

Series Big Idea: We all need more of God in our lives. Every struggle and every need is best answered by a bit more of God. And that may, in the end, be our biggest problem. How do we make more room for God in our lives? For thousands of years, God's people have learned and practiced ways to allow God to have more influence. In this series we'll look at four vital practices that allow God to transform our characters and guide us in how we approach our circumstances. By practicing any or all of these four spiritual activities, we'll discover that it is possible and thrilling to allow God more say in our lives.

Message Big Idea: God wants to transform us to become more and more like Jesus. We want to be more and more like Jesus! But we've filled our lives with tasks, obligations, activity, stuff, noise, busyness and even people to the point that we've left little room for God. Only God can bring transformation and change and that means we need to make more room for God in our lives. We will look at four vital spiritual practices that help us move from just trying to be like Jesus to training to be like Jesus. These practices help us make more room for God.

Main Idea: Say "no" to the urgent. Make more room for God.

Main Text: Mark 1:32-39

Links: MyPantano.church - for *The Tyranny of the Urgent* booklet.

Reflection/Discussion Questions:

1. Do you ever wish you had more time in your day? Would you describe your life as busy? Why and how? Do you feel like your life is crowded and full? If so, by what or with what?
2. List the 5 things that you believe should be the most important things in your life. Why are these 5 things important?
3. That which is important will get the best and most of our time, money, energy, attention and affection. Do the 5 things you listed get the most of you? How and why or why not?
4. Often the "urgent" crowds out the what's important in our lives? Urgent things demand our attention now, but they are not really important in the long run. What are some of the most common things that seem urgent in your life.
5. What is one thing you can remove or eliminate from your life to make more room for God?

Main Idea: Say “no” to the urgent. Make more room for God.

Message:

I was at a meeting a couple weeks ago and met with a godly man who is a pastor of a church and works full time in education doing groundbreaking work. He also serves several important Christian organizations and more! When I asked him how things were for him he replied that he wish he had 32 hours each day. Everyone around the table could relate. We are all busy. But do we really need or even want an extra 8 hours a day? For what? For those of us who are busy and our lives are already full, we would just fill up that 8 hours with more stuff and wish we had another 8 hours. It isn't more time we need. It is knowing how to use the time we have. Is what we are doing what God wants us to do? It's called a matter of priorities!

The devil uses lots of schemes to trick us, tempt us and trap us. All of his temptations, in the end, are meant to keep God from having the primary influence in our lives. And in our current culture, one of his greatest tricks is to keep us busy and make sure that we are busy doing things that seem important, but in an eternal and kingdom sense are not. Think about that. If we are busy doing things that don't really matter, then the devil has had a victory! And he seems to be winning.

I think the words busy and distracted best describe our culture. We have chosen to be busy. We feel important and good when we are busy. Being busy has great benefits because that means we don't have to have down time in order to get depressed or face the some pain or discomfort inside us. We are afraid to slow down because we know that we'll have to face some demons that live just under the surface. We use our busyness as form of escape, so we binge watch a TV series, only to go to the next series when it is over. Being busy happens because we think that we need to get lots done or we'll be seen in a bad light like being lazy or not caring. We choose to be busy as a way to try to be good enough for God. We crowd our lives with so much stuff that life not only gets full, but so full that we find we don't have room for the things that are really important.

But in the end, what is most important? I believe what's ultimately important is making room for God to have more influence in our lives. It is God and only God that can transform us. It is only God who can guide us to live the very best way possible. It is God who can keep us from temptation and making bad choices that we regret. The most important thing we can do in life is to make more and more room for God's influence to lead us, change us and protect us. And the more we allow God to be real in our lives, the more we'll know how much we are loved by God - and that is priceless!

So today we are beginning a series called *Making Room*. We'll finish this series on Lent on Wednesday, February 14th. We are going to discover how we can get more of God in our lives and how we can grow to be more like Jesus. You see, every struggle we have, every problem we face and every need is best answered by a bit more of God. The more we allow God into our lives, the more we'll see our lives transformed to

become who God created us to be. But the challenge is that - how will we make more room for God. So in this series we'll look at some things we can do to allow God to transform us to be more like Jesus.

