

Life in the fast lane . . .

We are living life at a dizzying speed, and God is nowhere to be found. We're not rejecting God; we just don't have time for him. We've lost him in the blurred landscape as we rush by on our way to church. We don't struggle with the Bible, *but with the clock*. It's not that we're too decadent, *we're too busy*. We don't feel guilty because of sin, but because we have no time for our spouse, our children or our God. It's not sinning too much that's killing our souls, *it's our schedule that's annihilating us*. Most of us don't come home at night staggering drunk. Instead, we come home staggering tired, worn out, exhausted and drained *because we live too fast*.

Speed is not a sin, but neither is it neutral. Fast living used to mean a life of debauchery; now it just means fast -*but the consequences are even more serious*. Speeding through life endangers our relationships *and* our souls.

Voices surround us, always telling us to move faster. It may be our boss, our pastor, our parents, our wife, our husband, our politicians or, sadly, even ourselves. So we comply. We increase the speed. We live life in the fast lane because *we have no slow lanes any more*. Every lane is fast, and the only comfort our culture can offer is more lanes and increased speed limits. The result? Too many of us are running as fast as we can, and an alarming number of us are running *much faster* than we can sustain.

Speed damages our souls because living fast consumes every ounce of our energy. Speed has a deafening roar that drowns out the *whispering voices of our souls* and leaves Jesus as a diminishing speck in the rear view mirror of our lives.

Spiritual growth is not 'running faster', as in more meetings, more Bible studies and more prayer meetings. Spiritual growth happens when we *slow* our activity down, not when we increase it. If we want to meet Jesus, we can't do it on the run. If we want to stay on the road of faith, we have to hit the brakes, pull over to a rest area and stop. Christianity is not about inviting Jesus to speed through life with us; it's about noticing Jesus sitting at the rest stop.

While the church earnestly warns its congregation to watch for the devil, the devil is sitting in the congregation encouraging everyone to keep busy doing 'good things'. I've just received a letter from a woman minister who was on the edge of crashing and burning. She and her family joined a growing, active church, and quickly volunteered to help. But two years later, she realised that her entire family were speeding by each other in unrestrained zeal to one activity or another at church every week. *Run faster!*' this woman's church newsletter screamed.

Sin does not always drive us to drink; more often it drives us to *exhaustion*. *Tiredness is equally as debilitating as drunkenness*. 'Burn-out' is slang for an *inner* tiredness, a fatigue of our souls. Jesus came to forgive us all our sins, including the sin of busyness. The problem with growth in the modern church is not the *slowness* of growth, but the *rushing* of growth.

He came to give us rest. We know when we are ready for God to work in our lives when we're *tired*. When the weight of our lives begins to weigh us down, God is present *in the heaviness*. It turns out that weariness *is* next to godliness -because when our souls are tired we are able to hear his voice and, according to Matthew 11 :31, what he's saying is, 'Come. Rest.'

The ugly truth, however, is that many of us *do not know how to rest!*

Actually, we do know how to rest, we simply refuse to *choose* rest. Rest is a *decision* we make. Rest is *choosing* to do nothing when we have too much to do, *slowing* down when we feel pressure to go faster, stopping instead of starting. *Rest is listening to our weariness and responding to our tiredness*, not to what is making us tired. Rest is the result of the humiliating recognition that we are not necessary.

Rest is what happens when we say one simple word: 'No!' Rest is the ultimate humiliation, because in order to rest we must admit we are not *necessary*, that the world can get along without us, that God's work does not depend on us. Once we understand how unnecessary we are, only then might we find the right reasons to say yes. Only then might we find the right reasons to decide to be with Jesus instead of working for him. Only then might we have the courage to take a nap with Jesus.

From Messy Spirituality, Christianity for the rest of us, Mike Yaconelli.
Available from www.amazon.co.uk second-hand for around £2.00.