An Unhurried Life: Rest Before Work

Alan Fadling on Jesus' Unhurried Love, Meaningful Rest, and Living From God's Presence

Alan Fadling | Wednesday, October 21, 2026 | Host: Mark Burns | Archive: June 2013

Program Summary

In this second part of a June 2013 archival interview, Mark Burns continues his conversation with Alan Fadling, author of An Unhurried Life: Following Jesus' Rhythms of Work and Rest. Alan explains that unhurried living is not laziness: Jesus was deeply fruitful while remaining attentive to the Father and to people along the way. He observes that hurry can cause us to miss unexpected opportunities to care for others, and he points to the Good Samaritan as an illustration of love that takes time. The conversation examines how busyness can become a substitute for identity, how Jesus withdrew to pray, and how His wilderness testing followed the Father's declaration of love at His baptism. Alan also reverses the familiar work-then-rest equation: in Genesis, humanity's first full day was a day of rest, so meaningful work flows out of communion with God rather than establishing our worth. The interview ends with a gentle invitation to begin exactly where we are and ask Jesus to teach us His own rhythm.

Key Takeaways

• An unhurried life is not an inactive life; Jesus modeled purposeful, fruitful work without frantic striving.

• Hurry can cause me to miss people and opportunities God places along the journey.

• The Good Samaritan illustrates love that is willing to stop, care, stay, and follow through.

• Being busy does not necessarily mean being spiritually fruitful.

• Busyness can become a subtle way of proving importance or worth to other people.

• My identity as God's beloved is established in relationship with Him, not in accomplishments or reputation.

• Jesus often withdrew to lonely places to pray, even while His public ministry was active.

• Jesus' wilderness testing followed His baptism and the Father's affirmation of His beloved Son.

• Rest is not merely recovery so I can work harder; it is a gift and a place of communion with God.

• In the creation account, the first full day experienced by humanity is a day of rest.

• Good work can flow from rest, gratitude, and attentiveness to God rather than exhaustion.

• I can begin cultivating an unhurried heart exactly where I am by asking Jesus for one simple next step.

Scripture References

• Matthew 11:28–30

• Luke 5:16

• Luke 4:1–13

• Luke 10:25–37

• Genesis 1:26–2:3

• Mark 1:9–13

• Ephesians 2:10

• Psalm 62:1–2

• John 15:4–5

Quote of the Day

“Love doesn’t work on technology speed. Love has its own pace.” — Alan Fadling

Broadcast Notes

Mark introduces the program as the conclusion of an interview from June 2013 and revisits Alan’s description of himself as a recovering speed addict. Alan contrasts our culture’s negative view of slowness with Jesus’ unhurried fruitfulness. Mark reads a question from the book about simplifying life to walk more closely with Christ, then shares how unresolved tasks compete for his attention even during prayer. Alan explains that Jesus was unhurried enough to notice people whom the disciples might have hurried past. He contrasts activity with eternal fruitfulness and notes that saying 'busy' can simultaneously express frustration and signal importance. The conversation then considers the Father’s declaration at Jesus’ baptism, His wilderness testing, and His regular practice of withdrawing to pray. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the Samaritan stops, tends the wounded man, arranges lodging, pays, and plans to return—demonstrating love’s slower pace. The closing portion reconsiders work and rest: rather than working until collapse, believers can begin from restful communion with God. Alan illustrates this with a lengthy planning meeting punctuated by pauses for Scripture and gratitude, and closes by encouraging listeners to tell Jesus their desire for a less hurried life and ask for one concrete next step. References to Alan’s ministry, family, and book availability reflect the 2013 recording.

❤■ Practical Applications

• Before beginning work, spend a few minutes resting in God’s presence without an agenda.

• Ask whether I am measuring my worth by productivity, possessions, or the approval of others.

• Leave a little margin between commitments so I can respond to a person who needs care.

• Read Luke 10:25–37 and identify one way I can practice the Good Samaritan’s unhurried love.

• When I say 'I’m busy,' ask whether that statement has become part of my identity.

