

An Unhurried Leader: The Lasting Fruit of Daily Influence
Available June 20, 2017
 \$20, 192 pages, hardcover
 978-0-8308-4634-4

*“Alan Fadling has done it again! He writes in a way that challenges me to rethink my leadership. I love him and hate him at the same time for reminding me to love from an overflow and abundance rather than leading on empty. He doesn’t just describe the problem, instead in *An Unhurried Leader* he gently and graciously guides the reader toward change that is doable and a reflection of the genius of Jesus’ unhurried way of living and leading.”*

– **Doug Fields**, author of *Your First Two Years in Youth Ministry*

From the Author of *An Unhurried Life*

An Unhurried Leader is Alan Fadling’s follow-up to his award-winning book *An Unhurried Life*. “The response I received from readers of *An Unhurried Life* led me to take this theme one step further,” Fadling said. “I wanted to deal with the dynamics in my outer life of relationships, work, and leadership where I find it most challenging to follow Jesus’ unhurried way. I’m tempted to make things happen fast when fruit that lasts nearly always takes time to produce. I am addressing a reality in culture – even Christian culture – that sees hurry as an apparent virtue but a costly one.”

In *An Unhurried Leader: The Lasting Fruit of Daily Influence*, Fadling unfolds what it means for leaders to let Jesus set the pace. He writes, “Too often I’ve lived and led fueled by the idea that the one who hurries gets the most done for God. This is so different from the spiritual wisdom that the one who hurries delays the things of God. What I’ve been discovering is that unhurried leadership is actually more fruitful *because* it is more unhurried, not *in spite of* that slower pace.”

Through biblical illustrations, personal examples, and on-the-ground leadership wisdom, this book guides leaders into a new view of kingdom leadership. *An Unhurried Leader* includes chapters on the following:

- Leading from Abundance
- Questions That Unhurry Leaders
- Unhurried Influence
- Unhurrying Our Thoughts
- Prayer as Primary Influence

“When I talk about leadership in this book, I’m not limiting that to people like CEOs and senior pastors who have a wide span of organizational responsibility,” Fadling writes. “I certainly hope that what I have to say will be a significant help to fellow organizational leaders. But I’m writing not just about organizational leadership. I’m writing about life leadership. I’m talking about spiritual influence, about kingdom of God influence. Each of us has been planted in particular places among particular people whom we might bless and benefit by sharing something good we’re receiving from God’s good kingdom. We all have some scope of influence in the lives of others. We need not have a *position* of influence to be a *person* of influence.”

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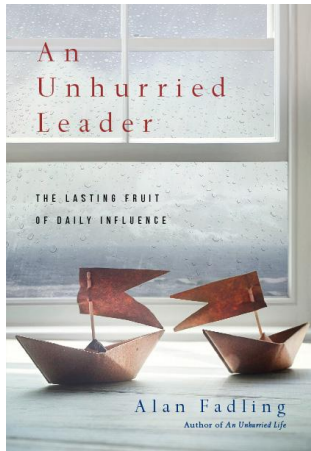


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“In An Unhurried Leader, Alan Fadling points the way out of hurried leadership that kills the souls of leaders. He reveals leadership steeped in spiritual abundance and joy. This is not a how-to book. This book lays out a path to becoming a better sort of person, who is then naturally a better kind of leader.”

– **Todd Hunter**, Anglican bishop, author of *Christianity Beyond Belief*

Becoming an Unhurried Leader

Hurried leadership makes me think of a childhood toy called a Chinese finger trap. This long, narrow cylinder is often woven from bamboo strips. A child puts a finger from one hand into one end and a finger from the other hand in the other end and pulls. The trap tightens on each of the child’s fingers. Without thinking, the child’s instinct to get out of the trap is to pull harder. But the harder he pulls, the tighter the trap becomes. The child needs to do the opposite of what he assumes is right and instead push his fingers toward each other. Doing so will loosen the trap enough to extricate his little digits.

When we get into hurried, anxious places in our lives, how do we respond? Do we, like a child first experiencing a finger trap, try harder and go faster only to find that life gets even more hurried, worried, and cramped? What if we learned to do exactly the opposite of what we would do impulsively? We might experience what Isaiah described: “In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength” (Is 30:15).

I’ve found those words from Isaiah especially helpful whenever I think about having a more unhurried approach to my leadership relationships and roles. To be specific, I see salvation and strength as leadership categories. Throughout Scripture, God’s people seek human leaders like judges or kings who will be strong on their behalf and get them out of the messes in which they find themselves. It’s not much different today. But, through Isaiah, God paints a very different picture of what true salvation and strength look like.

When we look for someone who will save us from our troubles, the qualifications at the top of the list are rarely repentance and rest. We tend to want leaders who will take charge and get moving. Repentance sounds, to the untrained ear, like a reversal or perhaps like a lack of confidence. And as for rest? We want leaders who are going to work until they solve our problem – or drop trying. And when we think of strong leaders, we don’t tend to look for someone who would best be described by the words *quiet* and *trusting*. At least in North America, we often seem to be drawn to bombastic, self-assured leaders who seem to know what they’re doing – and we hope like crazy they’ll get something, the right thing, done. But Isaiah said that we’ll find salvation – help, wholeness, or rescue – in repentance and rest. He said that we’ll find strength – power, influence, and energy – in quietness and trust. Unhurried leaders are different.

- Rather than fill their lives with noise, unhurried leaders make time for silence in which to listen (quietness).
- Rather than allow anxiety to drive them, unhurried leaders learn to depend on a reliable God who invites them to join a good kingdom work already well underway (trust).
- Rather than tackle self-initiated projects under the guise of doing them *for* God,

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unhurried leaders humbly orient themselves to the Leader of all, learning to take their cues from him (repentance).

- Unhurried leaders also learn to rest as hard as they work.
- Rather than measuring the productivity of their lives only in terms of what they *do*, unhurried leaders understand the importance of certain things they *don't* do.

Quietness, trust, repentance, and rest are words that speak, at least in part, to those things. So what was Israel's response to God's invitation to repentance, rest, quietness, and trust? Isaiah described it:

But you would have none of it.
You said, "No, we will flee on horses."
Therefore, you will flee!
You said, "We will ride off on swift horses."
Therefore your pursuers will be swift! (Isaiah 30:15-16)

Unfortunately, Israel answered God with an unqualified no. Specifically, they said, "No, we will flee on horses." They decided to rely on horsepower. To try harder. Do more. Work longer. Hard work and effort are good, God-given capacities, but when these become separated from a living communion with God, they can become destructive rather than constructive. We can find ourselves running past God rather than walking with God. And, unfortunately, Israel would use horsepower to run away rather than to engage or confront their enemies in the strength of God. And, sadly, if horsepower didn't do the job, they said they would opt for *more* horsepower – not just horses but *swift* horses. In this case, Israel's more horsepower was met with their enemy's more horsepower ("Therefore your pursuers will be swift!"). Doesn't it sound a lot like that child's finger trap game, only with greater consequences?

Practically speaking, when I wake up to being in horsepower-only mode, I feel angry, or anxious, or drained. In such moments, I seek to take even a few minutes to be quiet and still, to allow my heart and mind to remember that God is with me. When anxious thoughts start to invade and rule that moment of silence, I allow myself to gently remember God's gracious invitation: "Turn to face me. Relax in me. Let me quiet your heart. Trust me." Then I remember that I'm not doing this work alone or for a God who is distant or disengaged. I let myself remember that I'm doing this work because of God's invitation and in his loving and empowering presence.

– Adapted from chapter one, "Becoming an Unhurried Leader"