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## Word-filled Meditation: Are we TOO Busy?



Part 34 (031102AM)

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## ARE WE TOO BUSY?

### Living the Word-filled Life in Busy Times

If I were to summarize the status of life in Tulsa it would be with one word – busy. Isn't that what we all hear so often? We call a friend and ask how they are and they reply, "Well I'm busy with this and that...". Then we pass someone in the grocery store, or at the mall, or Wal-Mart and say, "How are you?" – and what is the top response? "Well, we have been busy with ...".

We are certainly a busy people, living in a busy nation, at the top of a busy world.

By the way, what does busy mean? Well, I checked Webster, here is what he says.

Main Entry: <sup>1</sup>busy Function: *adjective*; Etymology: Middle English *bisy*, from Old English *bisig*; akin to Middle Dutch & Middle Low German *besich* busy; Date: before 12th century

busy : **1 a** : engaged in action : **OCCUPIED**

Wait a minute – occupied. What does the primary definition of our primary description of our daily life really mean? Listen to what "occupied" means before we continue with the meaning of busy.

**1** : to engage the attention or energies of **2 a** : to take up (a place or extent in space) *occupied*> *occupy* this corner of the room> **b** : to take or fill (an extent in time) *occupies* all of my free time> **3 a** : to take or hold possession or control of *occupied* the ridge> **b** : to fill or perform the functions of (an office or position) **4** : to reside in as an owner or tenant

We feel that busyness is a virtue in our culture. The synonyms of busy are terms of honor. Badges that people we admire wear proudly. Listen to these synonyms of modern life:

- o **BUSY** chiefly stresses activity as opposed to idleness or leisure *busy* to spend time with the children>.
- o **INDUSTRIOUS** implies characteristic or habitual devotion to work < *industrious* employees>.
- o **DILIGENT** suggests earnest application to some specific object or pursuit *diligent* in her pursuit of a degree>.
- o **ASSIDUOUS** stresses careful and unremitting application < *assiduous* practice>.

There we go. That is it. We as a culture are busy, which means if we combine what the dictionary has defined – that we have stated that we "**engage the attention or energies of**" our lives with various activities that "**take up (a place or extent in space)**" in other words these chosen activities fill a place or displace something else, and continuing to read from the dictionary "**to take or fill (an extent in time)**" sounds true so far, here is the next line – "**to take or hold possession or control of**" and finally here is the last word from the dictionary describing a busy life "**to reside in as an owner or tenant**".

Now step back with me and think about that idea.

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We have confessed as a society that we are busy. That means we have allowed ourselves, or chosen to be engaging our energies in filling up our lives with activities that take hold and control our time and we begin to be owned, possessed, and controlled by our activities.

So next time you say that you are busy you may be confessing that good activities have begun to take over and control your life. Which is fine unless something else suffers.

I have a dear elderly friend who quietly slips me things that she thinks may help me. A while back she gave me a note from someone about how busy our families have gotten these days. Listen to someone's very piercing insights on this very subject of being perhaps "too busy".

### Busyness [1]

*It seems that in a generation equipped with the most timesaving devices in history we have less time for building and maintaining relationships than ever before. Perhaps it's because we've substituted activity for intimacy, busyness for value. Though many people fuss about how busy they are, the simple truth is that each of us chooses to live this way. We enroll ourselves and our children in classes, clubs, and camps, all good things that can consume our schedules and leave no time for the best things - love, joy, peace. Busyness, like heroin, tobacco, or alcohol, is addictive. The "buzz" of a hectic lifestyle is intoxicating and like other addictive substances, reveals deeper underlying problems such as a low self image, the need to feel accepted and valued. We may also find it difficult to have genuine face-to-face relationships for the sheer joy of the relationship apart from some hidden agenda. In other words, we may have working relationships, but they are shallow and unsatisfying. It appears that many in today's generation do not know the blessing of simple fellowship. They have yet to discover the value of simple, unstructured time together. So we become human doings instead of human beings. Busyness makes us feel important, too. Ask anyone how their jobs are going and they'll immediately say how busy they are. This appears to offer some sense of job security. If we're busy, we must be needed. Similarly, busy family and church lives convince others that we must be important. After all, we reason, people are depending on me. I'm working hard for God. Sometimes we stay busy because we don't really want to have time to think about how busy we are. We think if we don't talk about all the problems we have because we don't have time to discuss the problems we have, they'll simply go away. But we have beautiful homes and talented children, so everything must be ok, right?*

