

## Abide Practices – Slowing

This week’s invitation is to explore slowing down to be with God. The aim is to learn how to put the brakes on in your daily life so you can be attentive to God and experience Him in new ways. Learning to slow down is foundational to creating a rhythm of life that makes time and space for the other spiritual disciplines.

### PRACTICE 1: SLOWING DOWN FOR LOVING UNION – SELF ASSESSMENT

The aim of slowing down is to move through life at a pace that enhances your ‘loving union’ with Christ. Loving union is about allowing God to have full access to your life, having our hearts wide open to him. This can’t be done in a hurry.

Take this short assessment<sup>1</sup> to see whether your pace of life is helping you prioritise loving union. Next to each statement, write down the number that best describes your response using the following scale:

5 = Always true of me, 4 = Frequently true of me, 3 = Occasionally true of me, 2 = Rarely true of me, 1 = Never true of me.

1. My highest priority is to take time each day to remain in loving union with Jesus	
2. I involve God in my life as I make decisions and initiate new plans	
3. I wait to say yes or no to new opportunities until I have sufficient time to prayerfully and carefully discern God’s will	
4. I regularly step away from the demands or responsibilities of in my life to make time to delight in God’s gifts (E.g. having a meal with friends, listening to a piece of music, enjoying a walk in creation, watching a sunset)	
5. I have a dedicated and regular practice of meditating on scripture in order to commune and be transformed by Jesus	
6. I regularly set aside time for experiences of silence and solitude to enable me to be still and undistracted in God’s presence	
7. I am relaxed and comfortable with my limits (my available time, gifts, energy, knowledge, health).	
8. When I become aware that I am anxious or feeling emotionally triggered, I slow down to be with God.	
9. When life gets pressured because of responsibilities, expectations, needs, or opportunities around me, I maintain my key spiritual practices and rhythms	
10. I am aware and think about God during my waking hours, whatever I’m doing	

#### If you scored mostly ones and twos:

You are likely doing too much in your own power. You may be doing a number of tasks in your day without any thought of Jesus. You are probably overloaded and distracted and because of this, prayer may feel more like a duty than a delight. But God is extending His grace to you through this assessment and invitation to engage in this spiritual practice.

#### If you scored mostly twos and threes:

You are making progress but are likely still out of balance, with your *being with God* insufficient to sustain your *doing for God*. You know that discipleship is about enjoying communion with God as well as serving Him. Ask yourself: *Am I moving in the direction of more loving union with Jesus or less? What adjustments might God be inviting me to make in this season?*

#### If you scored mostly fours and fives:

You are in a good place of rest and centredness in your relationship with Jesus. Your *doing for God* is fed and fuelled by your *being with God*. What steps could you take to deepen your relationship even more?

### PRACTICE 2: IDENTIFYING ‘HURRY SICKNESS’

Hurry is the great enemy of spiritual life and a form of violence against our own souls. But most of us don’t see hurry and over busyness as a problem (we may even see them as a virtue!) or realise the damage they do to us.

Read the below list of symptoms of ‘hurry sickness’ and tick the ones that are true of you.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from assessment from The Emotionally Healthy Leader by Peter Scazzero

<sup>2</sup> From The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry by John Mark Comer

1. <b>Irritability</b> – You get mad, frustrated, or annoyed way too easily and live with an ongoing low-grade negativity.	
2. <b>Hypersensitivity</b> – Minor comments hurt you deeply, things not going to plan have a disproportionate effect on your emotional wellbeing	
3. <b>Restlessness</b> – When you try to slow down and rest you can't relax. You try spiritual disciplines but find them boring or agitating. You struggle to focus on one thing at a time (E.g. Watch TV whilst checking your phone, whilst folding clothes etc).	
4. <b>Workaholism or non-stop activity</b> – You don't know when to stop. You're constantly striving for accomplishment and accumulation. You live to tick off your to-do list and struggle with leaving any task unfinished. At the end of the day you have little energy left for relational investment.	
5. <b>Emotional numbness</b> – You don't have the capacity to feel another's pain. Or even your own pain.	
6. <b>Out of order priorities</b> – You're always getting sucked into the tyranny of the urgent, not the important. Your life is reactive, not proactive. You don't have time for the things that really matter to you.	
7. <b>Lack of care for your body</b> – You don't get enough sleep or exercise. You don't eat healthily. You keep getting sick. You drink too much coffee.	
8. <b>Escapist behaviours</b> – Rather than doing what is life-giving because you're too tired, you turn to other distractions or comforts – overeating / drinking, binge watching TV, browsing social media etc. You use those things to escape from reality.	
9. <b>Slippage of spiritual disciplines</b> – Prayer, meditation on scripture, worship, community are the first to go when you get too busy, rather than your first go-to.	
10. <b>Isolation</b> – You feel disconnected from God and others. Even when you spend time with God and others, you struggle to be fully present and are constantly wrestling with distractions.	

### PRACTICE 3: STEPS TO SLOWING DOWN

Here are some ideas for slowing down your overall pace of life. Some are spiritual, some are very practical, some of them are easier than others! Why don't you try and do one each day and tick it off when you've done it. Then share your experiences with your small group or discipleship group.

<b>1. Identify the natural breaks in your day</b> (refreshing your coffee, having lunch, walking to a meeting) and use the time to pause and be with God.	<b>2. Choose a 'space for reflection'.</b> Find a space or view from your home or office where you can go at different points of the day and just 'be' in God's presence for a few moments.
<b>3. Take deep breaths.</b> Pause once an hour to just breathe deeply for 1-2 mins.	<b>4. Drive the speed limit / Get in the slow lane.</b> Rather than trying to get to your destination as quickly as possible, leave ten minutes earlier and drive slower.
<b>5. Call instead of texting / what's-apping.</b> Remember when we used to talk to people on the phone? No, give it a try and enrich your relationships.	<b>6. Show up early for an appointment.</b> Whether you're meeting someone for work or pleasure, turn up early and just sit there waiting (without looking at your phone!)
<b>7. Choose the longest queue at the supermarket.</b> Patience is cultivated through learning to wait so choose places where you <i>have</i> to wait.	<b>8. Put your phone to bed.</b> Choose a time in the evening when you put your phone away / turn it off and don't get it again until the morning <i>after</i> your devotional time.
<b>9. Only answer emails at specific times.</b> Most of us have emails coming through on our phone and feel pressured to respond as soon as we can. Set aside a time to reply to emails.	<b>10. Set a limit on your social media and TV use.</b> We burn up so much time without realising that everything we consume is forming our hearts.
<b>11. Do one thing at a time.</b> Multi-tasking is a myth. Seek to be fully present to the moment.	<b>12. Walk slower.</b> This isn't as easy as it sounds but if we learn to slow down our bodies, we'll slow down our lives.
<b>13. Smile.</b> Smiling is a powerful tool for affecting our internal mood. Slow down to smile at people.	<b>14. Put less in your diary.</b> You don't have to fill every hour of the day. Putting less in will create more margin in your life.