

Busyness: A Biblical Perspective

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Day One

Let's talk about a topic all of us, both men and women, are very familiar with—and that is busyness! We are all busy, aren't we? When was the last time someone told you they didn't have enough to do? No, we connect significance with busyness, and most of us either boast or complain about how busy we are. But what does God think about our busyness?

I want to address five questions about our busy schedules, to help us determine how God thinks about it. Our first question is:

Am I busy for the right reasons?

We must look at what we're doing and make sure we are doing what God wants us to do. For sure, doing what God has put us here to do will keep us busy.

Ephesians 2:10 says: *For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

We are here, as God's people, to do the good works he has planned for us. We are to be busy doing those good works. God doesn't honor laziness or wasting time. But one of the traps we can fall into easily is staying very busy for the wrong reasons.

When I was a staff member in my church, getting volunteers to fill all the needs of a local church was a constant challenge. So often when we ask someone to take on a job, we hear the list of excuses why they can't do it. Admittedly some are legitimate; I don't believe we have to say yes to every request that comes our way. But far too often the reason people aren't available is because their lives are filled with things of no eternal value.

For myself, I love being busy; I get bored easily if my plate is not full. But I also know I can easily fall into the trap of trying to do too much and not being busy for the right reason.

Are you willing to honestly ask yourself this question: Am I busy for the right reasons? Make it a matter of prayer; write all your commitments and responsibilities on paper, and then one by one ask God, "Is this one of the good works you put me here to do?" That is how we get serious about doing God's will and ridding our schedules of the things God never intended for us to do.

Day Two

Are you busy? Your response is likely to be "Are you kidding? Who isn't busy?" I want to ask some questions to help us determine what God thinks about our busyness. The first question I asked was, "Are you busy for the right reasons?"

Here's the next question to ask yourself:

Has busyness become my identity? Do I take pride in my busyness?

Some years ago, I recognized this was true of me. I found my self-worth, in part, in staying very busy, accomplishing lots of things, and having people notice. Often I would hear, “How do you do all you do?” I would take pride in knowing people noticed how busy I was. For the most part I was busy doing things in ministry, doing things for Jesus, but far too much of my motivation was to get the praise and admiration of others. That was who I was.

As God’s Spirit revealed this spirit of pride to me, I began to pray that God would deliver me from being addicted to busyness. I truly believe it can become an addiction when we are driven to keep going and stay busy because that’s who we are! We have built our worth on our accomplishments instead of on Christ.

One way you can tell if this is your problem is to notice how much you talk about how busy you are. Do you wear your busyness like a badge of honor, a point of pride? You may be doing good works, the good things God put you here to do, but if your busyness is all about you instead of pure service to the Lord, then you need to pray about this. Ask God to deliver you. Not from doing the good things he wants you to do, but from that sense of pride and identity based on your busyness.

I’ve noticed we are prone to play one-upmanship. You know what I mean. We say, “Hi, how you’re doing?” and the other person gives a litany of how busy they are. Then we reply with our own list, as though we’re trying to prove we’re busier than the other person. And on it goes. Subtly, without realizing it, we’ve taken on a spirit of pride in how busy we are.

I hope you’ll ask yourself this question: *Has busyness become my identity?* and be willing to let God change that attitude in you, if necessary.

Day Three

Someone has said, “There is always time to do God’s will.” Certainly, that has to be true. What God has given us to do we will have time to do, provided we know how to manage our time well and are disciplined in our work habits.

Here’s the next question we need to ask ourselves:

Do I set appropriate boundaries on my busyness?

Did you ever realize Jesus knew how to say, “That’s not my job”? In Luke 12 we read where a man asked Jesus to be a judge, and Jesus said, in effect, “That’s not my job.” I’m sure this man figured Jesus was the right person to settle this argument between him and his brother. But Jesus told him he was not called, nor did he intend, to become an earthly judge in human affairs. He was not unkind about it, but he certainly was direct.

In Mark 1:35-38 we see another occasion where Jesus disappointed some people. The whole town had gathered to hear Jesus, and his disciples were most anxious for him to come and please this crowd. But Jesus said no to his disciples because he said he must *go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.* No doubt he disappointed his disciples and the crowd, but Jesus stayed focused on his mission. He knew how to set boundaries and refused to try to please everyone.

