

Hurrying without purpose

By [MaryAnn McKibben Dana](#)

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For a few years I was what you might call tri-vocational: I pastored a church, I wrote books and spoke to groups and retreats, and I parented three elementary-age children along with my husband. Life was a wonderful crazy-quilt of scheduling: writing an article at the library down the street from the piano teacher, finishing a sermon in the bleachers at swim practice.

It also wasn't sustainable, I now realize. If you ask my kids, they'd probably tell you my two most common phrases were "Just a minute" and "Hurry up." [Ironical, eh?](#) We still had times of sabbath together, but they were shorter and less frequent than a few years ago. Part of that's to be expected as our kids age. Part of it's a by-product of a too-full life.

Now I'm bivocational, having left the sweet church I was serving. In the same time period, Robert adjusted his work schedule such that he's no longer working in the evenings. Consequently, we have more space in our schedule, though I'll let him speak for himself as to whether it feels more spacious. But for me, I know as I figure out a routine and my freelance work, the crazy quilt will be turning into something slightly more structured, geometric.

The problem is, I'm still in just-a-minute-hurry-up mode *mentally*. It's like when you're on one of those moving sidewalks at the airport and then you get ejected out the other side. Everything's a bit disorienting when you take that first step onto solid ground; your brain hasn't caught up to (or slowed down for) the new pace.

Which is why, the other night when the younger two kids were enjoying their popsicles after dinner, I hurried them along to bath time *for no good reason*. It wasn't that late, and hey, these were the first popsicles they'd had since last summer. . . . but I couldn't help myself. That's when the seven-year-old busted out with the quote that still makes me want to laugh and cry simultaneously.

Mommy, you ruined my savoring.

People ask me sometimes how the kids feel about the idea of sabbath time. As if it's something we'd have to drag them into. Are you kidding? Children get this stuff in a way adults rarely do.

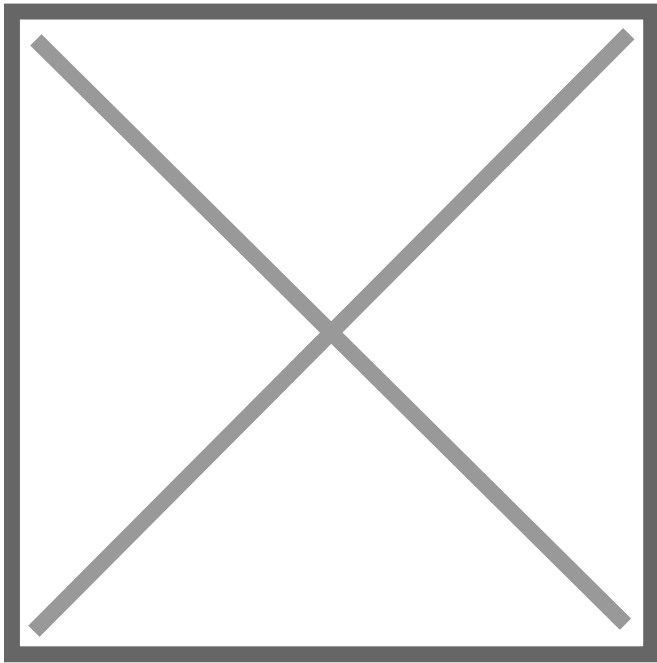
Some years ago I read a quote about the difference between speed and haste. It's long gone now, but my version is that haste is speed without mindfulness. Sometimes, life moves quickly, and speed can be healthy and appropriate. If I'm crossing the street and a car is coming faster than I'd anticipated, I'd better pick up the pace. But sometimes we are—or I should own it and say *I am*—in a hurry without purpose.

Our 12 year old is a bus patrol, which means she leaves the house about 5 minutes before my son and I do. This morning J and I left even later than usual because it was rainy and we had to find umbrellas. Still, when we got outside and saw C on the sidewalk, she was only about two houses ahead of us. She was also walking funny. I called out to her, "C, what's up?" She whirled around in alarm: "Be careful! Look down!!"

There were earthworms everywhere.

We picked our way down the sidewalk, pointing out each skinny pink wriggling thing to one another so we wouldn't squish it. I'm sad to say that "hurry up" was in my throat, trying to escape. But this time, it didn't. This time I didn't ruin the savoring of spring.

Someone posted this to Facebook last week:



I'm glad of this—it means my kids will be in my life for a good long time.

Originally posted at [*The Blue Room*](#)