

SABBATH SUNDAY

Josh Siders | December 26, 2021

So What? Hurry + Distraction = Exhaustion, but God invites us into rest.

Feel What? Hopeful

Now What? How is God asking us to stop and delight in this season of life?

INTRODUCTION

Hi, everyone. Thanks for joining us today, and I hope you had an excellent Christmas with lots of family and good food to share. This morning, or whenever you're watching or listening to this--no judgment--we're taking the time to gathering online. It's a gift from our staff back to all our wonderful volunteers so that we may all catch our breath and center ourselves in rest after a busy holiday.

This is important to us because as we look into our world, we see the opposite of rest. We see people who are at the end of themselves, overworked, stressed, and anxious and unsure what to do. Maybe that's you, feeling depleted after a hectic Christmas season, and looking at the upcoming demands of kids sports, job demands, and lack of available time to do it all. There just doesn't seem to be much hope for change.

In an article from 2019 titled ["How Millennials Became The Burnout Generation,"](#) Anne Helen Petersen talks about something she calls errand paralysis, which is the inability to find time and energy to accomplish mundane tasks. She talks to other younger adults about things like

registering your dog for a new license, taking knives to be sharpened, and so on. These simple tasks would perpetually roll over on her to-do list from week to week, and then she had a realization. **"The more I tried to figure out my errand paralysis, the more the actual parameters of burnout began to reveal themselves. Burnout and the behaviors and weight that accompany it aren't, in fact, something we can cure by going on vacation. It's not limited to workers in acutely high-stress environments. And it's not a temporary affliction: It's the millennial condition. It's our base temperature. It's our background music. It's the way things are. It's our lives. ...To describe millennial burnout accurately is to acknowledge the multiplicity of our lived reality—that we're not just high school graduates, or parents, or knowledge workers, but all of the above—while recognizing our status quo. We're deeply in debt, working more hours and more jobs for less pay and less security, struggling to achieve the same standards of living as our parents, operating in psychological and physical precariousness, all while being told that if we just work harder, meritocracy will prevail, and we'll begin thriving. The carrot dangling in front of us is the dream that the to-do list will end, or at least become far more manageable."**

Who can't relate to this? I've dreaded standing in line at the post office so much that I put it off for weeks. So I think Peterson is right: This level of burnout isn't curable by a long weekend off or a last-minute trip to the beach. What

the author calls burnout, other call perpetual exhaustion-- that feeling where you can never get enough sleep or rest to recover and be fully alert and functioning. In perpetual exhaustion, there's also a lingering feeling of being on edge, until one final trigger and then you just lose it. Think Clark Griswold's rant in Christmas Vacation. Hopefully, you just watched it this year and didn't live it yourselves.

With exhaustion, I think there are two key components we can all relate to, hurry and distraction. These aren't the only two contributing factors, but I do think they're the main ones for us in our culture.

First, a word on distraction. Social scientists have been studying our attention and how it's affected by technology. A new field, called attention economics has emerged referring to the scarcity of human attention and is applying economic theory to solve information management problems. For example, it's been shown that our attention has dropped from 12 seconds in 2000 to 8 seconds today. To put it in perspective, a goldfish has an attention span of 8 seconds. We're living in state of continuous partial attention where the norm now is to be watching a movie and simultaneously scrolling through social media. And mumbling to our spouses as they scroll on the couch next to us.

If there's something that can set you apart in our world for the better, it's expanding your attention span to be able to perform what's called deep work. Deep work is also known as “cognitive depth”--the ability to work in a state of deep

concentration and focus for a long period of time, without distraction or interruption.

Cal Newport, *Deep Work*: “The ability to perform deep work is becoming increasingly rare at exactly the same time it is becoming increasingly valuable in our economy. As a consequence, the few who cultivate this skill, and then make it the core of their working life, will thrive. ...Once your brain has become accustomed to on-demand distraction it’s hard to shake the addiction even when you want to concentrate. To put this more concretely: If every moment of potential boredom in your life—say, having to wait five minutes in line or sit alone in a restaurant until a friend arrives—is relieved with a quick glance at your smartphone, then your brain has likely been rewired to a point where it’s not ready for deep work—even if you regularly schedule time to practice this concentration.”

