

How quickly do you walk? On average, adults walk 3 to 5 km/hr. Professional race walkers can reach up to 15 km/hr! Now, we all walk at a different pace. Today we consider **the importance of healthy pace**. If believers are going to experience freedom and joy in our spiritual journey, a healthy life pace is essential!

Proposition

In the Bible we find a pattern for life. God invites us into challenges – but also calls us to rest in Him. This is the fifth topic in our series which is called **important things**. So far, we have considered the importance of the **next generation**; **death's defeat**; **above things**; and **living in Christ**. Living our lives “in Christ” means that we are “found in Him” (Philippians 3:9) for our salvation and for all of life.

An example of the need for healthy pace is the prophet Elijah. He served in the northern kingdom of Israel when Ahab came to the throne. Israel was in a terrible state as we read in **I Kings 16:30-33**. Howard Hendricks writes, “*This man, Elijah, stands out like a spiritual colossus in the midst of a generation of spiritual pygmies and perverts.*” (**Elijah: Confrontation, Conflict, & Crisis**, Moody Press, 1972, 7)

Elijah's ministry contained many highs and lows. He had to learn to follow God's pace! Here is a **chart** intended to give a sense of the seasons of Elijah's life and ministry. Let's remember that it is important to see the big picture of Scripture. In light of this, please remember to participate in our church **Reading Plan**.

Our story is a snapshot just one season of Elijah's ministry – let's read **I Kings 17:1-16**. From this story, we can identify four obstacles that Christians must overcome in order to live with a healthy, God-given pace.

[1] The rigor of rest

Elijah was led by God into a rigorous assignment – to confront Ahab with a prophesy of drought for 3½ years (v.1 cf. James 5:17). Then God put Elijah into concealment. How was this time of rest rigorous? Like Elijah, we must be deliberate and diligent to pull away from the activity and demands of life. Elijah was commanded by God to: **retreat** (“leave...hide” v.3); **refresh** (“drink from the brook” v.4a); **renew** (“ravens to supply you” v.4b). And thankfully, Elijah was obedient: “*So he did what the Lord had told him.*” (v.5)

Jesus Himself offers rest to us – see Matthew 11:28-30. Is this “spiritual rest” from the weight of sin? Or is it “daily rest” for our souls and bodies? The answer is “yes” – because this is a wholistic rest! It **starts** with the quieting of our sinful heart when we are reconciled to God in Christ. It **extends** to the ongoing peace (*shalom*) in which we are privileged to live by the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit.

There is rigor in rest! Physical rest pictures the ultimate rest of the soul – Hebrews 4:11 urges believers to “*make every effort to enter that rest*”! About our physical and mental capacities, Howard Hendricks comments, “*It is hard to learn the lesson of the barrenness of busyness. Your activity simply becomes an anesthetic to deaden in the pain of an empty life.*” (11) However, life is not empty when we **rest in Jesus**!

[2] The discipline of delay

One of the challenges of achieving healthy pace is dealing with delay. What happens when we are walking well, practicing rest, but have a major goal blocked? Elijah faced great delay. He had to believe that God's will would be accomplished. It took over three **years** for God's punishment of drought to play out. Delay can bring discouragement, doubt, and defeat. Is there something in your life for which you are trusting God? Does he have you in a place of delay and waiting? We must not see delay as a disaster but as a discipline.

There is great benefit and blessing when we obey Psalm 27:14, “*Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!*” As Arthur Brooks suggests, “*The forced separation from ordinary ambitions temporarily right-sizes one’s life.*” (***From Strength To Strength***, Green Tree, 2023, 168)

[3] The tyranny of time

Do you have enough time? We all have face this tyranny! Like Elijah, we must obey Ephesians 5:15-17: “*Be careful how you walk, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*”

On one hand, this involves accepting the **limitations** of time; on the other hand we must recognize the **potential** of time. Tim Keller has written a helpful article called “[Wisdom And Sabbath Rest](#)”.

- **First**, we must be honest and accept our “time budget”. Society is not honest about time. “*The average American considers the beginning of ‘old age’ to be six years after the average person dies.*” (Brooks, 94)
- **Second**, we must wisely “redeem” (“purchase” εξαγοραζομενοι) the time God has given. It requires rejecting a selfish or societal pace in favor of God’s plans and purposes. A **seed cleaning screen** provides a picture of filtering the use of time: **wrong? stop it** **neutral? weigh it** **good? do it** **eternal? guard it**

Like Elijah, we need to develop a God-oriented perspective and patience. The very best tool we have for this process is prayer. We know that earnest prayer was key to Elijah’s ministry – see James 5:17 We are restructuring a home group into a weekly prayer time at church – **Prayer Connect** will take every Tuesday.