#### What does busyness do?

- o *Busyness destroys relationships. We say, "It's the quality, not the quantity that counts." Nope. **There is no substitute** for time spent with those we love. It takes time to play with the kids, visit a friend, and get to know our spouse.*
- o *Busyness robs us of time to reflect, to meditate, and to live.*
- o *Busyness makes husbands and wives can become strangers to each other if they let their busy lives prevent them from spending time with each other. Not only does compulsive activity cause us to become strangers to our husbands and wives, but God becomes a distant cousin as well.*
- o *Busyness also destroys our relationship with God. If we are going to have a relationship with God, we must have time to mediate, worship, to listen and to talk with Him. He tells us to "Be still, and know that I am God" (Ps. 46: 10) and we tell Him, "Sorry, but I have a meeting to attend." Tragically, when we lose sight of who God is, we start reshaping Him into our image, making Him into something that can fit into our lifestyle.*

#### So what is the solution?

*Holiness means being separated from and distinct from the world. As Christians, we are to be fully dedicated to God. Safeguards against busyness include accountability, both personal and within the church.*

- o *DOWNLOAD: We are to practice memorizing God's Word so that it fills our consciousness and allowing it to change our behavior so that we are not conformed to this world's standards, but transformed by the renewing of our minds.*
- o *INSTALL: We are to seek out from God's Word the way He wants us to live, and practice them so that our lives are pleasing to Him.*
- o *OPEN: We must be continuously full of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. We need to realize that when we choose any action, we choose its consequences, too. God cannot bless disobedience and unfaithfulness.*
- o *RESTART: We must realize that God most often speaks to us in what the Bible describes as a gentle whisper (1 Kings 19: 11-12). Most of the time, the voice of God is a whisper, not a roar. We must be still and listen.*

*Jesus said, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? ... Seek first his kingdom, and*

his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:25, 33).

*Our Shepherd is not in the rat race; He leads us beside quiet waters and restores our souls. Let's return to a life of quietness and rest in the presence of our Lord Jesus. It begins by saying "No" to busyness and "Yes" to God.*

Do Malachi 3.16 and pray!

Last time we began to look at individuals who practice the Word filled life. I like to look on as God's Team. They were men and women who lived extraordinary lives, yet they were ordinary people. As far as we can see from God's Word the only unique aspect each of these share is the fact that they had what I call a Word Filled Life.

In Genesis 5:22, 24 After he begot Methuselah, **Enoch walked with God** three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.

- Enoch chose to take God into every day, every part of his life – what the Lord had said to him went with him. If you want to be great for the Lord, learn to walk through life with God.
- Next time you see a teen with their headphones on listening to something – think about your life. Are you listening to the voice of the Lord (through God's Word that you have opened and allowed into your heart and mind)? That is what Enoch did, and it made him a hero on God's Team. He walked through life with his headphones on – listening to the Lord!

In Genesis 6. Noah had a Word Filled Life while he was consumed by his job How on Earth did Noah do it? **Meditation – which meant** Noah "did" what the Lord asked him to do even if it sounded impossible. **Genesis 6:22** Thus Noah did; **according to all that God commanded him**, so he did.

