



"Worldliness is a spirit, a temperament, an attitude of the soul. ... It is a gaze always horizontal and never vertical."

—John Henry Jowett

28-May-10

Beating the Rat Race (Part One)

"But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase" ([Daniel 12:4](#)).

The angel's description of pell-mell activity and exploding information depict our society to a tee, convincing proof that we are indeed living in the end time. Interestingly, the angel—Gabriel, who had interpreted earlier visions ([Daniel 8:16](#); [9:21](#))—instructs the prophet to "shut up the words and seal the book [of Daniel] until the time of the end." Present-day conditions are now paralleling what the prophecy describes, and the words have been opened up so that we can figure out the mysteries of the [book of Daniel](#).

Human knowledge now doubles every few years, as millions of people have pursued higher education, enabling exhaustive research, exploration, investigation, and experimentation in just about every field of study. What they find is then published and disseminated widely—globally, in fact—through journals and the Internet, and others take their findings and add them

to their own research. In this manner, knowledge grows exponentially as people strive to innovate and be the first to invent some new thing that will garner them acclaim, fame, power, and wealth.

It is no wonder that futurist Alvin Toffler (the author of *Future Shock* and other trend-watching commentary) has dubbed this era as the "Information Age." We are awash—and often thrashing about—in increasing knowledge. We cannot seem to go a day without hearing something "new" that someone has discovered, whether it is a new species, a new invention, a new therapy or drug, or a new spin on an old idea. It is almost impossible to keep up with it all.

This other factor—"running to and fro"—can be seen as a result of the increasing knowledge. The rapid flow of information makes everyone live in a hurry; we are all dashing and jerking around like the proverbial headless chicken. To change the metaphor, many of us have had to enter the rat race just to get by. The rat race is such a demanding lifestyle that to keep from falling behind, we have to pick up the pace of our lives drastically, devoting far more time and energy to "the cares of this world" ([Matthew 13:22](#)) than we would like.

To employ another analogy, the whole world is like six billion-plus ants all scurrying about the anthill, trying to set as much in store before winter sets in ([Proverbs 6:6-8](#)). The pace of life is almost maddening—ceaseless, frenzied, pulsating, enervating. Everything seems to be "24/7/365" these days. If a product or service is not "fast," "speedy," or even "instant" it is considered to be worthless—who has time for "slow," "leisurely," or "gradual" anymore?

Television is an excellent example of the pace of modern life. Try this next time the boob tube is on: For a few minutes, ignore the content of the program and commercials and notice the pace of the presentation. Some change in the picture happens every few seconds: The camera pans or tilts; it zooms in or out. The scene often changes entirely to some other place or time. A new graphic appears, flashes, disappears. And we have not even considered the machine-gun pace of speech or music "behind" the video. Something has to be moving all the time to keep a viewer's attention.

Will God's Kingdom be like this? Will life in God's Kingdom run at a frantic pace? It is hard to imagine [God](#) endorsing a society that is merely a "more righteous" version of this one. While it is clear that the Father and Son are constantly working (see [John 5:17](#)), they are not bouncing from pillar to post in a mad attempt to get everything done at once. Instead, He works out His plan over millennia, patiently guiding people and events to fulfill His will. From what we know of His character, He works steadily and surely, not frenetically.

Perhaps His more sedate pace comes as a result of His righteousness. Consider the fact that most of the worst components of this society would simply vanish if the majority of the people in it were righteous. If we removed just one sinful element—say, covetousness—the pace of life would instantly slow because people would not be so determined to get ahead of their neighbors. Gone would be the maddening quest to "keep up with the Joneses," as would be the vain and often cutthroat pursuit of "climbing the ladder." People would be more content with themselves and with what God had given them. Their strivings would be more to better themselves and reach their full potential than to prevail over the competition. Life would slow down because they would no longer have a driving need for more.

Therefore, we can conclude that this life's ramming-speed tempo is not of God. He never intended for us to live in such a fast-paced world. It produces excessive, prolonged stress, which is certainly not good for us. Although a certain amount of stress is necessary, more stress than we can physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually handle is wearying and debilitating. Eventually, it will wear us down.

Life today is also full of fear, not necessarily of something tragic happening all the time, but of slipping behind everybody else. This world produces fears and anxieties that motivate us down avenues that are self-destructive in the end. As mentioned earlier, the adversarial competition into which this society throws us has an edge of life-and-death reality. Just the fear of losing to "the other guy" and of not reaping the "rewards" of aggressive business practices can make a person cut corners and take chances that bring only trouble.

Nor should we ignore the element of confusion. Herbert Armstrong used to say that it is a hallmark of Satan's society, and [the world](#) we live in is chaotic, often to an extreme. Events move so fast that it is hard to make sense of them. Society is like a crowded Turkish bazaar, where dozens of vendors hawk their wares all at once, shouting that their goods are better than others, cajoling passersby with promises of amazing deals, undercutting their competitors, wheeling and dealing, and ultimately unloading their worthless trinkets on bewildered shoppers who know they have been hoodwinked but cannot tell how it happened.

Obviously, "God is not the author of confusion but of [peace](#)" ([I Corinthians 14:33](#)). In a hectic society like ours, peace is almost impossible to achieve, much less to find. We must come out of that confused, pulsating lifestyle before we can have real peace. In fact, the modern way of life is often described as a war to be waged and won, no matter what the cost. As God says of mankind in [Isaiah 59:8](#), "The way of peace they have not known."

[Jesus Christ](#) tells us in [John 14:27](#), "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you." How do we imitate His peace in ourselves? One way is the opposite of "running to and fro": It is being still. Only when we are still do we have the time and the perspective to have real peace, and as we will see, it is how we come to know God.

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[How to Combat Future Shock](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Alvin Toffler described a phenomenon known as Future Shock, a stressful malady caused by an inability to accommodate or adjust to rapid change. Over-stimulation and rapid change (accompanied by the death of permanence) eventually produces apathy and future shock. The antidote to future shock (or attaining the way back to permanence) includes (1) becoming goal oriented toward permanent things (Matthew 6:33), (2)

making sure of permanent values (Deuteronomy 4:40; Hebrews 13:8) (3) working to build wholesome habit, custom or routine (Exodus 31:13), and (4) building quality human relationships (Proverbs 17:17; 18:24; 27:10; Ecclesiastes 4:9)

From the Archives: Featured Article

[God's Quality Way of Life](#)

by Staff

Our God is a God of excellence and quality. As Christians, we should be striving to develop our lives to the sterling quality of God's character.

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