



Reading Guide for
The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry
By John Mark Comer

A 6-week journey and guide to read through a FAM favorite book that includes important questions to ask and quotes for consideration along the way



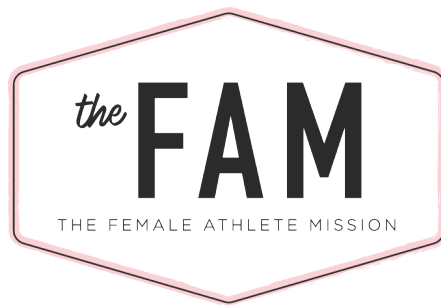
"The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry" Week 1 Questions (pg. 1-57)

1. Before reading, spend some time meditating on the words of Jesus in Matthew 11:28-30. What comes to mind? Are you drawn to what Jesus is offering? Do you believe it?
 - "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."
2. "For me, Jesus remains the most brilliant, most insightful, most thought-provoking teacher to ever walk the earth. And he walked slowly. So rather than buckle up, settle in." (12).
 - Does this make you feel uncomfortable? Would you rather God be a fast paced God, because that would fit into the world better?
3. JMC says discipleship is "apprenticeship to Jesus". Spend some time thinking through this wording. Is this different from when you think about "Following Jesus"? (Apprenticeship definition: a position as an apprentice; an arrangement in which someone learns an art, trade, or job under another)
4. Love, joy, and peace. Have you ever experienced these three central realities to the kingdom go God, when you have been in a season of "hurry"? Explain your experiences.
5. Psychologists and mental health professionals are now talking about an epidemic of the modern world: "Hurry Sickness" - A behavioral pattern characterized by continual rushing and anxiousness. (46).
 - Do you have hurry sickness? How was this in February (or think of the middle of season) versus April during COVID? Was it any different?
6. Do the little quiz on pages 48-51 about the symptoms of hurry sickness. Spend time being honest with yourself and before God. Share with your group your results, or if you're on your own, share with God. How do you feel when you see this?
7. "Could it be that... were the ones who are absent, not God? We sit around sucked into our phones or TV or to-do lists, oblivious to the God who is around us, with us, in us..." (54).
 - Are you feeling distant from God?



Random quotes to discuss with yourself, God, a friend, or the group you are reading with:

- "Why am I in such a rush to become somebody I don't even like?" (4)
- "We are distracting ourselves into spiritual oblivion" (27).
- "Yet in spite of our smartphones and programmable coffeepots and dishwashers and laundry machines and toasters, most of us feel like we have less time, not more" (32)
- "You're not the customer; you're the product. It's your attention that's for sale, along with your peace of mind." (39)
- We have an average of attention span of eight seconds... a goldfish has nine seconds. (39) (And we wonder why it's so hard to pray!)
- "Hurry is a form of violence on the soul" (47)
- "Hurry kills wisdom; wisdom is born in the quiet, the slow" (52)
- "Hurry is not just a disordered schedule. Hurry is a disordered heart." (55).



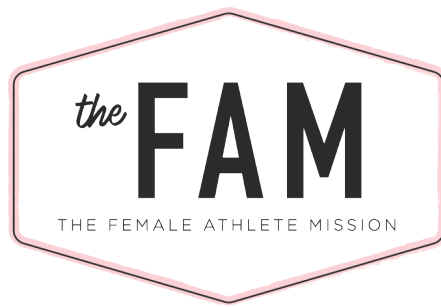
"The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry" Week 2 Questions (pg. 61-98)

