

Purposeful Delays

Pastor Jeremy Peters

Mark 5:21-43 NLT

Jesus got into the boat again and went back to the other side of the lake, where a large crowd gathered around him on the shore. Then a leader of the local synagogue, whose name was Jairus, arrived. When he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet, pleading fervently with him. "My little daughter is dying," he said. "Please come and lay your hands on her; heal her so she can live." Jesus went with him, and all the people followed, crowding around him.

A woman in the crowd had suffered for twelve years with constant bleeding. She had suffered a great deal from many doctors, and over the years she had spent everything she had to pay them, but she had gotten no better. In fact, she had gotten worse. She had heard about Jesus, so she came up behind him through the crowd and touched his robe. For she thought to herself, "If I can just touch his robe, I will be healed." Immediately the bleeding stopped, and she could feel in her body that she had been healed of her terrible condition.

Jesus realized at once that healing power had gone out from him, so he turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my robe?" His disciples said to him, "Look at this crowd pressing around you. How can you ask, 'Who touched me?'" But he kept on looking around to see who had done it. Then the frightened woman, trembling at the realization of what had happened to her, came and fell to her knees in front of him and told him what she had done. And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace. Your suffering is over."

While he was still speaking to her, messengers arrived from the home of Jairus, the leader of the synagogue. They told him, "Your daughter is dead. There's no use troubling the Teacher now." But Jesus overheard them and said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid. Just have faith." Then Jesus stopped the crowd and wouldn't let anyone go with him except Peter, James, and John (the brother of James). When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw much commotion and weeping and wailing. He went inside and asked, "Why all this commotion and weeping? The child isn't dead; she's only asleep."

The crowd laughed at him. But he made them all leave, and he took the girl's father and mother and his three disciples into the room where the girl was lying. Holding her hand, he said to her, "Talitha kum," which means "Little girl, get up!" And the girl, who was twelve years old, immediately stood up and walked around! They were overwhelmed and totally amazed. Jesus gave them strict orders not to tell anyone what had happened, and then he told them to give her something to eat.

THE KINGDOM IN ACTION

March
24
2013

Delays provide accelerated opportunities for Spiritual Formation

Jairus

Suffering Woman

Delays reveal some of our true beliefs about God

Suffering Woman

Jairus

Jesus demonstrated that it is possible to live an unhurried life in the midst of extreme busyness.

Creating Unhurried Space

by Jan Johnson (www.janjohnson.org)

Purpose:

The writer of Proverbs understood that *"It is not good to . . . be hasty and miss the way"* (19:2). Likewise, the apostle Paul emphasized the importance of taking time to follow God's leading: *"So to make sure there will be no slipup.... I want you to have all the time you need to make this offering in your own way. I don't want anything forced or hurried at the last minute"* (2 Corinthians 9:5, TM). In a moment of Jesus' life when it would have been logical to have hurried (to heal Jairus's daughter), He instead took time not only to acknowledge the healing of the woman with the flow of blood but also to listen to her tell *"the whole truth"* (Mark 5:33).

Dallas Willard commented on the motives behind haste and rushing in his book 'The Great Omission.' He says,

Many well-meaning people . . . cannot succeed in being kind because they are too rushed to get things done. Haste has worry, fear, and anger as close associates; it is a deadly enemy of kindness, and hence of love. If this is our problem, we may be greatly helped by a day's retreat into solitude and silence, where we will discover that the world survives even though we are inactive. There we might prayerfully meditate to see clearly the damage done by our unkindness, and honestly compare it to what, if anything, is really gained by our hurry. We will come to understand that for the most part our hurry is really based upon pride, self-importance, fear, and lack of faith, and rarely upon the production of anything of true value for anyone.

Perhaps we will end up making plans to pray daily for the people with whom we deal regularly. Or we may resolve to ask associates for forgiveness for past injuries. Whatever comes of such prayerful reflection, we may be absolutely sure that our lives will never be the same, and that we will enjoy a far greater richness of God's reality in our lives. (The Great Omission, p. 29)

Exercise:

Let's try on an unhurried existence in some small measure. Develop a strategy, using the ideas below or others.

- First, ponder the above ideas, especially noting who is hurt by your hurry. Preferably, journal about this.
- Ask God to help you allocate a period of time during this month as an "Unhurried Space" or a "No Hurry Zone." You can designate a day or a morning or even an hour. Prepare for it by praying "for the people with whom you will be dealing."
- As you do this, ask God to help you relax. And enjoy. Notice everything around you and all the good people and things that fill your life.
- When you are tempted to hurry, notice what's going on inside you. Is there some pride (*I shouldn't have to wait!*), self-importance, fear, and lack of faith? Is your body tense? Are your teeth gritted? Please do not condemn yourself. Just notice this "no hurry zone" is NOT a "beating yourself up" zone.
- Afterward, journal or talk with your spiritual director about a) what it was like to live without hurry and b) what you noticed about what drives you to hurry.
- Thank God for this experiment.
- Repeat throughout the month as led . . . or not led.

Suggestions:

You may need to follow Dallas's suggestion of taking "a day's retreat into solitude and silence, where we will discover that the world survives even though we are inactive. There we might prayerfully meditate to see clearly the damage done by our unkindness, and honestly compare it to what, if anything, is really gained by our hurry."

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Purposeful Delays

Mark 5:21-43 NLT

- 1) What from this passage and Sunday's teaching stood out to you?
- 2) In this passage in Mark, we see that both Jairus and the suffering woman both experienced the (seeming) delay of Jesus (in reality, of course, He's right on time). Describe a time in your life where you experienced a season of delay, where Jesus seemed to be slow in responding to your situation (perhaps you're in one right now).
 - a) What emotions did you experience? (anger, anticipation, discouragement, peace, etc.)
 - b) What character traits in you were exposed during this time? (insecurity, faith, impatience, resolve in the Lord's provision, self-preoccupation, etc.)
 - c) How did you cooperate or resist the Holy Spirit's intention to make you more like Jesus?
- 3) As you reflect on your experience of delay, what did your response reveal about what you believe to be true about God's character (any possible misconceptions)?
- 4) On Sunday, Jeremy talked about the fact that Jesus is very purposeful in what, from our perspective, seem to be delays. Sometimes we are given insight at a later time as to what the purpose may have been, and sometimes not.

In his book *Walking with God*, John Eldredge writes: "When it comes to crises or events that really upset us, this I have learned: you can have God or you can have understanding. Sometimes you can have both. But if you *insist* on understanding, it often doesn't come. And that can create distance between you and God, because you're upset and demanding an explanation in order to move on, but the explanation isn't coming, and so you withdraw a bit from God and lose the grace that God is giving. He doesn't explain everything. But He always offers Himself" (p.81).

What is your reaction to Eldredge's perspective? Does it encourage you? Does it frustrate you? Have you ever noticed delays resulting in you withdrawing from God instead of pressing in deeper? If God is always offering Himself to us, do you think that can truly be enough? (ie. if you don't find out the 'why', is the 'Who' enough?)

- 5) Review the spiritual practice on 'Creating Unhurried Space.' Talk about your own experience with hurry. Do you think it's possible to be busy and yet unhurried? What might that look like? What steps could you take to begin to retrain yourself around a still and unhurried way of life?