So, if we're not careful, our brains are being rewired to prevent any deep concentration, keeping us easily distracted and easily bored. We look to fill every available moment with activity, and we're unable to be at rest with ourselves.

John Mark Comer, *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*: “What you give your attention to is the person you become. Put another way: the mind is the portal to the soul, and what you fill your mind with will shape the trajectory of your character. In the end, your life is no more than the sum of what you gave your attention

to. That bodes well for those apprentices of Jesus who give the bulk of their attention to him and to all that is good, beautiful, and true in his world. But not for those who give their attention to the 24-7 news cycle of outrage and anxiety and emotion-charged drama or the nonstop feed of celebrity gossip, titillation, and cultural drivel. (As if we 'give' it in the first place; much of it is stolen by a clever algorithm out to monetize our precious attention.)"

The other contributing factor to exhaustion we want to consider is hurry. Christian philosopher Dallas Willard called hurry "The great threat to spiritual life today." He said to follow Jesus with our true selves, we must "ruthlessly eliminate hurry" from our lives.

Have you ever thought of that? Hurry is a great threat to a thriving spiritual life. That's not what most of us would expect as an answer to the challenge of spiritual life. Maybe drugs and addiction, maybe divorce, maybe warring political ideologies. But, hurry? And, then, when you look at some of the stories and statistics on busyness and you start to realize what Carl Jung said: "**Hurry is not of the devil; hurry *is* the devil.**"

The Harvard Business Review conducted a study on business and found, in general, that a person who is perceived by others as busy has a higher social status. In other words, "the more we believe that one has the opportunity for success based on hard work, the more we tend to think that people who skip leisure and work all the time are of a higher standing."

Hence, the rise of hacks. There are countless tips and gadget that have been created to save us all just a bit of time, which is our scarcest commodity in this life of hurry: There's never enough time to fit in the ever-expanding list of things to get done. Now, there's no way I'm going back to the days before we had a Roomba, but you and I both know what happens when we're in a hurry because we're busy:

- Irritability
- Stress
- Anger
- Anxiety
- Missed appointments
- Broken promises
- Tension, rifts, and miscommunication

But, there is another way. Kosuke Koyama, who was a Japanese theologian, wrote a book called *Three Mile an Hour God*, capturing the point that Jesus came to the earth and walked among us, to and from places he went. In his book he said this: **“God walks ‘slowly’ because he is love. If he is not love he would have gone much faster. Love has its speed. It is an inner speed. It is a spiritual speed. It is a different kind of speed from the technological speed to which we are accustomed. It is ‘slow’ yet it is lord over all other speeds since it is the speed of love.”**

Transition: So, hurry plus distraction is a surefire path to exhaustion and burnout. So, how can we push back

against our culture's norms and live from the design we were meant to? How do we actually slow down to walk with God and live an intentional life?

SOLUTION

Genesis 1:27-2:3 (NIV): God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. ...God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day. 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.

The God who created us did so for connection and shared pleasure. Instead of being made as robots to boost his productivity, God created us and then took a day to enjoy who he had made. And it's not that work is bad for us--we find out in these opening chapters that there was beauty and life to maintain and God partnered with humanity to see it through. But the point is, there's a priority and it's not work so you can rest. It's rest in God so your work fulfills its purpose. Even more, as pastor and author Rich Villodas says, "**Sabbath is not a reward for hard work; it's a gift we receive. Humanity was created on the sixth day. Their first day was a day of rest. They lived from a place of rest.**"

For many of us, if we have ever practiced sabbath, we tend to think of it as a day off. A day to catch up on house projects, run errands, and veg out on Netflix to get our mind off things. But this isn't a sabbath--it's unpaid time where we're still working. The kind of sabbath God created and intends for us to practice is an invitation into pausing and reflecting in worship on his provision and his love. Sabbath is where we are separated from our work to be reminded that our identity isn't in what we can do but in who we are as the image bearers of God. It's a reminder that we have worth and value because of who created us and why he created us.