1. JMC states that if he had 10 more hours in the day... he would "fill them up with even more things, and then [he] would be even more tired and burned out and emotional fried and spiritually at risk than [he is] now." (62).
 - If you had more time, would you be less exhausted or more?
2. Pages 65-68 lists 10 different limitations: Our bodies, our minds, our giftings, our personalities and emotional wiring, our families of origin, our socioeconomic origins, our education and careers, our seasons of life and their responsibilities, our lifespan, God's call on our lives.
 - How does it feel to be aware of limitations? If you were to embrace them, would you feel more free or more restrained? Explain.
3. "Life is a series of choices. Every yes is a thousand nos. Every activity we give our time to is a thousand other activities we can't give our time to." (70).
 - What is your relationship to the word "No"? Be honest.
4. "Do you ever catch yourself with the sneaking suspicion that you'll wake up on your deathbed with this nagging sense that somehow, in all the hurry and busyness and frenetic activity, you missed the most important things?" (70).
 - Look at this in the context of your specific life stage. (ex: high school, college, 20's, etc.) When this stage is over, what do you NOT want to miss? For examples, look at page 71.
5. A yoke: imagine two oxen yoked together to pull a cart or plow a field. "A yoke was a common idiom in the first century for a rabbi's way of reading the Torah...it was his set of teachings on how to be human. His way to shoulder the... weight of life" (76).
 - How is Jesus' yoke easy? Review the verse on page 78 and 79
6. Following Jesus is a lifestyle. Think of JMC's example of the runners: "I want the life, but I'm not willing to adopt the lifestyle behind it." (83).
 - Why aren't you willing to adopt Jesus' way of life if his yoke is easy?
7. "I'll suggest people keep a time log for a week; when they do, they are usually shocked at how much time they give to trivial things." (96)
 - Let's keep a time log for a few days! Keep a page in your journal. At the end of the day, write down your time on social media ("Screentime" app), and log other activities Netflix, working out, etc. It's not to see how "bad" we are... it's about taking inventory. At the end of the week, look honestly at it. Do you have time to be the person you want to be?



Random quotes to discuss with yourself, God, a friend, or the group you are reading with:

- "The solution to an over busy life is not more time. It's to slow down and simplify our lives around what really matters." (62).
- "One of our key tasks of our apprenticeship to Jesus is living into both our potential and our limitations" (63).
- "The main limitation we all share - regardless of where you started in life or how smart or hard working or type A you are - is time" (69).
- "Every day is a chance. Every hour is an opportunity. Every moment is a precious gift." (73)
- The way of Jesus: "It's not just a set of ideas (what we call theology) or a list of dos and don'ts (what we call ethics)... It's a way of life based on that of Jesus himself. A lifestyle." (84).
- "An easy life isn't an option; an easy yoke is" (88).
- "I'm struck by how fiercely present Jesus was, how he just would not let anything or anyone... rush him into the next moment" (91)
- Margin: "The space between our load and our limits" (91).
- Jesus "put on display an unhurried life, where space for God and love for people were the top priorities" (93).
- "We achieve inner peace when our schedule is aligned with our values" (94).
- "The hard truth is that following Jesus is something you do. A practice, as much as a faith." (97).



"The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry" Week 3 - SILENCE AND SOLITUDE - Questions (pg. 99-142)

1. "All those little moments of boredom were potential portals to prayer. Little moments throughout our days to wake up to the reality of God all around us" (120)
 - When do you experience boredom? Can you even think of the last time you were 'bored'? What did you do in response to this boredom?
2. Eremos is a greek word that could be translated to many things... "desert, deserted place, desolate place, solitary place, lonely place, quiet place, wilderness" (123-124).
 - "The wilderness isn't a place of weakness; it's the place of strength." (125) Reflect on this statement. It was true for Jesus. Read 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 for more reflection.
3. "The busier and more in demand and famous Jesus became... the the more he withdrew to his quiet place to pray. Usually for us it's the exact opposite... In seasons of busyness we need more time in the quiet place, not less" (130).
 - What are your usual excuses for not having a quiet time? Do these excuses measure up to what Jesus was experiencing? If Jesus were you, what would he do?
4. There are two kinds of silence: external and internal. "Could it be that we're using external noise to drown out internal noise?" (132) Read the paragraph on 132-133 explaining 'internal noise'
 - How do you relate to this? Does your internal noise scare you?
5. Without silence and solitude with Jesus, JMC lists the consequences on page 137.
 - Are you experiencing these consequences? Which do you relate to most? Explain your own experiences.
6. WITH silence and solitude, JMC lists what can happen on pages 138-139.
 - Which of these are you most drawn to? Is there a certain sentence that really speaks to you? Write that out and reflect on what is drawing you in about it.
7. Time to PRACTICE!
 - Try 30 minutes for THREE consecutive days. First thing in the morning, try a "quiet time" with Jesus. Get quiet. Allow your inner noise to go crazy. It doesn't matter if you have time, *make the time*. Leave your phone in another room. Use an actual book bible (not electronic). Each day, choose a few passages to go to: read, journal, meditate on them.
 - Here are some to choose: Psalm 23, John 10, Romans 8 (this could take two days!), Psalm 139, 1 Corinthians 13, Ephesians 6:10-20, Psalm 42



