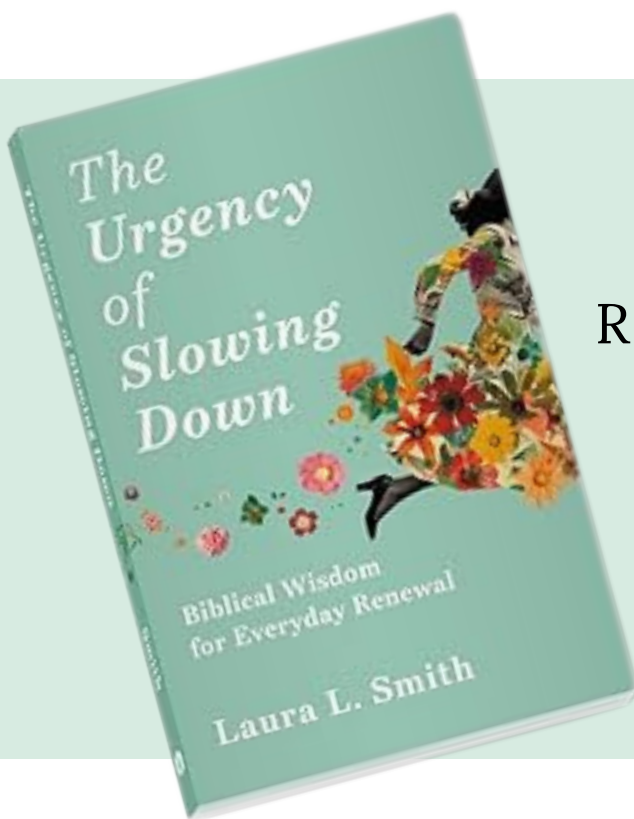


THE URGENCY OF SLOWING DOWN

BIBLICAL WISDOM FOR EVERYDAY RENEWAL
BY LAURA L. SMITH



READ THE FIRST
CHAPTER FOR
FREE!

WWW.LAURASMITHAUTHOR.COM

Chapter One

On Running: Fast and Slow Rhythms

I'm a runner.

Actually, I *was* a runner until my left knee got mad at me a few years ago. Tightening up. Aching when I'd get out of a chair. Then it got downright angry. Buckling during a run, refusing to jog another step. I finally went to see an orthopedic doctor, hoping he could snap his fingers and let me run again. Apparently not.

The doctor sent me to get an MRI. The diagnosis was something about the cartilage in my knee rubbing against my kneecap. I landed in physical therapy, where I learned some exercises designed to prevent future injuries and my knee had time to rest and heal. Then I tentatively tried to run again. One mile one day. Two miles a few days later. And I learned through trial and error that I *can* run if

I take every other day off;

I stretch daily; and

I wear an ugly black knee brace when my knee feels wonky.

Now I'm a runner *and* a walker.

It took an injury to teach me to slow my pace.

I run a day and then walk a day, back and forth, run then walk, fast then slow, which sometimes makes me feel creaky. But it's what my body demands. I can't run two days in a row without consequences.

The same holds true for our lives: we can't run constantly without paying the price.

You and I were created to do and make things for God's kingdom. The apostle Paul said, "I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received" (Ephesians 4:1). *The Message* version of that verse reads, "I want you to get out there and walk—*better yet, run!*—on the road God called you to travel" (emphasis added).

I get excited when I read that. I want to get out there and run. Do the things, meet the people, live out the calling God has put on my life, ask the questions, write the words. This instruction is good instruction.

But some days we need to walk.

Because we were also created to reduce our speed every now and then, to pause before and after all the places we're going and things we're doing. This isn't just for my knee. This applies to everything in our lives. My knee knows when I haven't taken time to slow down. Similarly, our souls know when we shortcut taking breaks in our schedules, when we ignore stillness. We get edgy and grumpy and exhausted. We feel the stress boiling up in us like a pot of pasta left on high too long. If we don't turn down the burner, we're going to boil over and make a mess of things.

Our culture calls us to be runners. To run every day in our work, relationships, volunteering, and commitments without resting or allowing time to stretch. The world encourages us to work a side hustle, be more productive, and achieve higher goals. And, yes, there is great work to be done. No question.

Still, Jesus frequently took time to get away from the crowds, from the busyness of His ministry, from His preaching, healings, and miracles (all excellent things), and He invites us to do the same. "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” (Matthew 11:28–30).

Are you weary? Are you burdened by anything?

Jesus offers rest.

Yes, God calls us from the very beginning of time to do good work (Genesis 1:28). But Jesus says His work? His yoke? It’s easy. The work He calls us to isn’t heavy or exhausting; it’s light.

How can that be?

How can we do great things for God’s kingdom, use the talents He’s given us, pursue the passions He’s put inside us, care for the people He’s placed in our lives, and tend to all the urgent requests for our time and still end up rested?

Jesus tells us this can happen if we’re willing to learn from His gentle and humble heart. From the rhythms of work and rest, go and slow, that He created and modeled. When we don’t follow these rhythms, when we skip the slowdown part of the cadence, we end up injured, depleted, anxious, or unable to do what God calls us to next. We also miss out on the beauty and refueling the stillness provides.