But before we get to how to make room for God, we have to face our greatest challenge. We have an uphill spiritual battle ahead of us. It is really hard to make room for God because our lives are already full and overflowing. We've packed into our lives all kinds of projects, tasks, habits and patterns that have left too little room for God. Yes, we'll give God a couple hours on Sunday and maybe a little time here or there. But we'll never give God ample room in our lives until we uncrowd our spiritual home and free up some space for God and open up some of our time. Let's look at this more.

Some 35 years ago when I was using a discipleship program and came across a spiritual truth that was a game changer for me. It helped me realize that I was just doing lots of stuff, but the things that really weren't that important. I found it in a little 31 page booklet that you can still buy for \$2 online by Charles Hummel called *The Tyranny of the Urgent*. Go to MyPantano.church and you'll see the link.

The Tyranny of the Urgent - it's a catchy title. But it's a powerful idea. The "tyranny of the urgent" reminds us that our struggle is an issue of priorities. You see, we allow "urgent" stuff to become a priority over the "important." But here's the trick and whenever we talk about a trick we know that the devil is the one at work. You see, **The urgent is seldom important!** The urgent non-important stuff crowds out the important stuff that really matters both now and for eternity.

Here's what we mean by urgent. Urgent things demand our attention now, but they are not really important in the long run. The urgent is the daily stuff like shopping, watching our favorite shows or games, dishes, dusting and laundry, checking FaceBook. Urgent stuff can be the things others think are urgent and expect us to do...now! All these can be good and at some point might need to get done, but they are seldom important. The urgent won't make a real difference and won't affect eternity in any way. We make the urgent seem important to the neglect of what is really important.

When my kids were young we lived in Cincinnati. Unlike Tucson, we had a big lot with lots of grass! In the summer, I thought I had to mow it no less than once a week and then trim around the sidewalks. It could take a couple of hours. There were so many times that I put the mowing before that important time with my kids. Mowing the grass was urgent. Time with my kids was important. The urgent so often wins out. The urgent looks different today for me and for you. But guess what, the important stuff remains the same.

So what's important? That's a critical question we have to figure out. The important can include consistent time with God or making room for God. Or it includes time with our spouse and kids. Taking care of ourselves is important and that includes rest, exercise and having down time. If we don't care for ourselves, we won't be able to care for others. The important is taking the time and making the effort to love people to Jesus

and serve others so well that we have an opportunity to share Jesus - who is the most important one in all of life. The important is loving God and loving our neighbor as ourself. But those important things get crowded out in our crowded urgent filled lives.

So here's my challenge to all of us here today - **Say "no" to the urgent. Make more room for God.** The beginning of our spiritual journey to make more room for God in our lives begins with saying "no" to the things that are not really important to make room for the One who is the most important - God.

Now it is so easy to think that our struggle to prioritize is the fault of our modern world. We think that our culture makes being busy, distracted and having crowded lives almost impossible to escape. We think, if I had just lived in Jesus day, I would have all the time in the world to focus on the important and not be trapped in the tyranny of the urgent. Well, maybe. How about if we look at Jesus to see how he handled the urgent.

Let's look at how Jesus began his public ministry. I think this event that happened to Jesus is so telling because it happens right after he's baptized and he's just getting his three years of teaching and serving started. He's beginning a three year journey toward his sacrificial death on a cross. And this event shows up in chapter 1 of Mark - a book that tells the story of Jesus. Mark is 16 chapters long. This is in chapter 1! This story was in fact one of the early tests Jesus faced. Would Jesus keep the priorities God had for him? Would Jesus stay focused on what was important and not urgent?

Turn to **Mark 1:33-39 (pg. 682 - NIV)**. While you are turning there let me set the context. Jesus was in a town on the northern end of the Sea of Galilee named Capernaum. He had just healed the mother-in-law of Peter there. You can't imagine how many jokes have been made about that. I won't go there! This woman was instantly healed of a fever by Jesus and the word spread fast. **33 The whole town gathered at the door, 34 and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.** Some of you wonder why Jesus wouldn't let the demons declare who he was - the Son of God. Jesus did not want foul evil demons stating the truth of his identity, he wanted it to come next from his disciples. That would come later in Mark chapter 8. Let's continue. **35 Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. 36 Simon and his companions went to look for him, 37 and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"** **38 Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." 39 So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.**

The whole town gathered at the house of Peter's mother-in-law. How many? We don't know. Hundreds? If Jesus could heal Peter's mother-in-law, maybe he would heal every sick and demon possessed person in the town.