• Notice one person today whom my schedule might otherwise cause me to overlook.

• Step away briefly during demanding work to pray, recall a Scripture, or give thanks.

• Make rest an intentional rhythm rather than waiting until I am exhausted.

• Ask Jesus which unnecessary commitment, distraction, or expectation I might simplify.

• Begin where I am and take one modest, sustainable step toward an unhurried heart.

Today's Challenge

For seven days, practice a rhythm of 'Rest, Notice, Respond.' Rest: begin with ten quiet minutes in Scripture or prayer before plunging into the day’s demands. Notice: leave one small opening in the schedule and pay attention to someone God places along the way. Respond: offer a concrete act of care without rushing. Each evening ask, 'Did I work from a place of rest today, or did I try to earn my worth through work?'

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for inviting me to come to Jesus when I am weary and burdened. Forgive me when I measure my worth by how much I accomplish or how busy I appear. Teach me to hear Your love before I rush into the day. Help me rest in Your presence, work faithfully from that place of rest, and remain attentive to the people You place along my path. Give me the willingness to stop, listen, and care when love requires more time than I planned. Show me one unnecessary burden I can release and one simple rhythm I can begin. I want to follow Jesus not only in what I do, but also in how I live and love. In His name, Amen.

About Today's Speaker

Alan Fadling is a Christian author and spiritual formation teacher whose book An Unhurried Life: Following Jesus' Rhythms of Work and Rest explores how believers can live and serve from a deeper relationship with God. In this June 2013 archival conversation, Alan discusses spiritual direction, solitude, silence, and the connection between unhurried prayer and fruitful leadership. Details about his roles and ministry affiliations in the original interview reflect that historical period.

About Today's Host

Mark Burns is General Manager of the WLUJ Family of Stations and Great News Radio Network and host of Mark & Friends. With decades of experience in Christian radio and ministry, he brings pastors, teachers, authors, and other guests into conversations intended to educate, edify, and evangelize. This program revisits his original June 2013 interview with Alan Fadling.

Proofread Broadcast Transcript

We're glad you're here. We're glad you're here. Fellowship is sweeter.

knowing you're near. It's so good to see you. we hope that it's clear.

Everyone loves you. We're glad you're here. Reading from Matthew 11, verse 28.

Jesus said, Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. That was Matthew 11, verse 28. Oh, magnify the Lord with me.

Let us exalt his name together. It's Wednesday, October 21st, 2026, and welcome to Mark & Friends. Today we're continuing a special conversation from our June 2013 archives with author Alan Fadling and his book, An Unhurried Life.

Yesterday we considered how hurry can crowd out our time with God and how our worth isn't measured by how much we accomplish. Today Alan takes us further, showing how Jesus modeled an unhurried life, why meaningful rest matters, and how slowing down can help us recognize opportunities to love and serve others. And listening friend, if you missed yesterday's program, you'll find it along with the transcript and additional ministry resources under the Mark & Friends tab at greatnewsradio.org or wluj.org. Now let's continue with this conversation with Alan Fadling.

So hurry rushes towards the destination and fails to enjoy the journey. Can I get a testimony, Alan? Well, when I start the book saying I'm a recovering speed addict, I emphasize the recovering. I am certainly not writing this book as someone who's arrived and I find this easy.

It is a continual challenge. And here's another place where my wife, Jim, helps me so much. This is how she lives.

She enjoys the journey. She's not in a big hurry to reach the destination like I am. But what I find is that in my hurry, you know, I end up running past so many good things that I think God's prepared in advance for me.

And I've got my agenda and I'm rushing to put it together and get it done as fast as I can. And I think I'm missing out on a lot of opportunities as a result. There's so many things about your book, as I mentioned yesterday.

And if you missed the interview, it is archived at greatnewsradio.org under our Archive Programs link. The helpful questions you ask at the end of each chapter, your unhurried time, and you have us kind of think through something that we learned through that chapter or a way that we can apply it or some steps to take. So I so appreciate that because it sometimes seems that if we slow down, we can be viewed as being lazy.