I look forward to my running days now more than ever, because I have a new appreciation for how precious they are. I put in my earbuds and go. I sweat out toxins from my body and mind as I pound my feet on the pavement or trail and process with God. I get my heart pumping and endorphins flowing, so grateful that I’m able to run. I cover more ground and I cover it faster than on walking days. I finish my workout with a sense of accomplishment, alert and focused.

But I’ve also come to look forward to the non-running days.

On walking days, I slow down. I notice the sunlight filtering through leaves. I breathe in and out. Walks are easier to schedule. I can walk a little in the morning and a little more after dinner.

Often I'll recruit my husband, a friend, or one of our kids to join me. It's the perfect time to talk and share. That's harder on a run, because not all my people run, and the ones who do don't necessarily run the same mileage or pace as me. There's something therapeutic about the slow down, about talking while outside, surrounded by God's creation. About sharing lives shoulder to shoulder—in this together, moving forward.

And the stretching. Yikes! I feel it the next day if I don't pay enough attention to this step both before and after moving. If I'm trying to fit in a run before a meeting or return from a walk knowing it's time to start prepping dinner, it seems more convenient to skip the stretching or maybe just zip through it. But those couple of minutes of intentional slowdown are game changers for how my body functions. Like taking a moment to pause and praise God for something grand that just happened or asking for His help before moving into the next conversation or task of the day. These cadences are so important—the slow and the go, back and forth, rest and work, sleep and wake, move and be still.

Jesus invites us, “Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace” (Matthew 11:28–29 MSG).

Yes, please. Unforced rhythms of grace sound incredible.

We can have them if we want.

We get to choose.

To stay in the fast lane and try to do all the things on our own. To risk burnout or heartburn or burned-up resources, dollars, or relationships. Or to release the achievements, goals, and speed in which we get it all done to Jesus. Trusting that He knows what's best. That He *wants* what's best for you and me, His beloved children.

Our busy seasons of go, go, go can be exhilarating and productive. But they need to be balanced with relaxing afternoons and lingering dinners or a morning when we sleep in. We need the fast and the slow. It's the contrast that highlights the benefits of both.

Busyness beckons. We tend to ignore the stiffness in our souls, the aches in our hearts that are calling us to slow down. We just keep going and going until we buckle. But we don't have to.

I like that Jesus says "walk with me," not "run with me," in Matthew 11. Jesus is on the move, just at a slower pace than the world might tell us we need to go. Which will you choose? The fast lane or the easy yoke?

Slow Down

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.

(Matthew 11:28-30)

In what areas of your life do you feel you're running too fast?

How does this idea of slowing down make you feel?

What's currently keeping you from slowing down your pace?

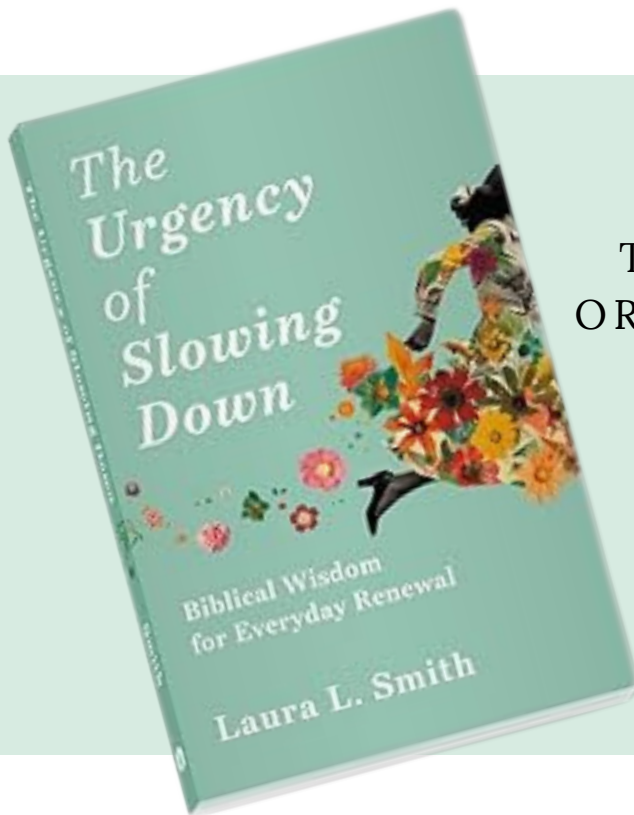
FIND REST AWAY FROM THE MERRY-GO-ROUND OF LIFE.

GRAB YOUR COPY

What if instead of filling our heads
with worry about our metrics,
we fully believe that God loves us?

God, who invented the world and work and us,
didn't intend for us to burn the candle at both ends.

He won't force us to turn down the volume,
but He has goodness waiting for us
in the quiet.



TO KEEP READING,
ORDER YOUR COPY OF
THE URGENCY OF
SLOWING DOWN
HERE.

[HTTPS://AMZN.TO/4GI98KG](https://amzn.to/4GI98KG)

WWW.LAURASMITHAUTHOR.COM