

Slow Down; Series: Trees

John 15:1-17

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The Book of Our Old Self, Chapter 15



I am my own tree – from the roots, all the way to the tippy top of my branches..

I don't need your cleaning.

I definitely don't need your pruning and I bear my fruit all by myself.

I keep track of all my fruits and all my branches.

All of them have been grown apart from any help from anyone else
and nothing is destined for the fire.

I am a law unto myself, I love myself, and I find my deepest pleasure within myself.

The words in me are my own and I live for my own glory.

I don't need friends.

I don't need a Father.

I don't need a Teacher.

I don't need a gardener.

I don't lay down my life because, um, then I wouldn't have a life.

I choose what's right for me and whatever I have, I have chosen.

Whatever I have, I have earned.

This is my own word.

Thanks be to me.

I would like to say that this is far from the truth – that I don't live like this, but this is far too often far too close to the way that I live my life. And perhaps it is far too often the way that you live your life. We live our lives *as if* we are on our own, supplying our own needs, deserving of all we have.

And you know what? You can function like this. You can function like this your whole life and you can accomplish a lot like this. For those of you who are living like this, I am not going to tell you that you're not doing anything because you are doing things. Even some very good things. For those of you who are living like this, I am not going to tell you that just-you-wait-and-see, you're going to burn out and fall flat. Because you might not. You might live your four score and 10 years just like this and do ... fine. You'll just keep go-go-going and grow-grow-growing as much as you can go and grow. And you may even find yourself impressed with your own going and growing... and others might even be impressed with you, because it seems like you're always going and growing and never stopping.

I read an article¹ a couple of months ago that has stayed with me that reminds me of the Book of My Old Self, chapter 15. It talked about the difference between regular athletes and elite athletes. Regular athletes work out at about the same intensity level all the time. The better the athlete, perhaps, the harder they go and the harder they push themselves. Elite athletes, on the other hand, are able to discipline their intensity – going really easy for most of their workouts, and then for 1 in 5 workouts, just crushing it. They are able to reach and surpass fitness goals over and over and be the top in their sports because they know how to discipline their intensity.

This is extremely difficult to do. So difficult that athletes who think they are doing it, can't do it. A study was done of college runners and they were told for a particular cluster of workouts to go at an easy intensity level of 1.5 (on a scale of 0 to 10). They went at a 3.4, on average. Then they were told to do high intensity running – 8.2. They could only go 6.2. They didn't have the energy to go at the higher level because they had not rested their bodies when they were told to rest.

¹ https://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/health-and-fitness/article-the-surprising-science-behind-why-easy-days-and-hard-days-make-a/?utm_medium=Referrer:+Social+Network+//+Media&utm_campaign=Shared+Web+Article+Links

This article has done nothing to change my workouts. I probably go between a 4 and a 6 in intensity... tiny window... working harder by adding distance, not intensity. I'm okay with that...

But, I am applying this article to my understanding of what God is calling me to right now when it comes to the pace of my life, when it comes to the way I've been living according to the Book of My Old Self, chapter 15.

Left to my own preferences, I will just keep on going between the intensity levels of 4 and 6 – working, working, working, going, going, going, growing, growing pretty hard. All the time.

And maybe you're like me in that. You go-go-go. From appointment to appointment, assignment to assignment, list to list, sunrise to sunset, week to week.

What if you took it down to a 1.5? And by a 1.5, I don't mean watch more Netflix, surf more Facebook... In my transfer of this wisdom in this article to my life pace with God, a 1.5 means The Gospel of John, chapter 15 [John 15:1-17 read at this time]



A 1.5 means that I am going slowly enough on a regular basis to focus in on my deep rootedness in Jesus Christ. That rootedness is always there, but when I am constantly moving at a 5.7 speed, I don't have the time to be aware of it. But when I am aware of it, in that awareness of my deep rootedness, there will be prayer, there will be meditation on Jesus' word, there will be silence and solitude, there will be a growing awareness of the things in my life that need to be cut away and pruned, and most importantly there will be time to love

people in a slow way. Because love is slow. Love takes time. I mean, when do you feel most loved? Have you ever been loved in a speedy way? Though only one of the '5 love languages' is quality time, all the other love languages [acts of service, words of encouragements, physical touch, gifts]... take time.

Dallas Willard said, "Hurry is the great enemy of spiritual life in our day. You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life."

Martin Laird, "God is the ground of our innermost being, yet we skim along on the surface of life" (Into the Silent Land, p. 28).