Random quotes to discuss with yourself, God, a friend, or the group you are reading with:

- "Pretty much the only place we can be alone with our thoughts anymore is in the shower" (121)
- "The noise of the modern world makes us deaf to the voice of God, drowning out the one input we most need." (122)
- "We are distracting ourselves into spiritual oblivion." (122)
- "Jesus 'often withdrew.' He frequently got away. He made a point to sneak off to pray on a regular basis. It was a common habit in his repertoire." (130)
- "In seasons of busyness we need more time in the quiet place, not less" (130).
- "Quiet is a kind of balm for emotional healing. And more: an unlocked, open door to spiritual life." (132)
- "One of the great problems of spirituality in our day and age that so few people feel safe enough to admit is how separated we feel from God" (134)
- "If our theory is right and the problem is more our absence than his, more about our distraction than his disconnection, then the solution is fairly simple: create an environment for attention and connection to God and I know of no better place than the eremos" (135).
- "If the churches came to understand that the greatest threat to faith today is not hedonism but distraction, perhaps they might begin to appeal anew to a frazzled digital generation." (141)



"The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry" Week 4 - SABBATH - Questions (pg. 143-176)

1. "Desire is infinite. It has no limit. No point at which it's ever satisfied. The problem is, we are finite; we have all sorts of limits, remember? So the result is restlessness." (145).
 - Think of this equation: Infinite desire - finite soul = restlessness. How have you seen this play out in your own life?
2. "The word Sabbath comes to us from the Hebrew Shabbat. The word literally means "to stop." The Sabbath is simply a day to stop: stop working, stop wanting, stop worrying, just stop." (148)
 - What fears, thoughts, or confusions might keep you from "stopping"?
3. Look at the chart of restfulness vs. restlessness on page 149.
 - What words do you resonate with most today? Which side of the chart do you find yourself mostly? What does this reveal/bring up?
4. "The Sabbath was made for man, not the man for the Sabbath" - Mark 2:27. In JMC's words, Sabbath "is 'for' us. A gift to enjoy from the Creator to the creation. To gratefully receive." (152)
 - Meditate on this verse. Does this take away any 'legalism' you might be feeling about Sabbath? Do you see this as an invitation or a law to abide by?
5. "If you're new to the Sabbath, a question to give shape to your practice is this: What could I do for twenty-four hours that would fill my soul with a deep throbbing joy? That would make me spontaneously combust with wonder, awe, gratitude, and praise? (155)
 - Answer this question today. Allow yourself to dream. Make a list and don't hold back.
6. JMC talks about how Sabbath is a day for rest and worship. Everything we do on this day should check both of those boxes. Is it restful? Is it worshipful? Worship is: "anything to index your heart toward grateful recognition of God's reality and goodness." (162).
 - What are 3-4 things in your life that could be worshipful (according to above definition)?
7. The Sabbath is "Scheduled social justice." (168)
 - Where there any specific convictions that came up for you during this section?
8. "Sabbath is a way of saying, "Enough" (168). "We are restful when ordinary life is enough" (170)
 - What if our ordinary is enough? Does this conflict with your idea of being a productive, driven person? Can you surrender this drive for one day?

