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P R E S S
E S U A P

*Making Time for God
in an Overscheduled Life*



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1

GOD, I NEED YOUR HELP

*The LORD replied, “My Presence will go with you,
and I will give you rest.”*

EXODUS 33:14



SISTERS, ARE YOU “RUNNING ON FUMES” AND feeling broken, fragmented, overwhelmed, or uninspired? Perhaps you may be experiencing all this at the same time. Women, in general, are in a web of entanglement to survive in varied pursuits, such as climbing the ladder in corporate America, serving in church leadership, or engaging in community activism, in addition to personal and family responsibilities. Women of all racial and ethnic backgrounds are challenged to endure the duality of gender and economic suppression. In addition, Black, Indigenous, and other women of color (BIWOC) carry triple burdens in light of racism, sexism, and limited opportunities for economic advancement. How do you stay on top of your game with so many challenges and obstacles? Who or what is your stabilizing force?

Because there is a constant act of juggling multiple roles at different life stages and seasons, it is absolutely necessary for women to find time and space to experience God’s presence. The frequency of reset for balanced living is necessary for the well-being of our spirit, mind, and body. Together let us press pause in an act of surrender, making a conscious



choice to decline less important things competing for our attention and intentionally sit at the feet of God. The posture of surrender is the bending of our ear to the heart of God to listen to his will for our lives. A purpose-driven pause on the speedway of daily existence helps us obtain and maintain spiritual health for balanced living. Lasting productivity begins when we regularly stop and enter his presence—a zone of renewed strength, focus, peace, and enlightenment.

The fragility of a woman is impacted most when her spirit, soul, and body are disjointed, and internal homeostasis is in crisis—a weak spirit sickens the soul. Wholeness begins with understanding how to maintain spiritual homeostasis, the core plank of humanity’s functionality. Why? When one is spiritually healthy, the entire physical body benefits. The three parts of the human body are spirit, mind, and body. Each component requires attention; however, this book focuses on spiritual health, the core of the trifold being. A healthy, stable spirit fortifies unity (harmony) of all parts of our being (spirit, soul, and body).

Come away, beloved, to a nonjudgmental space with the Holy Spirit to gain access into the private chamber where hearts meet with a loving and forgiving God. In the journey through these pages, you will encounter transformation in the presence of God. You will learn to slow down and press pause in the privacy of your own space or a small group. The challenge is to remain still long enough in God’s presence to discern God’s character in Scripture, prayer, reflection, and journaling, building renewed faith to trust him as you navigate life. This book is a companion that will enhance the process of pressing pause from nonessential tasks that fill your calendar, robbing time from God, leaving your spirit empty. In this contemporary contemplative experience, you will discover how to find solitude, engage attentively, and listen to God constantly in steering your spiritual journey. As author John Mark Comer says, “Hurry kills relationships. Love takes time; hurry doesn’t have it. It kills joy, gratitude, and appreciation; people in a rush don’t have time to enter the goodness of the moment. It kills wisdom; wisdom is born in the quiet, the slow.”¹



TIME CULTIVATES TRUST

Relationship building with God takes time. Think about how much time people spend with their boyfriend or girlfriend before saying “I do.” My friend and husband, Tim, and I spent many days and nights on the phone because we wanted to be together and know everything about each other. Friendship builds trust and confidence in one another. A spiritually healthy relationship with God the Father also involves time to build trust in his counsel and promises.

It is easy to go to God in difficult situations such as financial needs, rebellious children, and sickness. He wants us to come to him when we recognize we need him, but why wait until we have an emergency or are in crisis, crying or completely losing our composure? Why do we not cry out to him when we are happy, grateful, and thankful for his blessings? Practicing pause builds confidence to talk to God anytime, regardless of the situation, embracing his kindness and comforting guidance. Here’s the real test of obedience: Will we pause and choose an unconditional love and purpose-driven relationship with him?

