

Staff Work

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Slow Down

Sonya Jongsma Knauss
Dordt College, sonya.knauss@dordt.edu

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Slow Down

Abstract

"I'm still working on getting better at those more important, formative habits that help me live in slightly more counter-cultural, deliberate ways. Ways that help me really focus on what I love."

Posting about a slower pace in life from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/slow-down/>

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Disciplines

Family, Life Course, and Society

Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

Slow Down

 [inallthings.org/slow-down/](https://allthings.org/slow-down/)

Sonya Jongsma Knauss

My default mode is fast. As in, why should I walk to work if I can bike and get there faster? Why should I amble along if I can take quick strides and make it from point A to point B in that much less time?

I noticed the other day that my nine-year-old, when we walk along holding hands, doesn't say "slow down, mom!" like she used to when her legs were a little shorter (and I would slow down, at least for as long as I could consciously remember to fight my tendency to hurry). Now, she just does a few little fast steps to catch up once in a while. Is that progress?

Time is precious; I like to conserve it. I can get attached to the ways I plan to use my time; it's sometimes challenging to recalibrate if I get thrown off course. I like the problem-solving logistics of cramming as much as I possibly can into a full day, whether it be work or play. That approach can really pay off in a work environment where juggling multiple projects and deadlines is key to conquering a to-do list. But it's not great way to live all of life, in general.

I'm reluctant to call this out as a bad habit. But perhaps this attachment to time, and the way I want to use every second of it, gets in the way of forming better habits—ones that respect the moment, allow for more spontaneity, regularly prioritize people ahead of plans. The desire to squeeze as much as possible out of each day can sometimes be just plain miserly; it makes us jealous of our time. It can cheat us of the richness of living and moving more slowly, where serendipity can play a role and relationships beat crossing one more item off the to-do list.

I'm usually pretty good at building habits that involve discipline. Especially when I have clear goals, like a marathon, I find it easy to carve out time and add "run" to the to-do list. But I'm still working on getting better at those more important, formative habits that help me live in slightly more counter-cultural, deliberate ways. Ways that help me really focus on what I love.

Fortunately, I'm not in this quest alone. My family is good at helping me slow down, whether it's my husband's insistence on conversation over breakfast instead of just rushing out the door, or my kids' occasional chide of "put away your phone" when I check my work email while trying to make supper.

For instance, there's no shortcut to good food. Really, I've never found a frozen pizza that was as good as one that my dad made from scratch, starting the dough in the early afternoon so it would have time to rise; chopping tomatoes and simmering the sauce with herbs for hours. I've never eaten a chicken from the supermarket (bred to gain weight as quickly as possible) that was anywhere nearly as good as the slow-raised, pastured chicken that I get from my local CSA, [The Cornucopia](#).

For years in my life, after having kids, I "didn't have time" to read books for fun. Actually, I devoured countless pages while nursing, but once the kids started moving around, I simply couldn't prioritize something that seemed like a luxurious use of time. I was more focused on how much I could cram into each day.

This past Sunday, I caught myself sitting on the couch with my legs stretched out reading a novel. For a moment, I thought, "I should feel lazy!" But I didn't. I just felt satisfied and relaxed as I read and listened to my girls practicing their piano pieces, which they do longer than they need to, without being asked, because they like it. Imagine that!

I think they get it, despite the uneven example I've been able to offer. I hope they hold onto the things they love that renew their spirits, and learn the balance and benefit that slowing down—at least in some things—can bring.