- Noah was on God's Team because he listened and obeyed. He did what God asked him to do. He remembered what God said, thought about it, and made a plan to obey what the Lord said. That is powerful even though it is simple. Noah knew what the Lord had told him and did something about it.
- Next time you read God's Word ask your self – what did the Lord just say to me? And what does he want me to do about that? And how can I do that in such a way that I please Him? You are becoming a man or woman of God by meditating upon God's Word by taking it in as you live life (like Enoch) and doing something to respond obediently to God (like Noah).

In Genesis 12 we saw that Abraham had a Word Filled Life while experiencing complete turmoil in his personal life. How did Abraham do it? **Meditation – which meant** Abraham "built" an altar or meeting place with God where ever he was. **Genesis 12:7** Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." And there he built (**established; constructed**) an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him.

- He wanted to remember what the Lord said so he would never let the Lord down by forgetting Him. Are we so focused? Do we take the time to set up markers at the spots where God has revealed Himself to us? One way to start is decide that you will read God's Word until you hear Him speak. Then note what He says. Jot a word in the margin of your Bible. Draw an arrow to that verse, then bow and offer a sacrifice. Say to the Lord "I will remember you today" and then by the power of the Holy Spirit of God living inside of you and me – walk through life with God (like Enoch), seeking to obey what you remember He said (like Noah), and set up markers or altars of remembrance (like Abraham).

What a TEAM. What a lesson for us. Often however we don't hear the voice of the Lord in His Word because our lives are too full and too complex. One of the best ways to experience the discipline of meditation – and the immense rewards that it will bring to our lives, is to practice a spiritual fast.

Next we look at Moses. As we turn to Exodus 33, imagine life 3500 years ago for Moses. To do so you have to think of having a campout. But not just any camp out, one in your own backyard – that you are completely responsible for everything. Food and water and travel and safety – it all falls on you. To that detail add the fact that there are 600,000 families and the backyard camp ground covers 81 square miles! Now you have what Moses was dealing with.

In that incredible sea of stress what was the habit of Moses? We find it in **Exodus 33:7-11** Moses took his tent and pitched it outside the camp, far from the camp, and called it the tabernacle of meeting. And it came to pass that **everyone who sought the Lord went out to the tabernacle** of meeting which was outside the camp. 8 So it was, whenever Moses went out to the tabernacle, that all the people rose, and each man stood at his tent door and watched Moses until he had gone into the tabernacle. 9 And it came to pass, when Moses entered the tabernacle, that the pillar of cloud descended and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the Lord talked with Moses. 10 All the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the tabernacle door, and all the people rose and worshiped, each man in his tent door. 11 So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. And he would return to the camp, but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle.

- o Moses had a Word Filled Life while living away from home and going to a very pagan, secular university in Egypt.
- o He maintained that Word Filled Life while recovering from manslaughter charges that drove him away from his home for 40 years.
- o He cultivated a Word Filled Life while working from dawn to dusk every day out in the

blazing heat of the desert sun by day and the bone chilling cold of its star lit nights.

- o Moses never lost his Word Filled Life in spite of a 40-year career filled with 603,000 different families' opinions, problems, and sins. Moses' Word Filled Life endured the defection of his family both wife and brother and sister; attempted murder plots by his employees and friends, plagues, poisonous snakes, fierce attacks from marauding armies, and no water or food in the desert.

To feel the pressures on Moses just zip back to 3,500 years ago in the Sinai Wilderness. The Camp of Israel was at least 81 square miles just for 600,000 fighting men and their families! That is the equivalent of a square camp ground containing solid rows of tents from Lewis Street on the West to Elm Street in BA on the East, from 21<sup>st</sup> street in the north to 101<sup>st</sup> street in the south. That would put us today in the tabernacle in the center of the camp!

Moving that crew around was nothing less than impossible. If just the Exodus march out of Egypt was marching as a column of 5 people wide – it would have stretched 225 miles long. If they traveled as a column of 50 people wide they would have stretched for 22.5 miles. Just to put our vast world in perspective – our world of 6+ billion would be a wall of people 100 wide that would stretch for 45,000 miles!