My grandmother, at ninety-one, is a perfect example of a life committed to a relationship with God. Early one morning, she was awakened, got out of bed, and knelt to pray while breakfast was being prepared. When she did not come in to eat, her daughter looked in on her and realized that her mother had transitioned to heaven while in that posture of prayer. While sad for her loved ones, it was a beautiful sight to remember. When we got the call and my mother told us that Grandma died, it did not feel sad to me. I felt like she was honored to be called home while in communication with God. There was no sense of fear about her death; my grandmother’s friendship and relationship with God removed any fear, guilt, and doubt because I knew she loved God and he loved her—they were in covenant.

He is our Father and friend, so he should never be approached in fear of harm, but in reverence, yielding to his Spirit and hearing his whispers of love. You can be free to trust and not doubt, having no guilt or shame. There are times we will fail, but we have Jesus, our



Advocate with the Father God, and can sincerely apologize, be forgiven, and forgive ourselves even when we are missing our time with him.

PRIORITIZE GOD OVER OUR CULTURE OF STRESS

Would you agree that women have gravitated toward God more than men throughout the ages? They have wholeheartedly served the church, organizations, employers, and families. Each of these relationships requires sacrifices of time, often to the point of self-neglect. It is not easy to properly balance it all, but it can be done when daily goals are set to prioritize relationship with the Father. Making time for God guarantees productive days yielding fruit that will remain.

The world is moving at a faster and faster pace. Thanks to modern technology, we are always plugged in to our jobs, distressing news reports, and what our friends, family, and favorite celebrities share on social media. Modern advances were meant to make our lives easier and more interconnected, yet they often leave us anxious and overwhelmed. We are fearful of not doing or being enough. In other words, we have developed *FOMO*—the fear of missing out—which is now so prevalent that the term has made its way into the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

As a longtime medical professional, I have observed that stressful lifestyles without intervals of pause to reset contribute to various health problems. Few know how to get a real handle on their out-of-control lives. They seek answers for success and peace by self-medicating and through other indulgences, far too often falling into sin and other traps of the enemy. The solution for regaining peace and productivity is found in the simple choice of pause, an old practice of contemplation.

Hurry has become the driving force of humanity, minimizing or eliminating time with the One who has the blueprint for every individual's purpose in life. The not-so-distant Covid-19 pandemic opened the eyes of many to the need to pause and reset from life in the fast



lane. Many have returned to past behavior patterns, however, in attempts to redeem time and offset the loss of material gain because of the pandemic.

Ladies, we are in a pandemic that has existed for ages—bearers-of-life loads. Whether you are a pastor's wife, preacher, teacher, speaker, business owner, doctor, lawyer, or homemaker, societal pressure can stack up, hindering the practice of pause, excluding the practice of God's guidance for obedience and self-awareness to eliminate stressors that wear us down into broken pieces. This is not a science course, but understanding the necessity of a pause for spiritual and physical reset is vital for women. As you sit at his feet in pause, how has the Spirit been leading you to care for the total you? Are you teetering under the weight of chronic stress?

EXPLORING SPIRITUAL HEALTH

A desire to experience other models of spiritual intimacy led me on an expedition of private and public religious practices. My search began with reading, watching YouTube, and attending conferences. During this immersion, I visited many different types of worship services and temples, and interviewed leaders about their daily practices to nurture spiritual health. The one thing that was consistent among the groups were the influences of time constraints and cultural expectations to perform. The observations revealed that private times of worship seemed to be an optional task. The acts of contemplation required setting boundaries of separateness in solitude to maintain a rhythm of prayer, reading, and reflection—personal time honoring religious covenants. The public groups of worship had designated times of attendance that had some similarity to Western Christian services.

To understand cyclic consistency in spiritual health, I was given the opportunity to experience two monasteries, one in Conception, Missouri, and the other in Thailand. Interestingly enough, the visible culture and practices of prayer and work life in the Missouri monastery remained relatively intact, with little of the fingerprints of outside



culture on their tradition. There was little deviation from regular patterns in the Conception community, including prayer twenty-four hours per day, sunlight, rest, and healthy meals. The overall pace of life was slower than in Thailand, which appeared to be more commercial.

