

Slow Down Christian

By: Jim Hohnberger

“The days are bumper to bumper Lord. The deadlines, the pressures, the list of things to do keep funneling into my schedule, until I feel like one monumental traffic jam! I’ve nearly concluded that it is, after all, my own fault! There is no time for quiet or reflection, for pause or beauty, there is no time to think! When the blank spaces do occur in my schedule I feel I have been so rushed that now, I owe it to myself just to vegetate. Lord, Lord when will I learn to live a controlled life without apology? Help me to learn, to say yes and no at the right times.”

Doesn’t this illustrate what most of our lives are like? If so, may I suggest a simple prescription? “For fast-acting relief try slowing down.” Our lives are just too pushed, too stuffed, too fast paced and there’s a practical solution, there really is - its called slowing down.

I’d like to share what our lives used to be like 15 years ago, before Sally and I put the above prescription into practice.

“I simply must get the bills paid this morning and the shopping can’t wait another day. And my children! I’ve had so little time to be with them lately that we hardly

seem like a family anymore. Maybe I can read them a story tonight or take them to the park or go on a picnic, or to the zoo.”

“And I mustn’t neglect my own body. Exercise is important and I’ve got to find time for that. Perhaps I could run with Paul after work or maybe Dan would like to play racquetball. Bill said we should get together to play golf. You know my annual physical is overdue too. And I ought to be reading more. There’s this new book out that all my friends say is terrific. Everybody knows it’s important to keep your mind active so I just shouldn’t neglect the newspaper. If I could get into bed an hour earlier each night or get up one hour earlier in the morning, I could do plenty of reading then.”

“And we should be taking more time to maintain our spiritual lives. That’s one area we cannot afford to neglect. Maybe we could start a Bible study with another couple. And we should set aside an hour in the morning and evening for prayer and study.

“And what about our social obligations? We can’t expect to have friends if we never get together. The Jones’ had us over twice now and I know they’re waiting for us

to reciprocate. We'll just have to set a date and keep it, that's all.

"And my job is requiring more time now. I can't be neglecting that. And honey, are you sure you have time for that part time job of yours? After all, the children?"

"And there are so many things that need fixing and repairing around the house. And I told Cliff I'd help him with his new project.

"Don't forget you have to do all your canning this month. I know I promised to take you out for dinner but can't that wait until after we visit the relatives next month?"

"You know there's work that needs to be done at the church too. And the income tax is due next month also. I'd better block out some time for that! And I ... excuse me, the phone is ringing, I've just got to answer the phone!!!"

It's one GIANT treadmill, are you on it? We were and it's wonderful to be off. Our decision to get off came over 16 years ago. I remember the circumstances as well as my own name.

We had just driven over 3 1/2 hours to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. There we found a remote, little lake, set up our travel trailer and were sitting on the edge of the lake watching our 2 young boys, ages 2 and 4, throw stones in the lake.

"Sally my whole body feels as though it's going a hundred miles an hour, take my pulse, please?"

"It's 88 Jim!"

"Is that good?"

"For your age, it's terrible!"

Five days later, after I had unwound, I had not touched a telephone, read a newspaper, opened any mail, or seen the inside of my office, I felt relaxed, wonderfully relaxed.

Now I was throwing stones in the lake and my two precious boys were admiring my feats of wonder. Remember they were only 2 and 4 years of age.

Again I said to my Queen, "Please take my pulse."

"It's 68 dear."

Twenty beats a minute less, that's 1,200 beats an hour, or 28,800 beats a day. What was I doing to my-

self? Was it worth it? If I kept it up what would be the final story of my life, my marriage, and my family?

"Sally - something is WRONG! Why are we kept so BUSY?"

"But Jim we're doing a lot of **good**."

"But is it resulting in any **saving good**?"

For the next five days we discussed just that. We studied the lives of others in the same business I was in and we didn't like the final outcome of their lives. Oh they had made plenty of money, their retirements were

secure, but most of them were divorced or unhappily married. And their children had grown to be just like the world. Yes they had a "good" college education and were now pursuing successful careers but their characters, their morals, their attitudes were not what we wanted.

As we studied the lives of those in our denomination we saw the same scenario. Was this what we wanted for our lives? Our marriage? Our children? We cringed at the thought.

But what should we do? Who could we go to for answers?

There was only **One** we could go to. He would have the answers for us. He also has the answers for you. We all vary so much, that's why we can't follow another but seek individually the solution to our own lives from the Mighty Counselor.

What did we do? We sold our business, our beautiful country home, our furnishings and found a little log cabin in the mountains of Montana and there changed the direction of our lives forever.

There we would make God a priority! We would make our marriage and children a priority and everything else would be secondary. People thought we were crazy, a little fanatical, getting a bit extreme.

But it worked for us and is still working. Our boys are now young men of 18 and 20 years. They have their own businesses, they travel and speak on the Christian life, they are well mannered, respectful of adults, polite and have strong moral characters. They aren't given to the immorality of this society; in fact they are appalled by it. They think the music of the day is disgusting as

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well as the fashions and amusements. I wish you could meet them; they stand out in a crowd, not because they are great, or better than anyone else or holier than thou, but because they live on principle—God’s principles, not man’s nor society’s.

My boys are prepared for this world because they have a strong hold on Jesus. Sooo many of the other youth are bent to the pitiful path of worldliness, indebtedness, foolishness and immorality. May God have mercy! Please Lord; help us to wake up before it is too late!

Was it worth it? It was the wisest move we ever made! Our family is not only together, it is growing in Christ. We love each other’s company, respect each other’s counsel and lend a daily hand to lighten each other’s burdens. It was worth it! Wonderfully worth it!