[4] The angst of action

Elijah acted courageously when he rebuked King Ahab (v.1). Then he retreated to wait calmly. Herein is the angst of action: when to **act courageously**? when to **wait calmly**? As the brook dried, God moved Elijah to his next assignment in Zarephath (vv.7-9). This required trust and obedience! There was travel. There was a bold request of a poor widow. If Elijah had not rested in God’s presence before this assignment, it could have been a disaster. But he had obviously been listening: “*this is what the Lord, the God of Israel says*” (v.14) and a miracle ensued. Exodus 14:13-15 is another example of a “*be still...move on*” scenario.

We must obey both commands! We must not **over-function** – “*if I don’t do it, no one else will.*” We also must not **under-follow** – “*here am I...send my sister!*” In the context of ministry, Paul Tripp cautions,

In ministry it is tempting to try to do more than you can realistically and healthily do. It is tempting to write job descriptions for others that ask more of them than they can responsibly handle. And it is tempting to let a leader work way beyond his limits because his work seems essential to the success of the ministry enterprise. (71-72)

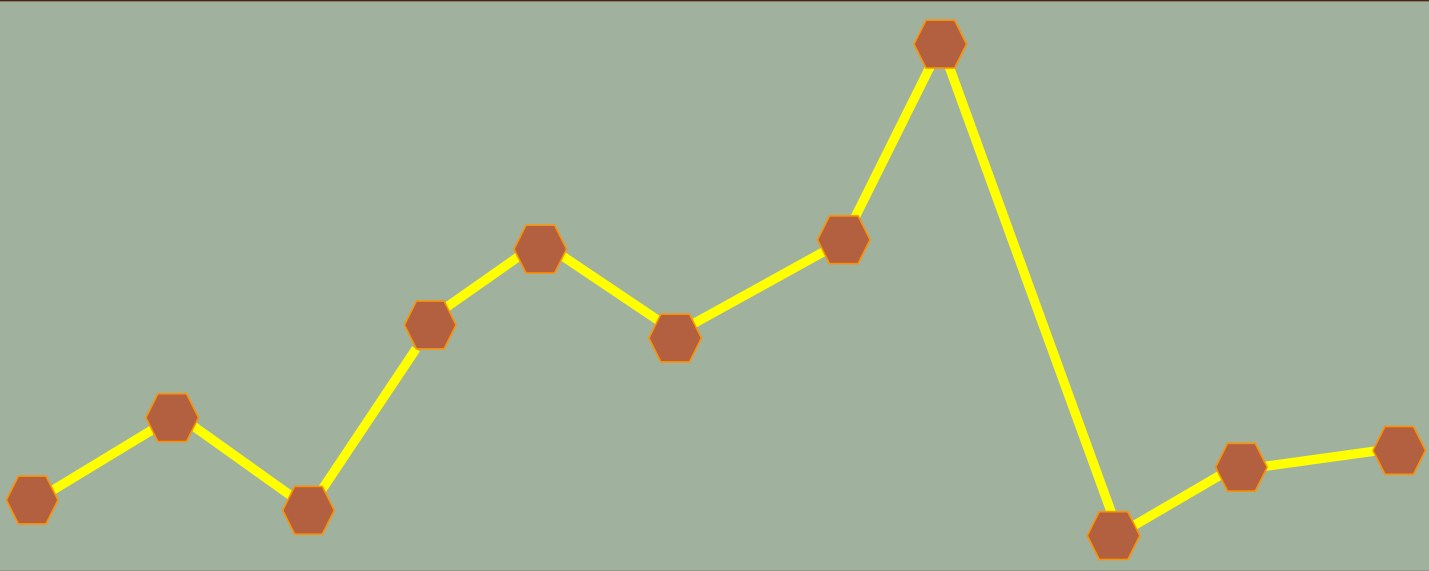
Conclusion – See Digging Deeper

A walking pace is calculated by dividing time over distance. Do you have a healthy pace? In his book **Three Mile An Hour God** (SCM Press, 2021), Japanese theologian Kosuke Koyama argues that for our lives to be well paced, we must rediscover slowness. He argues that God walks and works at three miles an hour.

Today, we have looked at the life/work pace of Elijah. Howard G. Hendricks writes, “*studying biblical biographies leaves us without excuse*” but also that “*such a study leaves us with hope*” (5-6). Do not miss the significance of Elijah’s statement: “*As the Lord, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand.*” (v.1)

Elijah was a willing servant of God: a man of “*spirit and power*” (Luke 1:17) but also “*a human being, even as we are*” (James 5:17). We must look to God, listen to His guidance, and obey to live with healthy pace.

Charting the ministry of Elijah in I Kings 17,18,19



16:29-33	17:1	2-6	7-16	17-24	18:1-15	16-37	38-46	19:1-8	9-14	15-21
Ahab & Jezebel	Drought Prophesied	Kerith Retreat	Miracle Provision	Son Raised	Obadiah Warns	Carmel Contest	Heavenly Fire	Jezebel Threatens	Gentle Whisper	Elisha Called