We see these rhythms of work and rest alive in Jesus. Tasked with the most important duty ever given to a person--the redemption of the cosmos--Jesus still took time to rest and be with his Father. Jesus even took naps! And he invited his followers to mimic him in their own lives:

Matthew 11:28-30 (The Message): “Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

In Jesus, there is rest. When we come to him and reorient our lives around his priorities and practices, we can flow in the same Spirit of peace that he did.

Transition: Let's talk about some practical points of sabbath rhythms. How do you practice Sabbath?

APPLICATION

Some of the keys to this are in the word *sabbath* itself. The original word for sabbath is *shabbat*, which means “stop.” It's a day where you stop your work in order to make room for other activities. When the Israelites were brought out of Egypt, Moses received the Law from God which governed the affairs of their nation. They were told to remember the sabbath and to keep it. It was a way to resist the culture of their Egyptian captivity in demanding more production that interrupted their life and worship. So ceasing from their work activities represented a liberation from the tyrannical demands of ever-increasing production, that we can certainly relate to. And its a call to rest in God and know that he's the one in charge of things:

Marva Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly*: “A great benefit of Sabbath keeping is that we learn to let God take care of us — not by becoming passive and lazy, but in the freedom of giving up our feeble attempts to be God in our own lives.”

So, on the sabbath, we stop. But that's not all. God, through the prophet Isaiah, commanded the Jews to consider the sabbath a delight. So sabbath is a day of enjoyment--between God, yourself, and others.

Remember, the first full day for Adam was a day of rest with God. And to frame this correctly, maybe we need to ask ourselves the question: What do you think Adam saw when he first opened his eyes? Did he see a frowning

face, sort of like a suburban dad say, "It's about time you're up. We have a lot to do today"? Or, perhaps, was God smiling when Adam opened his eyes? Do you think God could have been beaming with joy and excitement to spend those first moments in delighting in Adam's wonder and astonishment? This is important because it's difficult to delight in someone who you perceive to be constantly annoyed by you. But you'll find endless delight and creative ideas to rest and rejuvenate if you understand that God is willing and eager to help you do just that.

So, ask yourself: **What could you do for 24 hours that would bring you deep, settling, centering joy?**

What does it look like for us, the Siders family?

At Sunday down on Saturday evening, our family gathers together in our kitchen. We begin the weekend with connection to each other, and lots of food. We cook a fun and filling meal, like pizza from scratch or steak, which is always on the rare side. We sit, light two candles, and say a prayer. Over dinner, we share our highs and lows from the past week. The boys tell us about what they've learned in school, how many touchdowns they scored, and when they've felt scared or tired or alone. Sarah and I share about our lives, and we help each other look for God in those high and low moments. Sometimes we read a Psalm together, and we always laugh. And the next morning we sleep in, and do it all over again during brunch. And we end the meal with something tasty because I have one rule for our sabbath meals: Calories don't count. Just as long as you stop and you delight.

And the rest of the day on Saturday is relaxed with no screens. We read books, take naps, go for hikes, play boardgames together. All sorts of things that slow us down and connect us to each other.

OBJECTIONS

Now, does it all happen perfectly this way every week? No, and I know that some of this is seasonal as the boys get into sports and other social activities. And sometimes we're visiting out of town relatives, or Sarah and I want a date night just to ourselves. But what we have done is to start where we are with what we're able to do, and we've created a baseline of stopping and delighting so we know what true rest looks and feels like so we know when we stray from it too far for too long.

INSPIRATION

But start where you can. You may not be able to take an entire 24-hour period off work or away from your devices, and there's no judgment from me about that. But where can you start? Maybe four hours with your phone in a drawer, or perhaps a slowed down, multi-course meal with your family or your roommates? How about sleeping in and instead of reaching for social media first thing, you meditated on scripture or took a hike in a new part of the city? I think even a little bit of headway made on this front will pay off tremendously for you--and for those around you.

CONCLUSION

Next Step:

•How is God asking us to stop and delight in this season of life?

Prayer