



UNHURRIED

*An Invitation to Slow Down, Create Margin,
and Surrender Control to God*

SAMANTHA DECKER

MOODY PUBLISHERS
CHICAGO

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All emphasis in Scripture has been added.

Edited by Pamela Joy Pugh

Interior design: Brandi Davis

Cover design: Good Mood Design Co / Riley Moody

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ISBN: 978-0-8024-3327-5

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1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

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To my husband, Dustin,
and our children, Eli, Caden, Hudson, and Charlie.

God called me to slow down, and in many ways,
He used you to show me how.
Thank you for making me more like Jesus.
I love you . . . so much!

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PART ONE

THE PROBLEM OF
HURRY, CONTROL,
AND AN OVER-
PLANNED LIFE

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CHAPTER ONE

IN THE CHAOS

Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.”

HAGGAI 1:5–6 (NIV)

With tired eyes, sagging shoulders, and an aching lower back, I placed the computer on top of my seven-month pregnant belly and opened it. However, as soon as I started digging through the pile of unending work emails, my two-year-old screamed my name from the bathroom—which is never a good thing—the doorbell rang, and the oven timer beeped.

Rushed, I ran to get the one-sheet-pan-dinner out of the oven, motioned to my friend to come on in and drop off the sippy cup my son had left at her house the day before, and dashed to inspect the damage done to the bathroom (let’s just say toilet paper was everywhere).

Not only that, but as I looked around, I saw every toy tractor, truck, and train we owned lined up along our cherry-walnut chest

my Papa made me, loads of laundry overflowing, mail piled up on the counter, and a general state of mess. I was swimming in chaos.

Busy was the norm, and because it had become my norm, I wasn't stressed or overwhelmed. And yet, I wasn't present.

I had made my life hurried.

I spent most of my days jumping from one task to the next. I had become a master at marking off my to-do list, multitasking, and making plans obsessively.

As pastor and author Ben Stuart describes it in his book *Rest & War*, I felt like an octopus on roller skates¹—plenty of movement, just not necessarily forward; busy, but not productive.

That same fall evening, I walked down the worn pathway to the mailbox and my kind neighbor casually asked how things were going. I responded as I normally did: “Oh, I’m good, busy . . . but good.” Her response is what stuck with me. She said, “I don’t know how you do it all.”

Honestly, at that moment, her words felt like a badge of honor. They meant I was doing more than she was, that she was impressed with how much I could do, and in some way, I was achieving more. My ugly, selfish pride surged.

Later, I opened my Bible, planning to do my daily Bible reading I hadn't seemed to have time for earlier in the day. I opened to Haggai only to read this:

Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.”

Haggai 1:5–6 (NIV)

In the stillness of the night, the Lord's conviction came raining down as my sweet neighbor's words echoed in my mind.

"I don't know how you do it all."

Those few words weren't a badge of honor; they were a call to action. They were an indication my life was full of misplaced priorities. Like the people Haggai addressed, I was striving, but never satisfied. I was failing to do what God had called me to do and be who God had called me to be. My life was like a "purse with holes in it."²

In the book of Haggai, the temple was destroyed, and yet God's people focused on building their own houses and pursuing their own success instead of following the Lord's command to rebuild His temple. So often, we are like these Israelites. We pursue financial security, job success, do-it-all parenting, and endless pleasures over the commands and will of God.

What about you? Are you exhausted from planning and re-planning, and still feeling like you can't get it all done? Does it seem like you're constantly on the go, physically or mentally, and rest is unattainable? Have you traded peace, ease, and purpose for striving, achieving, and success?

The good news is God will meet us where we are and work within our schedules and circumstances if we let Him. This may involve replacing "good" things with the things God's calling us to do or looking for opportunities to say a sacred no when our plates are full.

However, the reality is "doing it all" and "being busy" is probably present in your life as well. We are encouraged and often even forced to be on the go. We say yes without thinking. We make plans to have plans and fail to set and maintain the boundaries we desperately need.

This book is about slowing down, creating space, and ultimately joining God in the work He is already doing.

As a result of this hurried and busy lifestyle, we sacrifice what we don't even realize we are sacrificing: the things that matter.