Talk about that a little. Well, you know, in the beginning of the book, I talked about living in a culture that values hurry. And it's just embedded in the way we think.

If you plug the word slow into your dictionary, like your Microsoft Word dictionary, the meanings that pop up are almost all negative in tone, like sluggish and time-consuming and even stupid. So who wants to be those things? You know, I think the idea that we might be unhurried and that that might actually be a good way to live, that it might actually be a way of following Jesus, that actually it might surprise us as a more productive way to live. I mean, for example, if Jesus is actually unhurried, at least this is his way of life, the heart that he has, nobody's going to argue that Jesus is lazy.

Nobody can read the pages of the Gospel and say, you know, Jesus sat around in a lazy boy watching, you know, ESPN or something. He lived in those three years of active ministry. My goodness, he produced more than I may produce in my whole life.

And so I want to make a connection between being unhurried and living fruitfully. I don't think necessarily everything we do in our busy, hurried way is necessarily as eternally fruitful as we'd like it to be. I know in your second chapter, entitled, An Unhurried Apprentice, I gave three asterisks to the question at the end of the chapter, and I mentioned this on yesterday's program.

I have Post-it notes throughout this book, a lot of things underlined, one, two, and three asterisks. And this was a three asterisk, which is like apply, share, talk about, think through, tell other friends. But it says, what opportunities to simplify your life might Jesus be inviting you to consider so that you can walk more closely with him and share the riches of that journey with other like-minded Christ followers? And I'm like, oh, Lord, I just need to keep reading this book, thinking about it.

And reading the book and thinking about it, really, it's helping engage me with God. I mean, I appreciate your words and think they're somewhat inspired because you spend time praying and talking with God. But as I connect with your book and your words, I connect with God.

And I've been unhurried in many new ways as I just kind of think through thoughts and say, Lord, you know, what opportunities can I take to simplify, to slow down, to spend quality time with you? Because I'm one that I get a lot of things swirling in my brain. And unless I get closure, they're lodged in there. And unless I get them resolved, they're in there along with all these other new things.

And what I find is they compete with my attention with God. Even when I pray, I'm still thinking about those things. And it's like, Lord, help me sort through those things so that when I spend this quality time with you, not only is it unhurried, but it's productive and it's restful.

Yeah, I think it's possible that we might find that in following Jesus, we could be unhurried as he is in the pages of the Gospel, unhurried enough to care for the person who crosses our path. You know, think of how many times they're on their way somewhere, at least that's what Jesus said, and the disciples are trying to push him along because we've got an agenda, and Jesus will stop and frustrate those poor twelve and care for the person there on the side of the road or at the gate or whoever it was, that he was unhurried enough to care. And he seemed to be aware of the opportunities that were coming across his path, in a sense the work that the Father was wanting to do through him along the way.

And I find that in my hurry, I'm not as aware of those opportunities as they come. And we talk sometimes about divine appointments, and many of us have had such experiences. Something happens in our life we didn't plan, we didn't expect, and yet it has God's fingerprints and God's favor all over it.

What I'm finding is that as I cultivate a more unhurried way of life, I seem to notice those opportunities a little more readily than I used to. Now, somebody's probably thinking to themselves, but if I become unhurried, might I tend to start being lazy? And so when does unhurried become maybe unholy also? Yeah, I wrote the chapter about productivity because I knew that would be one of the deep reactions to the idea of being hurried. Either a concern about laziness and being less productive, or that this

would result in being less engaged in the life God's inviting us to live and the work God's inviting us to do.

But actually, I've found that a lot of times my hurried way of life is actually a lazy way of life. I'm failing to be as attentive as I might be to the one I claim to be serving. And so I'm losing touch with my King, with the Lord, and I'm frantically doing many things I think that He wants me to do.

I mean, can you imagine if someone were to ask you, you know, how are you? What would happen if you answer? Well, you know, I'm really happy to say that, you know, that today my yoke is easy and my burden is light. And I think some people would look at you like you were nuts. And yet Jesus might actually answer the question that way.