I used to think if I was everything I should be, everybody would be happy with me and I’d be able to please everyone. But when I realized Jesus set boundaries and said, “That’s not my job” when necessary, it freed me to know I too could set boundaries. Just because someone asks you to do something doesn’t necessarily mean you should do it.

For many of us saying no is very difficult. That’s because our worth as a person is too much based on what others think of us. When we are dependent on the opinions and affirmation of other people to feel

good about ourselves and what we're doing, then we are at their mercy. We're going to jump through their hoops, trying to be super people, to gain their approval and therefore feel we're okay.

If you haven't learned how to set biblical boundaries in your life, I urge you to take this matter under consideration. There are some good Christian books on the topic, and it will be well worth your time to find out when and how you should be setting boundaries on the busyness of your life.

Day Four

If you're very, very busy, it could be because it's your way of avoiding some issues in your life that need to be addressed. We're asking the question: How does God feel about my busyness?

Maybe you need to ask yourself:

Do I stay busy to avoid issues that need to be confronted?

I know how easy this is to do, because I did it for ten years. During this period many years ago, I was running from God's control in my life. I wanted to be in charge. So, my lifestyle was not what it should be, and I knew it. But I didn't want to face it; I didn't want to relinquish control of my life. I just kept busy. I made sure every minute was filled with some kind of activity. Every weekend, every evening—if I didn't have anything to do, I found something. I got involved in all kinds of activities simply to stay busy. That way I didn't leave time to think; I didn't allow quiet moments when the convicting voice of God's Spirit could get to me.

It didn't really work. I was under conviction the whole time, but busyness became my escape mechanism to avoid confronting the sin in my life. What a foolish thing to do. We can't hide from God, no matter how busy we are, and eventually we must face ourselves. If you're staying busy because you don't want to hear what God has to say to you, let me urge you to give it up. God wants only good things for you, and you don't even realize how heavy your burden of guilt is until you get right with God, accept his forgiveness, and turn the controls back over to him.

One final question to ask yourself about your busy schedule:

Is my busyness an obstacle to my spiritual growth?

Are you too busy for time with God? Is that what falls through the cracks when the schedule gets heavy? I believe this is one of Satan's best tricks to pull on us—to keep us so busy we convince ourselves we just don't have time to read our Bibles, develop a meaningful prayer life, get to know God better. If you're too busy to have a consistent daily time with God, you're too busy. That's for sure.

Day Five

What does God think about your busy life? I wonder if you have some bad habits that are making matters worse, causing you to be unnecessarily busy, eating up your time and keeping you from doing all the good things God wants you to do. Here are some of those things that can exacerbate our busyness:

1. Poor time management.

If you're not good at managing time, here are four things that will help you:

- *Whatever you have to do today that you don't want to do, do it first.* Believe me, this will help you immensely. If you tend to put off what you don't want to do, then it piles on you. You will be amazed at how it will free your mind and energy to know the thing you didn't want to do today is already done!
- *Eliminate as many interruptions as possible.* If others interrupt you frequently, think of ways to minimize it. More importantly, stop interrupting yourself. Stay on task. Set goals

for yourself, give yourself rewards for staying on task—whatever you can do to eliminate interruptions will save you much time.

- *Finish one job before you start another, if possible.* Jumping from one task to another always wastes your time. If you can finish one thing before starting another, you'll eliminate a lot of "start-up time."
- *Always have a plan for your day in writing.* Whether you use a to-do list, a calendar, your smart phone or computer—when you make a plan for your day, with some sense of priority and time frames, you will see great improvement in the use of your time.

2. Procrastination

A simple cure for procrastination is this:

- "Do it right and do it now!" If you have to do it, don't put it off. Living by this simple principle will bring remarkable changes in your life.

3. Negative attitudes

- Get rid of them! Negativity drains your energy and slows you down. Paul wrote to the Philippians that we are to *rejoice in the Lord always*. That leaves no time for complaining, griping, and being negative.

How does God feel about your busyness?

- Are you busy for the right reasons?
- Has busyness become a point of pride for you?
- Do you set appropriate boundaries on your busyness?
- Do you stay busy to avoid confronting issues in your life that need to be changed?
- Is your busyness an obstacle to your spiritual growth?

I hope these thoughts will cause you to think twice about your own busy life.