An article in the *New York Post* reported that American families get just 37 minutes of quality time together per day.³ Thirty-seven minutes. There are 1,440 minutes in a day. Our quality time comprises just a little over 2.5 percent. What are we doing with the other 97.5 percent?

Once the reality of this lifestyle began to soak in, I started asking God to show me what I was missing.

What did Scripture show me? What did the people far wiser and more experienced than me do to prevent this chaos? How could I slow down, eliminate the mess, and make time for the things that matter? The most basic answer I discovered was the need to lay aside my plans for the purposes of God. I needed to create margin.

This book is about slowing down, creating space, and ultimately joining God in the work He is already doing. It's a call to make small, moment-by-moment changes that have the potential to impact eternity. Above all, this book is written to give God glory: glory in my words and in my actions, and in the bigger story they tell.

This is the story of a God who knows how to rest. A God who has everything under control. A God who gave His only Son to save us from our sins and the bondage they bring. In Christ, there is freedom from striving, busyness, and hurry. But it requires surrender. Are you ready to take off these weights and follow Jesus with every area of your life?

The first three chapters of this book identify and break down the problem of hurry and control. When we pry our fingers off the objects we hold the tightest, we make room for God to heal, teach, and replace our idols with the things of God. Chapters 4 through 10 focus on the processes and tools we need to slow down. These chapters apply the truths found in God's Word as the remedy for

this epidemic of hurry. Finally, chapters 11 through 14 offer tried practices and applications for those who are committed to making a change. As we hunger for the purposes of God and take active steps toward inviting Him to direct our paths, we'll find that our pace will slow and our eyes will open. Soon our perspective will change.

Recently I stood in front of a traditional church pew and sang the old hymn "Be Thou My Vision." As I sang (not well, I may add), tears streamed down my face as the words became a prayer, a plea, and a confession of my inadequacy and Jesus' sufficiency. I knew in order to change my perspective, I needed Jesus to become my vision. Everything must filter through the lens of Christ: what I see and plan, even what I think.

Tradition tells us an Irish monk named Dallán Forgaill wrote this as a poem in the sixth century as he reflected on the faithfulness of St. Patrick, a missionary to Ireland in the fifth century. Many years later, in the early 1900s, Eleanor Hull versified the text into a hymn. The first verse of the hymn is this:

Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
naught be all else to me, save that Thou art.
Thou my best thought, by day or by night,
waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

For generations, followers of Jesus have recognized our deep need to see as Jesus sees and think as Jesus thinks. Forgaill, Hull, and countless other believers have pleaded with the Lord to guide their steps and light their path. The song ends in this way:

High King of heaven, my victory won,
may I reach heaven's joys, O bright heav'n's Sun!

**In Christ,
you have
everything
you need to
slow down.**

Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be my vision, O Ruler of all.⁴

Don't miss this. The victory is won! We serve and follow the High King, the Ruler of all. He was sufficient for the generations of believers who prayed this before you, and still is sufficient for you and me too.

So, before we get in too deep, know this: in Christ, you have everything you need to slow down. You have everything you need to rest and relinquish control and spend time with your King. Dive in, ask the Lord to be your vision, and trust in His sufficiency.

My prayer is this book challenges your pace, your priorities, and your plans, and shows you a God who wants you to abide with Him.

At the end of each chapter, you'll find a few questions for reflection and a verse to memorize. These questions are designed to help you pause and ask the Lord what it is He wants you to learn and apply to your life. They can be done individually or in community. The verse is intended to help you hide God's Word in your heart so you can better apply what you've learned. And if, like me, your tendency is to skip right over these and rush to the next thing (sound familiar?), my challenge to you is to use these questions and this verse to force yourself to slow down. You might be surprised at what God has for you!

In the Chaos

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. *Have you ever described your life as “busy”? What are some things that make it feel this way?*
2. *Does busyness feel like a good thing to you? Why or why not?*
3. *How does a hurried life affect your view of God?*

VERSE TO MEMORIZE

*Now this is what the LORD Almighty says:
“Give careful thought to your ways.”*

—HAGGAI 1:5 (NIV)

