HOW TO Fill Up
YOUR SOUL
WITHOUT
EXHAUSTING
Your Life









# 'Hi, my name is Rick Atchley and I'm the Teaching Minister at The Hills Church.'

It seems more and more we live in a culture that has normalized a way of life that is toxic to our souls, and I think the evidence is all around us. The skyrocketing rates of anxiety and depression, the rising abuse of alcohol and opioids, the constant airing of offense and outrage and grievance. And maybe most of all, seeing people I know and love who seem like they are always exhausted on the inside.

This has become the new normal, and we keep telling ourselves this is just a season. No, it's not a season. It has become our lifestyle. We are living in ways that are costing us our souls. And when you lose your soul, you lose connection with God.

I remind you of the words of two of history's greatest philosophers. Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not worth living." And Ice Cube said,

### "You better check yourself before you wreck yourself."

A huge part of the problem are these dopamine dispensers we keep in our pockets. Last summer, the Lord convicted me. My soul cannot do life at the speed of my smartphone. My soul cannot absorb all the evil and the suffering and the pain and the hate and the anger in the world all in one second. It's not good for my soul to be sucked into all the vacuous distraction that this little dopamine dispenser offers me.

Augustine said, "We must empty ourselves of all that fills us, if we want to fill ourselves with that of which we are empty." So, I'm just asking you to be honest. Is your current diet sufficient to sustain a healthy soul, or is your soul undernourished?

You see, we live in an age where it is possible to always be at work. And again, these dopamine dispensers are part of the problem. The current paradigm and expectation is that you should be available 24/7.

I want you to think about something. Which of the 10 Commandments will Christians applaud you if you break?

Think about your job. Think about my job. Could I remain a pastor if I cheated on my wife and committed adultery? Could I remain a pastor if I got angry and killed somebody? Could I remain a pastor if I consistently lied to you?

But I can work myself to the bone. I can fry my spirit with constant frenetic activity, and I will be applauded by Christians for my output. And you will be at your job, too. It's the one command Christians will celebrate you breaking.

Some of you may be thinking the devil never takes a day off. Well, he's the devil. I



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don't think the goal is to be more like him.

These last few years have been hard on us. And I know your souls are worn out. But the lie some of you are believing is there's a quick fix out there - if I could just go on a retreat or have a worship encounter or maybe hire a life coach or get some therapy. All these things are good, but there is no quick fix to restoring your soul.

We have just accepted the way that we do life is normal, even though it is killing our souls. And here's an important thing to remember about your soul: It will not scream at you if you ignore it, at least not right away.

The outer world will scream at you. The outer world will always ask for more of your attention. And the great lie is believing if I could just improve my score card in the outer world, then I will have more peace and joy in my inner world.

Jesus disagrees. In fact, maybe the most important question ever asked is this one from Jesus: What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?

What if Jesus isn't just talking about your eternal destiny? What if he's talking about the way you do life right now?

What have I really won if I lost my soul in the process? Can it really be considered a success if it seduced me from the cultivation of my soul?

Dallas Willard said, "The most important thing is not what you do, it's who you become." That's what you will take into eternity.

On the great exam, there's going to be these two big questions: Did you become someone who passionately loved God? Did you become someone who consisently loved people?

We cannot love well when our souls are depleted and weary. The Gospel shows



Jesus lived unrushed on the outside because He lived unrushed on the inside.

us over and over that Jesus said, "You can't love and always be in a hurry."

Non-Christians don't read Bibles. Non-Christians read Christians. And the real win is when they notice it is well with our souls.

## So how does our soul become well?

In my lifetime, I think the greatest writer and thinker on the subject of discipleship is a man named Dallas Willard. He mentored a popular preacher named John Ortberg who said, "Dallas, I really do want to be more like Jesus, but I keep getting frustrated. What is the one thing I could concentrate on and begin to do that would help me be like Jesus?"

Dallas Willard said, "You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life." John said, "That's a good idea. I need to slow down so I can do the one thing that I need to do. What's that one thing?" And Dallas said, "No, John, that is the one thing. Do you want to be more like Jesus?

# "You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life."

Most of you have read one, if not all four of the gospels, the biographies of Jesus' life. Can you think of one instance in the Gospels where Jesus was in a hurry? Did he ever say, "I'm sorry, but I don't have time for you right now. My schedule is too crammed."?

Jesus lived unrushed on the outside because He lived unrushed on the inside.

# Here's the first thing we must do: Slow down the exhausting pace of our lives.

The price we pay for our full schedules is empty cells in your time. That's why







your vacation isn't working.

You can't bust it and hustle for 50 weeks a year and then go to the beach for one week and think your soul is going to be well. There's something lurking underneath that's even darker.

I believe our exhausting pace of life indicates a lack of confidence in the sovereignty and the provision of God.

The solution to an overbusy life is not more time, it is to slow down and simplify your life around what you really believe about God.

For most of us, that is going to mean the hard but necessary task of doing some pruning. Because soul care cannot be squeezed into an already rushed life. Theologian N.T. Wright said,

"It is only when we slow down our lives that we can catch up to God."

Obsession with technology, particularly our smartphones, is a socially acceptable addiction, and I use that word on purpose.