Eliminate hurry... slow down. There will be times of intense work, but you will have the energy for them when you are mindful of your rootedness in Christ, which is something you can best recognize when you slow down... whether that slow down comes through intentional putting on the brakes, or whether that slow down comes to you because circumstances have slowed you down.

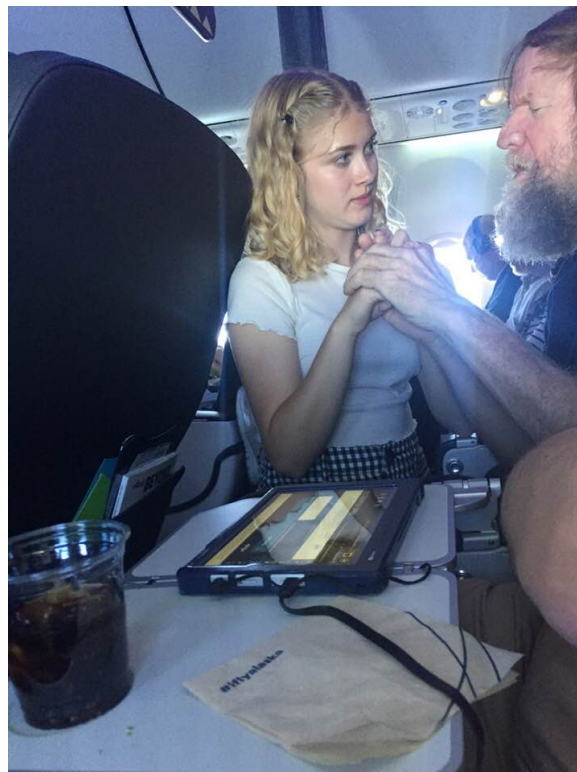
I want to make sure that these numbers that I've used today don't throw you for a loop. We don't literally live our spiritual lives on a scale of 1 to 10. We can't quantify the intensity of our life with God in the same way we can quantify our workouts. There are no direct parallels between calories burned and sins forgiven – between kilometers cycled and verses of scripture memorized – between cross training in the gym and cross training with different spiritual disciplines. And there is definitely a break down of this metaphor when I talked about regular athletes and elite athletes. We don't categorize disciples as regular disciples and elite disciples.

I simply want to say that our capacity to grow fruitfully, abundantly with God along the lines of the ways that he has crafted us deepens the more we live into our rootedness in Jesus, submitting ourselves to his ways and drawing our strength from him. And recognizing and living into our rootedness happens in a lot of ways, but it certainly happens when we slow down or are slowed down.

Airports are hurried places of lots of stress... and so are airplanes. I was in a number of airports and on a number of airplanes this past month. On our way out to Colorado, we had lots of delays which made us feel like we were rushing and staying still at the same time... and on

our way back, we had only just enough time to get from one thing to the next, so we were hurrying a lot... so perhaps that's why this final story struck me.

So, a woman named Lynette shared this story on facebook²... that she saw a man at Boston Logan airport, who appeared to be both deaf and blind. (She later learned his named was Tim.) Before Tim went through security, he was with his sister who was helping him, and she was signing into his hands, so that he could feel the words. (This is very Helen Keller). Lynette said that Tim ended up being assigned the middle seat in her row. She was on the window seat... The man in their row on the aisle seat (Eric), seeing that it would be more convenient for Tim to be on the aisle, switched with him. The woman watched as Eric helped him with his coffee, assisting him to get to the washroom... and she watched the flight attendants work so hard to communicate with Tim, letting him touch their faces and hands to try to understand. At one point, Eric asked the flight attendants to page the plane to see if there was anyone who knew ASL... and sure enough, here is Clara.



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<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=2089627184639065&set=a.1421819954753128.1073741828.100007754111179&type=3&theater>

A 15 year old girl who was learning ASL in high school because she had dyslexia and it was an easier foreign language for her to learn than anything else. And Clara spent time in the aisle here with Tim, fingerspelling words into Tim's hands... carrying on an animated conversation. Tim speaking. Clara fingerspelling back. Lynette said that all the people in the rows surrounding hers were turned toward one another, laughing and smiling and enjoying the delight that Tim was experiencing in having this connection with those around him and especially with Clara.

That Alaska Airlines commercial jet may have been flying at 500 mph, but I can see roots growing down to the water and leaves growing up to the sunshine and fruit as a sign fo God's life in that plane. This is a story of SLOW LOVE.

As the Father loved Jesus, so Jesus has loved us. Remain in that love. Abide in it. Make your home in it. Love from out of the nourishment of it.

And your joy, your delight and God's joy and God's delight will be complete.