In Thailand, the influence of Western culture was evident in the urban areas I visited. For example, there was “table talk” storytelling by the monks in a specific city location, with an ATM nearby for listeners to access and directly pay them for their services. The noise and movement of people were like that of large American cities; it was interesting to watch a monk go and use an ATM like any other person. Closer to the main worship building it became less noisy, but movement and talking were still heard while people located to areas in the temple to pray, worship, and reflect. However, there were other areas and communities that were less accessible to tourists and outsiders that maintained more of their traditional culture of communion in silence.

In that different country and culture, it took serious effort to get into a pause space. In both settings, the goal was to honor religious traditions by making purposeful choices to maintain spiritually healthy relationships—however, in Thailand, it appeared that concessions to outside culture were more necessary for financial reasons.

In a nutshell, a life of peace and success is available, based on the conscious decision and practice of gathering ourselves in quiet to commune with the Father. There is value in slowing down long enough to arouse our consciousness to the presence of God in every situation and circumstance. In the twenty-first century, it seems that contemplation is an overlooked or forgotten spiritual practice. This neglect may very well be a contributing factor to the increase of immoral lifestyles, as many lack “God-consciousness” or awareness of his love, character, grace, and mercy amid sinful disobedience and a life of busyness.

In the following pages, I pray that you chart a course for this journey; pause on purpose as necessary; learn to minimize and eliminate needless rushing, hurrying, and worrying from your life; and



position yourself in a posture of stillness when needed to limit distractions and stress. This will help maintain focus while increasing discernment, critical-thinking abilities, and overall mental capacity.

It has been my experience that slowing down harnesses the true essence of God's presence. In every situation, we can find a peaceful balance that honors covenant relationships and enhances productivity and fruitfulness in our lifestyles. It is my hope as you continue reading through the chapters and devotionals that practicing moments of pause will lead to daily private and public victorious living.

ARE YOU AT A CROSSROADS?

In the book of Jeremiah, the Lord said, "You are standing at the *crossroads*. So, consider your path. Ask where the old, reliable paths are. Ask where the path is that leads to blessing and follow it. If you do, you will find rest for your souls." But they said, "We will not follow it!" (Jeremiah 6:16 NET, emphasis added). Today our rejection of his way can be demonstrated in our choices to do other things as opposed to following the path that leads to sitting at his feet in times of quiet refreshing.

Many people in our society are at a crossroads, searching for answers to achieve success and finding forms of peace. Popular in the search are self-help books, including parenting, personal renewal, developing interpersonal skills, and spiritual growth. The Bible addresses those topics; however, there is a decline in Bible readers. Research by Lifeway reports that "in January 2023, around 100 million adults, or 39 percent of Americans, said they use the Bible three or more times a year. That equals the lowest number in the 13-year history of the study and ties with last year as the lowest percentage. In 2021, at the height of the pandemic, 128 million Americans (50 percent) said they interacted with Scripture at least that much."²

Our world is in a moral crisis: the argument can be made that it is because of diminished quality time with God—including reading the Bible.



There are benefits in reading the Bible. For example, it helps people to be morally and spiritually healthy as they become more aware of God's presence and attuned to the necessity of self-care of the spirit, mind, and body. The research also indicates that those who are engaged in Scripture reading are more *hopeful*.³

Other important research supports how Bible engagement substantially and positively impacts our spiritual, emotional, and physical health. As author Kathleen Cooke noted in a 2017 article, the Center for Bible Engagement documented that “if a person engages in the Bible four or more times a week, their odds of drinking in excess fell 62 percent; pornography viewing and sex outside of marriage fell 59 percent; gambling decreased 45 percent; gossiping and lying, 28 percent; and that overeating and mishandling money both fell by 20 percent. Bible engagement also produces more peace and joy in a person's life, by reducing the frequency of various emotional struggles.”⁴

As this research continues to show, spending time with God in his Word brings positive change in a person's life. The results of time with God in prayer and Bible reading reveal solutions and an increase in one's quality of life. The Bible tells us in Psalm 119:105, “Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.” Just as he did in the Garden of Eden, God wants to fellowship with us each day. He wants to guide us toward greater peace and purpose, perhaps even reordering our priorities in the process.