What a way to start off his ministry. Jesus is a hit and his popularity would soar. If Jesus had a marketing firm (he didn't!), they would have marketed this to the max. And talk about busy. What is pictured here is a crazy, crowded, busy life - hundreds of people gathering at a small house to see Jesus. My guess is that they had a late night and everyone went to bed tired.

But Jesus is wise. He is focused on God and God's purpose for his short time on earth. So he gets up before everyone else and goes off to a place where he can be alone with his Father to pray. Peter and others go looking for him. What's interesting is that the literal words Mark used when he wrote this was that they were "hunting him down!" They were on an urgent manhunt for Jesus. When they find him they declare; "Everyone is looking for you!" Everyone!!! They want you! The "urgent" had just visited Jesus! Peter and his disciples are telling Jesus what is urgent - everyone wants you. There are more people to heal. Was this "urgent" request bad? Well, no, not on the surface.

But Jesus, who is God in a human body made sure his human part made room for God. He said no to the urgent! He knew what was urgent and what was important. What God wanted was what was important. Jesus, in his short time on earth, wasn't going to heal every sick person. In fact, Jesus' primary purpose was not healing. He did it out of love and kindness. He did it to show us that he is truly God. But his real God given purpose and mission to bring the message that the influence of God had come in his very life. He had to get the word out to as many people as possible that God had come into this world thru him. He was the Son of God and that is good news because now we ability to know God and have a relationship with God through Jesus. That word has to get out and Jesus knew that was what was important. The message and hope of forgiveness and eternal life are ultimately what was most important.

So, Jesus had to pull away from the crowds, the busyness, and the urgent to make room for God. Our challenge was the same as Jesus' - **Say "no" to the urgent. Make more room for God.** How do we actually do that?

The place I suggest we begin is to identify what we can or need to eliminate from our lives to make more room for God. When you came in you got a card. Those of you with us online, you can download the card. Write on the card one thing you want to do less of or eliminate in order to make more room for God. It might be a TV series you watch or just the temptation to turn on the TV and just veg and watch whatever is on. Or maybe it is cutting back or eliminating checking FaceBook every hour. Or maybe it is cutting out gaming time or limiting it to once a week. What seems important but really isn't? What becomes urgent, but is not important? Then later as we finish, take the card and insert it in the prayer walls we have in the lobby and prayerfully make the commitment to make room to allow God to have a greater influence in your life this year. Over the next three weeks we'll share practical ways to actually give God more room in your life. But we start with what we'll do to make room.

Jesus wasn't going to get distracted by what the people in the town of Capernaum wanted. Jesus' priority was to take the good news to as many people as possible. He wanted to tell everyone that the presence and influence of God is now present and available to anyone who wanted God in their life. For some of you, you've never actually invited God to have any part of your life. So making room for God starts with inviting Jesus into our lives. Jesus won't force himself into your busy crowded life. You have to invite him to take charge of your life. You have to decide to follow Jesus and the way of Jesus. The temptation of this life is that there are so many things to say "yes" to. But it is only Jesus who will give you real life and only Jesus can give you eternal life. Only Jesus can. So: **Say "no" to the urgent. Make more room for God.** Say "yes" to Jesus. Say "no" to everything else that keeps God from having influence in you.

Real life that will never end starts when we decide to follow Jesus. Maybe you've recently made a decision to follow Jesus or are ready right now to make that commitment. Here's how you make a promise, a vow and commitment to follow Jesus. This is the way the Bible teaches us to begin the journey of following Jesus. It is in baptism. In baptism we make a promise to follow Jesus with everything and nothing less. We invite God to have full influence in our lives.

If you are ready to make room for Jesus in your life, I want to invite you to be baptized today during our service. In a moment as we sing the song *Everything and Nothing Less*. As we sing come down here into the auditorium from where you are on our campus and the door here to the left of the stage. We have folks to meet you and help you and we have everything you need. Don't let fear hold you back. Say no to the distractions. Say "yes" to Jesus. Let's stand and sing and come if you are ready to be baptized.

Song: Everything and Nothing Less