9. Let's practice Sabbath!! Plan for this. Choose a day. Dream of the things you hope to do. Remember, this day is a gift. It's a day to connect with and enjoy God! Put your phone somewhere hidden. Protect this day. Enjoy :)



Random quotes to discuss with yourself, God, a friend,
or the group you are reading with:

- "If at any point desire is no longer under our control and is instead driving our lives, we're in trouble" (144).
- Infinite desire - finite soul = restlessness (145)
- "When our innate human restlessness collides with the digital age, the result is a culture-wide crisis of emotional unhealthy and spiritual death" (147)
- God rested. (153)
- "I've had people laugh off the call to Sabbath with a terrible cliché: 'Yeah, well, the devil never takes a day off.' Ummm, last time I checked, the devil loses. Plus he's the *devil*." (154)
- "Shabbat means "to stop". But it can also be translated "to delight." It has this dual idea of stopping and also of joying in God and our lives in his world." (155)
- "When I Sabbath, I run each activity through this twin grid: Is this rest and worship?" (161)
- "Sabbath is a way to stay free and make sure you never get sucked back into slavery or, worse, become the slave driver yourself." (168)
- "Slow down long enough to enjoy life with God, who offers everything that materialism promises but can never deliver on - namely, contentment" (169)
- "A way of working from rest, not for rest, with nothing to prove. A way of bearing fruit from abiding, not ambition" (172)



"The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry" Week 4 - SIMPLICITY - Questions (pg. 177-217)

1. "Advertisement is propaganda...it is a multibillion dollar industry that is intentionally designed to lie to you - to get you to believe that if you will only buy this or that product, then you will be happy. Or at least happier" (186).
 - Think of a time (or multiple times) this has happened to you. Have you ever bought something, only to realize that it didn't actually make you happy? If we know the consumerism game will not fulfill us, what keeps us coming back for more?
2. "Whether you're into motorcycles, sneakers, or Japanese anime, most of us simply have too much stuff to enjoy like at a healthy, unhurried pace" (191)
 - Do you have time to enjoy what you have? How does this tie back to "hurry" for you?
3. Matthew 6:24 - "You cannot serve both God and money." "Notice, again, not a command. He didn't say, 'You shouldn't serve both God and money.' He said, 'You can't'" (193).
 - Reflect on how Jesus isn't teaching a list of "rules" but rather telling us the truth of reality. Then reflect on this truth from Matthew 6. It is impossible to serve both, so who are you serving?
4. "The goal isn't just to declutter your closet or garage but to declutter your life. To clear away the myriad of distractions that ratchet up our anxiety, feed us an endless stream of mind numbing drivel, and anesthetize us to what really matters" (201).
 - What are things in your life that are "anesthetizing" you to what really matters? What would it look like to remove those things?
5. Spend time with the twelve 'principles' that JMC gives us for simplicity on pages 205-213.
 - How do these resonate with your day to day life? Which ones can you implement today? Write them down as a reminder.
6. "What would Jesus do if he were me? If he had my gender, my career, my income, my relationship status? If he was born the same year as me? Lived in the same city as me? (214).
 - We have no excuse
7. Philippians 4:13 is about having the strength to be content (pg. 216)
 - Ask God for this strength. It will be counter cultural and counter to our 'flesh'. Get specific. What is an area of your life that you are discontent with?
8. Put it into practice! Come up with at least one goal this week to declutter some area of your life. For more ideas visit: <https://practictheway.org/practices/simplicity>



Random quotes to discuss with yourself, God, a friend,
or the group you are reading with:

- "If you're not on board with Jesus' view of money, it could be that you, like many Christians in the West... don't actually believe the gospel of the kingdom - the good news that the life you've always wanted is fully available to you right where you are through Jesus" (179).
- "The Gospel of America: "In a nutshell: the more you have, the happier you will be" (179).
- "We now get our meaning in life from what we consume." (180)
- "It's easy to forget that most advertising is a form of propaganda, one that plays not to our pre-frontal cortex but to a deeper, less logical part of us" (184).
- "We constantly make irrational decisions based on what he called our "unconscious drives" (similar to what the New Testament calls "the flesh") (185).
- Freud's Nephew, Edward Bernays' theory, "was that if the Nazis could manipulate people in wartime, then surely business owners and politicians could manipulate people in peacetime." (185).
- "The problem isn't stuff. It's that (1) we put no limit on stuff due to our insatiable human desire for more. And (2) we think we need all sorts of things to be happy when, in actuality, we need very few." (187)
- Affluenza - "It's like a disease promising to make us happy for \$49.99, while in fact it's a man in the shadows pulling our strings and stealing our money and, with it, our joy." (190)
- "Instead of spending money to get time, we opted for the reverse: we spend time to get money" (191).
- "We worry about what we worship. If you worship money, it will eat you alive." (197).
- "The world is constantly asking, 'How do I get more?' But the apprentice of Jesus is regularly found asking, 'How can I live with less?'" (209).