All because we slowed down to get **our** marching orders from God. He’s the **One** who gets the credit. We just placed our lives in His hands and followed after. We didn’t know what the results would be. Sure it seemed fanatical, praise God for that kind of fanaticism!

Perhaps some of you need to get a bit fanatical? You probably all have time for the unimportant, the mundane, the urgent, the expectations of others. But do you have time for the most important?

While at a friends home I noticed this statement tacked alongside the telephone.

“Overwork sometimes causes a loss of self-control. But the Lord never compels hurried, complicated movements. Many gather to themselves burdens that the merciful Heavenly Father did not place on them. Duties he never designed them to perform chase one another wildly. God desires us to realize that we do not glorify His name when we take so many burdens that we are overtaxed and, becoming heart-weary and brain-weary, chafe and fret and scold. We are to bear only the responsibilities that the Lord gives us, trusting in Him, and thus keeping our hearts pure and sweet and sympathetic.” What an eye opening statement!

If you want to enter into it I suggest you follow a **sim-**

ple four-step solution, but as you do remember the how of implementation is uniquely individual. Why? Because we vary so much. We all have different personalities, abilities and talents. We have different backgrounds, families, occupations and value systems. Be sure to give everyone their proper “space” on how they decide to regain the real meaning in their lives.

Number one, you must resolve to slow your pace, if not, circumstances will control you. Either you control your life or life will control you, **guaranteed!** This must be a daily resolve, the rest of your life. For we have an enemy who systematically plots to destroy you in your over-busyness. Daily you must go on our knees before God and ask, “Lord, what would Thou have me to do.” **Acts 9:6** KJV

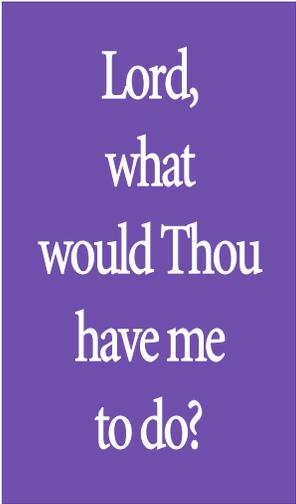
This is not a works program where we bring our lives down to the irreducible minimum to be holy. But rather, a program that works because God is the great designer for each of us. Only He knows whether you should move to the mountains, the countryside, or begin right where you are. He has the answers, so we

must seek Him and in seeking Him believe that He will guide and direct our paths. Psalm 32:8 - “I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with Mine eye.”

Number two. You must learn to say, “No” gracefully, with Christ in your heart. Some are so weak in this area that 30 minutes standing on their back porches saying, **no, no, NO**, would be a good prerequisite for each day until they mastered the art.

You may laugh, but those who are weak in this area are probably crying because it may mean saying “no” to your employer or to the expectations of your friends, relatives or fellow brethren in the church.

You must realize that others just won’t understand. They didn’t understand when we took the step and some of them don’t even understand to this day. But God understands, your spouse will understand and your children will be elated, because now they will have



Lord,
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YOU. That's all they ever wanted from the beginning, but instead we gave them things, amusements, worldly sports and worldly entertainments. And when it is too late we bemoan their condition, their characters, and their worldly ways. Now is the time to slow down by daily learning to say no, gracefully.

Number three. You must eliminate the intruders and defend the top priorities. I can't prescribe for you what to eliminate but I can share some of what I eliminated and the time it restored to me daily. The TV—I gained hours. The news—I gained 60 minutes daily. The newspaper and magazines—I gained another hour. The telephone—some of you would gain a third of your day! Sports—I gained almost half my Sunday as well as Monday nights. Success—*What do you mean you eliminated success?*—Yes, I decided how much money I needed to live on and was content with that. I now have the smallest income I've ever had in my life, but am one of the richest men in the world. How's that for a contrast?

You must decide what are the intruders in your life. You may find mine too fanatical for you. That's fine, but I didn't decide what to eliminate. I asked God what He wanted me to eliminate. That's where the road gets very narrow indeed, and very steep. Few there be that travel it!

My priorities, very simply: relationships—my walk with God, the pursuing of my Queen and the fruit of our lives—our Matthew and Andrew. Then comes my career, which is now turned into a full time ministry in helping people find the real value in life - "Christ in you the hope of glory." These remain my goals and probably will never change until I hear the words, "Well done faithful and good servant, enter into My rest."

Whatever could number four be? It's very simple. If you actually follow through with the first three then you must be ready to take the **Heat!**

Some of you are saying, "What do you mean take the heat?" You see, not everyone will understand, not everyone will agree, not everyone will desire the same. What you eliminate may not be a priority to someone else. And you know how opinionated we all are... So the talk will travel, the gossip will spread, and your character

will be maligned by some. Don't worry, you're in good company, Jesus was the most misunderstood person that ever lived.

But in time the fruit will blossom, most will understand when it is too late and you will find your peace in a "life hid with Christ in God," a marriage relationship you never dreamed possible and children that love, respect and honor their parents and their parent's God.

In a letter from a great reformer, Martin Luther, to his associate Melancton he wrote, "I hate with exceeding hatred those extreme cares which consume you. If the cause is unjust, abandon it."

It's just that simple; if the cause is unjust abandon it.

Ask yourself what do you really care about? What is really worthy of your time? What are you spending your life on that outweighs an intimate, loving relationship between husband and wife ...between a parent and child ... between you and your God? What will be the final analysis of your life and the lives of the little ones God has loaned you?

"Choose you this day whom ye will serve."

"As for me and my house we will serve the Lord."

Joshua 24:15

Power for Living



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