want to just slow down. Slowing down is too passive and uninspiring an enterprise; we are wired for more. A viable alternative to hurry must yield joys and fulfillments that rival those of hurry.

Introduction

Learning to live at a savoring pace is about slowing down and intentionally attending to *the showing in the slowing*. Savoring pace is slowness for enrichment's sake. You cannot rush and relish at the same time. Some of the most striking beauty this world has to offer is missed in the rush. As I edit this manuscript, there is a winter wonderland outside. Tree limbs are outlined with two-inch-thick snow, and the sun is doing more sightseeing than thawing in the cold Thanksgiving morning.

Savoring or relishing life is a sacred practice. When it comes to articulating the most enduring relationship of all, David, the biblical poet/king, speaks in savoring terms: "Taste and see that the Lord is good." In the prevailing haste of our existence, we must discover what it means to taste and see God, and to taste and see God's extravagant gift of life. Savoring pace is not just a timely speed corrective; it is a compelling sacred calling. The chapters on the savoring pace alternative are based on this presumption: *Each of us has the power to imagine, create, and practice a healthier, holier lifestyle free from chronic hurry.*

Finally, a word of caution. Even if you indulge the temptation to read the remedy section first, I implore you to go back at some point and read about why we run. A deeper understanding of the reasons behind our racing may inspire the necessary deeper changes in the way we think and act regarding hurry. This book is not about simple adjustment; it is about vigilant change. To that end, each chapter contains practical application questions and exercises that will help make this book a positive transformative experience.