So again, I don't think our busyness always equates to fruitfulness. I think that's an equation we assume, the more I do equals the more I produce. But in eternal terms, that's not always an accurate equation, I don't think.

Yeah, talk a little more about that hurried sickness that many of us, most of us have, because I think we all generally answer, how's it going? Oh, busy as ever, you know. And that really is a sickness that we need to overcome with God's help. Yeah, I find this is my struggle.

Again, if you ask somebody how they are, as you said, a very common response is busy. And as I think about that, I think it's kind of a mixed—we have mixed emotions about that word. At one level we're saying busy, we're a little frustrated, we're a little tired, we're sort of wishing it wasn't so busy.

And yet some other part of us is saying, well, now they're going to know how important I am, how wanted I am, how valuable my time is, because I'm busy. And again, I'm not arguing for doing nothing. I'm not suggesting we all just sit around as though I'm hurried with some life of wealthy leisure where I just don't need to do anything.

I'm talking more about a way of living, a way of heart, where maybe I could be very, very active, very, very engaged, and in the midst of that, unhurried, that I might have an unhurried heart. And again, I mentioned in our conversation yesterday that I found that stepping away for times of solitude and silence helped me remember that my identity is not established in the things I do and the things I acquire and the way people see me. My identity, most Christians I think would agree with this, at least in theory, my identity is really rooted in that relationship I have with God through Jesus, and that I'm beloved, and what better identity could I have than that? But in my hurry, that voice ringing in my ear, you're my beloved son or daughter, I'm pleased with you, the rush of my life begins to drown that voice out.

And I just begin to believe that I need to accomplish more if I want to still be valuable. I need to cultivate the good opinion of others through all that I do if I want to feel like my life has meaning. But actually, good work happens when I step into it from a place of confidence, from a place of fullness, from a place of security, that this is already true.

And now I get to go out from this place of fullness, and I get to do all kinds of good things that God has prepared ahead for me to do. I find I do better work that way. And as disciples of Jesus and as ambassadors for him, he's kind of our model, and he learned a lot about slowing down his pace through times in the desert, living an unhurried life by his pace.

So talk a little about how Jesus modeled it perfectly for us. Yeah, isn't it interesting if you read the Gospel story that Jesus is baptized, he hears the Father's voice, and then it says in, for example, Luke 4, it says that full of the Spirit, he was led by the Spirit, and you're just waiting for what comes next. What, led by the Spirit to a great ministry? Led by the Spirit to, you know, heartfelt worship? Led by the Spirit to what? He's full of the Spirit.

What's coming next? I can't wait to find out. He's led by the Spirit into the wilderness. Really? Wilderness? So 40 more days he's not doing ministry.

He's being tried. He's being tested. He's being tempted.

And in the book I talk about how I think those temptations are really calling into question, one, that voice of the Father he hears at the baptism. You really are my son. I love you.

I'm pleased with you. And out in the desert he's fasting, and he hasn't eaten, and the temptation comes to turn some stones into bread. Hey, you sure the Father really loves you? You're looking pretty hungry.

Maybe you're not as beloved as you think you are. And so Jesus resists those temptations, which are, you know, an echo of our first father and mother's hurried response to that very first temptation. The other place where I see Jesus modeling this for us is in little places in the gospel that we often rush right past, like a line that says, Jesus often withdrew to lonely places to pray.

That's a very interesting description. And I think, you know, if I'm a follower of Jesus, I wonder what it would look like to follow him into this pattern of life that he apparently practiced, that often he withdrew from the crowds, from the opportunities, even from the momentum. Who knows? And he went to lonely places to pray.

And I don't imagine him going to those places as though prayer was one more thing on his to-do list. It was almost a thing not on his to-do list. It was a break from his to-do list.

It was a chance once again to hear that voice he heard at the baptism, reminding him once more, in the midst of all that he was doing, that he's beloved, that he's pleasing to the Father. You mentioned the story of the Good Samaritan and what we can learn from that, because so often, as you mentioned earlier, we miss out on those divine appointments that God is setting up for us, for us to be useful and used of him, but we might miss them. But what can we learn from that Good Samaritan story? Well, you know, when I was working on this book, one of the things I did do was just read the Gospels.

