

Coach House Church BEACONS

JESUS WALKED

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I'm an early bird. Always have been, always will be. Never like people having to wait for me. Have you ever sat at a restaurant, or at the coffee shop, all by yourself at a table for two, waiting for that other person who is late to arrive? How uneasy do you feel? How agitated, even frustrated? How quickly do you reach for your phone to quickly "make the most" (you think) of the spare moments?

But what if you saw those unsettling, unplanned moments as a gift? A gift to finally stop and observe the world around you. A gift to slow down your breathing and heart rate. A gift to reawaken your soul to God's three-dimensional world rather than plunge mindlessly back into the matrix of a two-dimensional screen? What would it feel like, when the guest you were waiting finally arrives and you say "Please — don't apologise. In fact, you know what, thank you for being late!" Because your guest was late . . . you had time for myself. You had "found" a few minutes to just sit and think. Even eavesdropping on the couple at the next table and people-watching the lobby (outrageous!). And, most important, in the pause, connecting with a couple of ideas I had been struggling with for days. So no apology was necessary.

We are living in "the age of increasing speed," and one gift many of us need, among others, is "permission to just slow down." If I honestly evaluate my life, I often feel pressed to hurry. Too much to do; gotta hurry. Hurry in the morning. Hurry on the road. Hurry at work. Hurry between meetings and in meetings and over meals. Hurry to get dinner ready. Hurry to eat. Hurry to get the kids to clean up, and out the door, and to bed. Then, hurry to do more on evenings and weekends than I realistically have time for. Then hurry to bed. Get too little sleep. Then wake up again the next day and run the gauntlet of hurry over and over again. Anyone else ever feel like life has become more hurried than it used to be?

But what Is Hurry Doing to Our Souls?

Someone once wrote "Hurry is the great enemy of spiritual life. You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life." The problem isn't when we have a lot to do; it's when we have too much to do and the only way to keep the quota up is to hurry.

How does our hurry affect our love for others, and lack thereof?

Galatians 5, 13–25.

You were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

Love serves others.

There are three main uses of "love" in Paul's letters. First is God's love (and Christ's love) for us. Second is our love for God. Third, far and away most often, is our love for fellow humans. Paul's use of the word "love" are about 115 in total.

Of those, a little over 20 refer to God's love for us, about 5 or 6 refer to our love for God, and almost 90 refer to our love for fellow humans.

So, our love — our serving others — completes what God requires, which begins in his love for us, and our faith toward him.

Love for others comes from faith in Christ.

Christian love is not simply love for love's sake. Christian love for others is an extension of our love for God. Or, to use Paul's summary Godward term, love for others issues from faith in Christ. Paul says in Galatians 5:6 that what counts is "faith working through love."

Genuine love for others begins with faith in Christ. Or, we could say, faith in Christ (in us) is the channel through which genuine love (for others) flows.

Faith in Christ is soul-satisfying and freeing. Faith delights and rests in Christ, liberates us from the prison of self, and prompts us to expand that joy by drawing others in through acts of love.

So, the way that love, as serving others, happens, is we need to confess our sins, repent and trust in God through Christ (faith), and that faith is not mutually exclusive with God's Spirit, but produced and sustained by God's Spirit, and our affections and actions of love are inspired and empowered by the Spirit.

God calls us to move at the pace of his Spirit.

What struck me is we are called to adjust our lives to the Spirit, not presume that he will adjust to ours.

Think of Jesus's life. He was not idle. And he was not frenzied. He walked. And he walked. And he walked. From all we can tell from the Gospels, Jesus's days were full. I think it would be fair to say he was busy, but he was not frenzied. His days were full, and yet he did not seem to be in a hurry. He moved at the pace of love. And don't we all want to be like that?

But our hope is far greater than simply synching up with Jesus's perfect pace. And keeping in step with his Spirit. Even if we were to get the pace down, we all know we can't love like we ought. Not even close. Which is why it's such good news that love is the fruit of the Spirit. Not the fruit of our flesh. Not the fruit of our strength. Love is produced by the Spirit through us. Not apart from us. Our fruit of love happens in and through us, by the power of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit not only produces the fruit of love in and through us, but he also pours God's love into our hearts (Romans 5:5). Bearing fruit, by the Spirit, is not first and foremost for us in Christ. First, we are "rooted and grounded in love" (Ephesians 3:17) — that is, Christ's love for us (Ephesians 3:19).

It is good news that our root is not ourselves, but Christ. And our fruit of love and doing good, engaged as we are in the process, is not our own, but the working and power of God's Spirit.



JAMIE BAKER



Coach House Church

leadership@coachhousechurch.org // 0161 432 5604

the coach house church, 222 wellington road north, stockport sk4 2qn