#### HOW BIG WAS THE TASK?

Now here is the unbelievable need these people had. For nearly 40 years of their WILDERNESS WANDERINGS, ISRAEL under the leadership of MOSES wandered through the dry, sun baked arid wastelands of the Sinai. No lush green gardens, no stores and grain elevators to draw from and yet to feed three million people would take 1300 box cars of food **each day** or **a train 9 1/2 miles long!**

How did Moses do it? **Meditation – which meant** Moses "went out to meet" the Lord wherever he was, what ever else went on around and in him.

**Exodus 33:13** Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation is Your people."

- o **Moses knew the Lord because he sought the Lord. God told him 'you will seek and find Me when you seek with (what) ALL your heart'.**
- o **And Moses did seek with all his heart to know the Lord.**
- o **And Moses did find and know the Lord like no one else.**
- o **God sits day after day ready to speak to you and me as long as we will listen.**
- o **Just pick up the receiver, open the cover, turn your eyes onto the pages of God's Word and hear His voice.**
- o **Are you seeking Him with ALL your heart?**

Have you made the choice to clear out a site in your life – and build there a place for the Lord. Do you have a place of meeting the Lord like Moses? What a sacred duty and what a sacred privilege to have a spot we go to and meet with God.

I read a fabulous article on our time which I am including to catch your attention!

BreakPoint with Charles Colson July 31, 2003 Worldview and the Clock (Note: This commentary was delivered by Prison Fellowship President Mark Earley)

In Jonathan Swift's classic book Gulliver's Travels, when Gulliver arrives in Lilliput, the Lilliputians see his pocket watch and conclude that it must be Gulliver's god. After all, Gulliver told them that he never did anything without consulting it first. I often feel like that.

Is the clock your god? I believe that there is probably no other part of our lives so thoroughly co-opted by a secular worldview as our notion of time. We say time is a gift from God, but most of the time we treat time as a club rather than a gift-something that we chase, and once we catch it, it beats us up. It's a notion of time that is contrary to a Christian worldview.

To properly understand time, we need richer language than the language of management. We need biblical language that reflects the God who grants us life hour by hour, minute by minute.

Time in the global economy is what I call "head-banging time." There are no more days; there is simply productivity-24/7. Time in the global economy never slows down, never rests, and has no rhythm but the relentless beat of commerce.

That is not the biblical idea of time. God has built a rhythm into the world and into human beings. Eugene Peterson in his book *Working the Angles* points out that in the Bible a day doesn't begin with sunrise. It begins with sunset. The day begins when we go to sleep and God works. We wake up and join Him in the work of the day He began while we were sleeping. We don't begin the day, but rather we wake up and step into God's rhythm of grace, a day already in progress.

This idea that day begins when I go to sleep is a vital worldview concept. Life, success, and productivity don't, in the final analysis, depend on us. They depend on God.

And that understanding allows us to rest-to rest in our sleep knowing that God is at work, and to rest on the Sabbath. Because we believe in the providence of God, we can affirm that we have enough time, and we can then receive the day as a gift.

There are at least four applications for this biblical view of time. First, we should honor our bodies by keeping sensible schedules and getting the rest we need. We have enough time to work, rest, love our families and friends, worship, and exercise.

Second, prayer and meditation on God's Word must be built into our schedules. Keeping God and His Word at the forefront of our minds helps us develop the biblical notion of time.

Third, we can say no. Our overscheduled lives are testimony that our notion of time has not been formed by a biblical worldview.

And finally, we can enjoy the freedom of the Sabbath, that foretaste of our eternal rest with God.

Time is a profound worldview issue. And this biblical perspective on time will revolutionize the way we live, play, rest, worship, and work.

So the next time you look at your watch, take a moment to remember who your God is and how He has providentially given you all the time you need.

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[1] Doug Morrell, Disciples Corner email letter 10.11.03.

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