And I came across that story, and it struck me as a story about the unhurried nature of love. You know, the two religious leaders, I would argue, were sort of in a hurry to get to wherever they were heading. And surely, maybe they didn't want to be unclean because of the guy on the side of the road.

But I think they rush on past where the Samaritan, the good guy in the story, my goodness, how many different levels of unhurried do you see in his response? He stops where the other two wouldn't stop. He takes time to care for this wounded man. He bandages him.

He then takes extra time and carries him to a nearby inn. Who knows how long that took? And then he spent the night. I imagine he planned to be somewhere else that night in an inn caring for a wounded man.

And then he gives money to see to it that this wounded man is cared for and plans to come back and check on him. They talk about love being unhurried. And, you know, there are a lot of things where speed is good.

I mean, technology. I don't know many of us who are going out to upgrade our phones to the Model 3 models back. We want the next model.

With technology, speed's the way to go. It helps. You know, you get things done a little more quickly.

But love doesn't work on technology speed. Love has its own pace. And I think that story of the good Samaritan is one great illustration that love really is unhurried.

If love is going to be deep and rich and Christlike, I think it's an unhurried kind of response. In case you just tuned in, this is day two of my interview with Alan Fadling, author of An Unhurried Life, Following Jesus' Rhythm of Work and Rest, a great publication by InterVarsity Press. You can purchase multiple copies at ivpress.com, or you can find out more about Alan's ministry work at spiritualleadership.com, spiritualleadership.com. Today and yesterday's broadcast is archived at greatnewsradio.org. Also, if you stop by greatnewsradio.org, you'll see a picture of Alan, the book cover, and also at my Facebook postings and the station's Facebook postings, you'll see other references to today and yesterday's broadcast.

Well, Alan, there's just so many things about this book that I've loved. This is one of those books that I almost can't wait to finish so I can start reading it again. I think this interview is really helping me, and I appreciate your heart for equipping leaders and just the saints to follow Jesus more practically, intentionally, by slowing down our lives, by engaging in that quiet solitude time where we can rest in him.

This third chapter, there's a paragraph here that I want to read because it so typifies who I am and how I was thinking about things, but it says, Today many of us have been so conditioned by efficiency that times of sitting on the porch feel unproductive, irresponsible, lazy, even selfish. We know we need to rest, but we can no longer see the value of rest as an end in itself. It is only worthwhile if it helps us recharge our batteries so we can be even more efficient in the next period of productivity.

And that's, I think, how I looked at times where I rested or took a little break just to recharge my batteries so I could be more productive. But that's not always healthy either, is it? Yeah, you know, one of the places that was a very helpful place of reflection for me, in the chapter on rest, I talked a little bit about this, but that we have a tendency to measure ourselves primarily by the work we do, and then sort of rest supplements that, or it comes next, or it comes after. We sort of work, work, work, work, work, and we collapse into rest.

But usually the rest we collapse into in that frame of reference, it's always very restful. It often feels a lot more like an escape. Whereas I think you can make the argument from the Scriptures that, you know, in the story of creation, you know, God makes us on the sixth day, and in the way the story goes, the next day He rests, and so do we.

So our first full day of life as a creation is rest, not work. I mean, what do we need to rest from? We haven't done anything yet. And so, you know, the idea that began to dawn on me is that good work is rooted in rest rather than leading to rest.

Even the way that the Jewish mind thinks of a day where the first part of a day is not starting at sunrise but at sunset, that the first part of the day, therefore, is a time of resting rather than the first part of the day being a time of working. And I think beginning to think that rest is actually the place, I think, where our relationship with God is established, and then work becomes the response place where my identity in God is expressed. And I get that backwards all the time.