God gave us the tools for communicating with him, and we can use them every day. They are free (except for the price of a Bible) and only require a portion of our time. Within the following pages, you will discover the benefits of quiet time—including Bible reading, prayer, praise and worship, and reflective journaling—to help you develop an intimate relationship with God, find answers, and gain practical skills for living your best life. The benefits of quiet time during daily life as well as during life crises become readily apparent as you begin working on your relationship with God.



Now take a deep breath and in the margins of this book describe your current relationship with God in two or three words.

REALITY CHECK

You might think you are too busy for quiet time, but the truth is, you're too busy *not* to find time to spend with God each day. Jesus was fully God while he walked the earth, but he was also fully human. He got tired and had to juggle multiple tasks, just as we do. He, too, had to carve out time to rest and pray. Those times of intimacy empowered him to fulfill his Father's will. We read in Mark 6:31, "Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.'" If Jesus took the time to pause on purpose to rest and pray, so must we.

Starting today, you can breathe new life into your relationship with God. Whether you are a new convert or have been a Christian for years, you can grow your relationship with God by spending regular time in his presence. Devoting time to God brings victory in your life. This is the primary reason Satan attempts to distract Christians from consistently spending time with God. He knows the more you learn to trust and depend on God, the less effective his efforts to hinder your destiny will be.

I pray this book refreshes your faith and shows you how to become disciplined in worshiping God, as well as in reading, memorizing, and meditating on the Scriptures. Engaging in worship will invoke the presence of the Holy Spirit to fill you afresh and ignite a yearning to fulfill the call on your life. Studying his Word will equip you to complete the work God has given you to do. Regardless of your career choice, we are all called to intimacy with God. You can have rest, peace, and clear direction for your hectic life by making time for God a daily practice. God created you to fellowship with him, and in that time of fellowship, he will guide you to synchronize your life physically, emotionally, and spiritually.



PAUSE ON PURPOSE 1**LORD, HERE I AM**

*God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with
his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. — 1 CORINTHIANS 1:9*

Lord, here I am. Sitting at work in the cafeteria, thinking about my missed appointments with you. The song sung by gospel artist Smokie Norful, “I Need You Now,” often plays in my head, because it expresses the desperation in my heart to be rescued by God from the demands of chaos. Finding time to meet with God is not difficult compared to societal pressures to perform. God doesn’t push us but waits patiently for us to come sit with him. So often I feel like I am compromising in not making accommodation in my schedule for God, often having days with no adequate time with God. Am I attempting to serve two masters? Reverencing my responsibilities of work and church volunteering and ministry more than routine quality time with him?

Acknowledging in prayer that this has been my path by choice, to journey through life many times without you, I am sorry. I have missed you and still love you. Watching the clock on the wall, others rushing to get a bite to eat, worrying about today’s deadlines—my soul desires a touch from you. My heart longs for you. I need you now. Knowing you want time with me as my Creator is a delight. My concern is not your faithfulness, but rather my faithfulness to show up. Thank you for your patience, love, and forgiveness. Today, I surrender my will to answer your call to fellowship. My heart cries, “Here I am, Lord.”

Friend, where are you on the road of spirituality? God is waiting for you to grant you more.

Do you feel like you are serving two masters? Do you love one more than the other? Why?

The goodness of Jesus is available to you. However, you must do the work of seeking and finding private time with God. No one else can



do it for you. When I think of activating progress, I think about some species of turtles; they can't move unless they stick their necks out. Today you stuck your neck out and began an uninterrupted time in prayer, reflection, and Scripture reading. The transforming power of the Holy Spirit is always near, waiting on you.

Reflection: Spiritual reset comes easier when we prioritize regular moments of stillness with God.

Prayer: *It's me, Lord, needing you more each day. With my eyes on you, I lift my hands to touch the hem of your Spirit. As you resolve issues and concerns in my life, help me to continue showing up. Thank you for being near.*

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