### What is an addiction?

An addiction is a compulsive behavior in the short term that is undermining your well-being in the long term. We have become addicted to technology, particularly our phones.

They've done lots of studies. You're at a restaurant, you're having an important conversation with a dear friend about something that matters. And then you get a vibration in your pocket. They have studied the chemical reactions in our bodies. We just got a dopamine hit. And it feels good. And it is almost impossible for us to not put that friend on hold while we check that phone, because that dopamine hit felt good and we want another one. And this is why we are touching our phones 1 to 2 million times a year.

Our short-term compulsive behavior is having a profound long-term impact on the health of our souls. Over and over, studies are showing that our obsession with screens has increased our levels of anxiety, depression, obesity, and sleep loss. And we're only beginning to discover what it's doing to us.

The lie is through social media when you think, "I am more connected than ever." We're actually spending less time in actual presence of other people than ever before. Robert Putman put it this way: "We used to have friends. Now we watch them. Or we watch their curated presentation of themselves." And then what has the monetizing of hate and fear and anger done to our souls?

We are not the client of these We're on sale. They are selling the way to keep us engaged or to make us angry.

The goal is stillness. The goal soul. Why? Because your soul God. God is a talker; He loves souls are constantly inundated and even the capacity to hear

Charles Swindoll, popular was a time in his life with a very busy with his work... appointments. It affected the family; he was easily angered, through family meals, the first

One night his youngest "Daddy, I want to tell you

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The goal is
stillness. The goal
is for you to have
a healthy soul.
Why? Because
your soul is where
you commune
with God.

products. We are the product. our attention, and they know the longest is to make us afraid

is for you to have a healthy is where you commune with to commune. But when our with noise, we lose the space the voice of God.

pastor and author said there young family that he was just lots of commitments, lots of way he was acting around his always frustrated, rushing to get up from the table.

daughter came and said, something that happened at

school today and I promise I will tell you fast." And he said, "Honey, you don't have to tell me fast. You can tell me slowly." And she said, "Well, then, Daddy, listen slowly."

Do you want to connect to God? You're going to have to listen slowly. Maybe this story from the life of Jesus will help. In Luke 10, as Jesus and the disciples continued on their way to Jerusalem, they came to a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. Her sister Mary sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he taught.

But Martha was distracted. She would not have used that word; that's a word the Holy Spirit chose. Martha was distracted by the big dinner she was preparing. She came to Jesus and said, "Lord, doesn't it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me." But the Lord said to her, "My dear Martha. You're worried and upset over all these details. There's only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her."

Could it be that so much of what you call being busy, Jesus might call being distracted?

What you give your attention to determines the health of your soul.

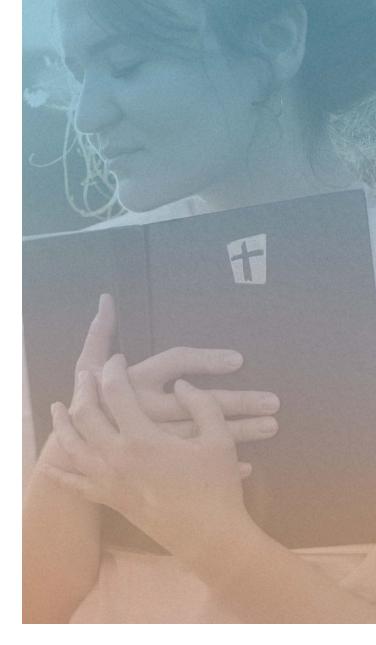
My favorite golf tournament to watch every year is in April, The Masters in Augusta, Georgia. Last year, the man who won is from the Metroplex. His name is Scottie Scheffler. Now, he had never won a major before, but he's in the lead. He admits at the award ceremony that he was nervous and unsure he could perform. But his wife spoke truth to him. Here's what he said at the ceremony: "The reason why I play golf is I'm trying to glorify God and all that he's done in my life. So for me,

my identity isn't a golf score. Like my wife Meredith told me this morning, If you win this golf tournament today, if you lose this golf tournament by ten shots, if you never win another golf tournament, I'm still going to love you and you're still going to be the same person. Jesus loves you and nothing can change that. And so she spoke some truth to his soul."

You need to do that. Fill your mind with truth. And let me tell you, as a pastor, here's one lie, especially that I think has disturbed more souls than any other. I cannot tell you how many times I've spoken with someone who says, I don't think God can love me. He'd love everybody else. But you don't know who I am. And you don't know what I've done. And that's why the last and maybe most important thing we must do is fill our hearts with the gospel. Every soul needs to hear the Gospel.

Every day. You can never preach the gospel to yourself enough. One of my go-to's when I want to minister to my soul is Romans 8. And I love what Paul says: "If God is for us, who can ever be against us? Since he did not spare even his own son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else?"

God is for us. Write those words across your soul every day.



# Questions to ponder:

- When I am at home, is time spent with my family slow and full of quality?

  Does what I do now place a high priority on my loved ones; those God has

  entrusted to me?
- What hobbies consume me right now and might be damaging to my soul?

  Do my hobbies indicate that I must always be doing something? How will

  I change this?
- When I am at work, does a frenetic pace to make more money expose my lack of confidence in the provision of God? How can I put my trust fully in God at work?

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