"The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry" Week 6 - SLOWING - Questions (pg. 219-244)

1. "Slow down your body, slow down your life... We're not just brains on legs. We're whole people. Holistic, integrated, complex and full of a dizzying amount of energy. So our apprenticeships to Jesus have to be whole-person endeavors. Mind and body." (222)
 - Take a moment to think about the word 'slow'. How does it make you feel?

2. JMC on not being able to actually come to a complete stop at stop signs: "maybe it's because I feel like I'm not driving fast enough, or even because I'm not enough... there's that disordered heart, right under the surface of my hurry" (224).
 - In our need to be constantly hurried, there is a disordered heart underneath. Think of one area of your life that you are hurried in. What might be underneath that? Ask God to reveal it to you.

3. "It's wise to regularly deny ourselves from getting what we want, whether through a practice as intense as fasting or as minor as picking the longest checkout line [at the store]" (226).
 - How might denying yourself contribute to slowing down and experiencing the presence of God?

5. "Turn your smart phone into a dumb phone" (226)
 - Look at the different ways you can make your smart phone less soul draining and addicting (226-227). Fiddle around with your phone and try [at least] ONE of them! (Gray scaling your phone will blow your mind!)

6. "Do not let your phone set your emotional equilibrium and your news feed set your view of the world..."let prayer set your emotional equilibrium and scripture set your view of the world. Begin your day in the spirit of God's presence and the truth of his scriptures" (228-229).
 - How is your phone setting your equilibrium? Is it the first thing you look at in the morning and how might that be shaping your view of the world each day?

6. JMC talks about how in managing email less frequently, he realized that, "most of it [gets] worked out -shockingly!- without you. And wow does that feel good." (231)
 - Does this feel good? Or do we like to feel needed/purposeful?" Examine your heart on this.

7. "Every...single...thing that we let into our minds will have an effect on our souls" (233).
 - Take some time thinking through the shows, movies, podcasts, etc, that you are letting into your mind. Be brave to think through how they are having an effect on your soul.

8. On page 240, JMC describes breathing prayers.

- Practice this prayer. Choose one positive thing from God to breathe in, and one negative thing you want to breathe out. Focus on that one particular flow, and do this for 5 full deep breaths. Write down your experience afterwards.



Random quotes to discuss with yourself, God, a friend,
or the group you are reading with:

- "Anti-rule people are often anti-schedule people; and anti schedule people frequently live in a way that is reactive, not proactive. As more passenger than driver, consumer than creator. Life happens to them, more that through them." (220)
- "We achieve inner peace when our schedules are aligned with our values" (220).
- "We're so addicted to the dopamine hit that is our phone that we literally can't just sit in our cars and listen to music or the news or pray or talk with our passengers. We have to reach for our phones..." (224).
- "75 percent of people sleep next to their phones and 90 percent of us check our phones immediately upon waking." (228)
- "If you fill your mind with fornication and wildly unrealistic portrayals of beauty, or romance or sex, or violence and the quest for revenge, or cynical secular sarcasm that we call 'humor,' or a parade of opulent wealth, or simple banality, what shape do you think that will give to your soul?" (233).
- "Our time is our lives, and our attention is the doorway to our hearts." (234)
- "Multitasking is just a sleight of hand for switching back and forth between a lot of different tasks so I can do them all poorly instead of doing one well" (234).
- "There's more to life than an increase in speed. Life is right under our noses, waiting to be enjoyed." (244).