And so I'm trying to do something to prove something that's actually already true, and it's a pretty unproductive perspective that I often struggle with. You know, when you said the very words, six days and then He rested, so man was created and He rested, and you're like, but He hadn't done anything, and what dawned on me is because God says, no, begin with me, rest in me, get to know me, let's spend time together so you can be equipped for the week. And it's like, yeah, we have to begin with rest, and that rest is beginning with time with God.

Yeah, and so then what I find is that starting from those places of restful communion with God, which I think is why He made us in the first place. I mean, when He created us, He already had a lot of servants, you know, these angels. They were there to do His bidding.

I don't think He made us first because He needed more servants. I think He made us because first He wanted friends. He wanted people with whom He could share the love of Father, Son, and Spirit.

And I think we forget the reality of that. But when we begin with rest, I think it's a way for us to remember. And then I find that from that place of restful communion, I get all kinds of creative ideas from Him about what He's inviting me into.

And sometimes they don't look quite exactly like what I thought I was going to be up to that particular day or that particular week or month. I just feel more creative. I feel more energized.

I feel more buoyant. I do my work from a place of energy. This last Saturday we had a 13-and-a-half-hour planning meeting.

If you've ever been in a planning meeting that long, you would expect at the end of it you're zonked. I just go home, turn on the TV, and I'm done. Get me out of here.

But one of the things that we've learned is that when we do that kind of work, we open up spaces, even in the middle of it. As I described yesterday in our conversation, we open up spaces to stop. And remember again in whose presence we are and whose work we're doing.

We take a moment to remember a line from Scripture that's blessed one of us. We take a moment to just give thanks for what we've received so far. We stop often.

We step back into rest. So at the end of that 13-and-a-half hours, I was surprised to find myself leaving refreshed and encouraged and excited for the next step. I think that's possible.

I don't think that's unrealistic. And I just think we probably did better work that day in less time than we might have done if we just kept cranking at it 13-and-a-half hours straight. Well, the book is called An Unhurried Life Following Jesus' Rhythms of Work and Rest, authored by Alan Fadling.

It's by InterVarsity Press, ivpress.com. I highly recommend it, everyone. Buy multiple copies. Don't just buy one.

Buy two or three, because when you finish reading it, you're going to want to buy them anyways to give out to friends and family members, your neighbor, your church, your small group. It's called An Unhurried Life. Oh, Lord, help us all in this endeavor to spend more time with you, to slow down our schedules, and just to find those times where we can connect with you.

Alan, in closing, I think this would be something that could be maybe very practical for our listener, even this day. Maybe they're driving to work or they're going to contemplate this throughout the week. But how can we begin to live a less hurried life? I think the simplest, though not necessarily easiest, answer I might give to that question is the only place we can start, any one of us, is exactly where we find ourselves.

Maybe feeling very, very busy, but perhaps feeling hungry for a less hurried way. And so the first thing that I would say is I would just talk to Jesus about the hunger that we might have to be less hurried, to be more unhurried, and to talk about what a temptation that is, and to talk with him about what we find hard, and to ask him if he would mentor us in his own unhurried way. I think if we would do that, something specific, something creative, something very simple might come to mind that could be our own next step in this unhurried journey.

Oh, listening friend, what a wonderful reminder that an unhurried life isn't necessarily a less productive life. It's a life that's more attentive to God, more available to others, and more aware of the opportunities he places before us. I especially appreciate Alan's encouragement to simply begin where we are.

You don't have to rearrange our entire lives overnight. We can begin by asking Jesus to teach us his rhythm of work and rest. Maybe that's a good prayer for all of us today.

Lord, slow my heart, help me recognize your presence, teach me to work faithfully, rest in you, and never become so busy that I miss the people you've called me to love. You've been listening to a special archive presentation featuring Alan Fadling, author of An Unhurried Life. Continue growing with us under the Mark & Friends tab at greatnewsradio.org or wluj.org, where you'll find the audio, transcripts, scriptures, key takeaways, and practical applications.

Thanks for listening. Thanks for being a part of our radio listening family. This is Mark Burns with the Ministry of Great News Media.

God bless you, and have a great day and night.