

# “A Soul-Destroying Busyness” // Luke 10:38–42 // *God and the Rest of the Week 4*

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A problem most all of you have, but you’ve probably never heard a sermon on it before: busyness.

- We are busy people...
  - We’re busy with our jobs: 86% of men and 67% of women in the United States work an average of more than 40 hours a week.<sup>1</sup>
    - Yet, most workers feel like they never have time to get anything done.<sup>2</sup>
    - Only 57% of Americans use all of their allotted vacation time.<sup>3</sup>
    - This causes emotional problems: CNN: In a 6-year study of 2,500 workers, those who worked 11-hour days were 2.5 times more likely to become depressed than those who worked 8-hour days.<sup>4</sup>
  - And we’re not getting enough sleep.
    - And, of course, this just contributes to the problem. Sleep deprivation causes obesity; diabetes; depression.
    - We tell each other stories about saints who got up at 3... Well, they went to bed at 6 am because they didn’t have lights.
    - Average American getting about 2 hours less of sleep than our great grandparents 100 years ago!
  - And then you have kids. I was listening to Jim Gaffigan, who has 4 kids... he said, “People ask me, ‘What’s it like to go from 3 to 4 kids. He said, “Well, it feels like you are drowning in the ocean, fighting with all your might to keep your head afloat for just another second... and, then, someone in a boat, takes a baby and says, “Here, catch.”
- And it doesn’t seem to be getting any better.
  - *NY Times Op-Ed* article that talked about how our smart phones and computers ensure that we are never really away from things. Vacation used to be like an on-off switch; now [because of technology] it’s more of a dimmer switch.”<sup>5</sup>
  - Study presented to Congress in the 1960’s: with all the new labor saving devices, we’d only work 15 hours a week and our main problem would be what to do with “all this time on our hands.”<sup>6</sup>
    - Anyone feel like that?

In our God and the Rest of the Week, I want to spend a week talking about how you set up your calendar. Strong statement: there are few things as damaging, and potentially soul-destroying, as busyness. Blaise Pascal, one of my favorite philosophers, said that busyness sends more people to hell than unbelief.

Jesus told a story in the Bible about busyness—maybe you’ve never thought of this:

## Luke 10:38–42

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<sup>1</sup> <http://visualeconomics.creditloan.com/the-state-of-the-40-hour-workweek/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://familiesandwork.org/site/research/summary/feelingoverworkedsumm.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> [http://articles.cnn.com/2011-05-23/travel/vacation.in.america\\_1\\_vacation-germans-long-holiday?\\_s=PM:TRAVEL](http://articles.cnn.com/2011-05-23/travel/vacation.in.america_1_vacation-germans-long-holiday?_s=PM:TRAVEL)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.cnn.com/2012/01/25/health/working-overtime-doubles-depression/index.html>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/14/jobs/14work.html>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.leisuresource.net/DownloadableContentHandler.ashx?mediaId=3c3c3a92-1082-45e3-bd32-e8ea02d56c9e>

[38] Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. [39] And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. [40] But Martha was distracted with much serving. (she was busy)

And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." (she's tattle-taling; and she feels self-righteous, and now she's bossing Jesus around, which is a really bad day.)

[41] But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, (double in Hebrew means intense statement—*this is very important*) you are anxious and troubled about many things, [42] but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."

- Many commentators have suspected that you have two very clear personality types here. Martha: task-oriented; Mary: people-oriented, just be with Jesus.
  - That may be true, but I don't think Jesus is here trying to indicate that he prefers the Mary personality best. He created both personality types and he has a purpose for both.
  - And he is not saying that no one should ever prepare meals; we should all just sit around and do our quiet times, all day every day. That would go against so many other things Scripture teaches. One of the spiritual gifts God gifts is serving and hospitality.
- So why is he picking on Martha? Why not say, "OK, Martha, here's your problem... but Mary, you should get off your rear every once in a while and help." Well, you see, the world usually values Marthas... Marthas are considered to be great Christians. What's more, Marthas usually value themselves and consider themselves to be great Christians.
  - And Jesus is going deal with a rather dangerous temptation for competent, responsible people. You see, *Just like it's harder for rich people to enter the kingdom of heaven, it's harder for competent people to find the will of God.* I'll tell you why.
- Now, real quick: (You say, "Ha! Well, I'm in good shape this weekend... I'm like the paragon of irresponsibility. I can't hold down a job! I was 20 minutes late this morning!" (I saw all of you who just walked in. Well, as you'll see there's a little Martha in all of us.)

Here's what Jesus does in this story. He:

1. **Shatters a myth**
2. **Confronts a fear**
3. **Points to a better way forward**

Simple, right?

## Myth, Fear, Forward

Here's the **MYTH** he shatters: **Busyness = faithfulness**

- Many of us like to be busy because then we feel important; needed.
  - **Basketball story**... but the feeling.
  - Interesting... In the studies we cited earlier... The WSJ in its study on overwork said that a little investigation uncovered the fact that the hours most people report are inflated because we feel like we need to exaggerate to prove that we are *useful*. And some people tend to exaggerate

because they “create mental pictures of themselves” in which they *legitimately feel* like they are working 24/7, even when at home and on vacation.<sup>7</sup>

- So the same reason we overwork is the same reason we exaggerate how much we overwork, because overwork makes us feel useful!
- For many people, busyness makes us feel faithful to God. “Look, God, I’m tired!” “I’m burned out. I’ve got nothing left!” This story shows you that is not true.

### The FEAR he confronts:

- What drives Martha’s busyness? Fear. See where it says she is “**anxious**” (vs. 41)?
  - “It’s not going to get done”;
  - “Everyone will think poorly of me.”
  - “Jesus will think poorly of me—that’s embarrassing, when God comes over for dinner—toothpaste spots on the mirror; unflushed toilets; sending someone out to Bojangles to pick up chicken.”
  - Martha says, “You can’t do that for the Son of God. You can’t serve him lazy leftovers. You can’t have Jesus show up and say, ‘Well, it’s BO-time.’”
- Before I tell you why that is unfounded...Let me get you to consider: isn’t a lot of our busyness driven by our fears?
  - Not being important.
  - Who else will do it? Indispensable.
  - Pride: “I’m the only one who can do this. I’m special. I’m unique. I’m a snowflake.”
  - Trying to please people. Some of you can’t say “no” because you want to be liked by everyone.
  - Trying to prove yourself—you can’t rest because you are trying to prove something to your parents; your siblings; a high school coach; an ex-girlfriend; yourself.<sup>8</sup>
  - Maybe it is a need to keep up with everyone else. You work to earn; earn to spend. Spend to keep up with what everyone else.
  - A fear that you will lack things in the future.
  - Trying to earn God’s approval—you feel like when you collapse from busyness, completely burned out, you’ll say, “There it is God. I am my own burnt offering.”
  - Parents: Fear of our kids getting behind.
    - A Professor at George Mason University, Bryan Caplan, who conducted extensive studies on biological twins adopted by different families... and what their research showed is that all the things the parents had their kids involved in had little to no effect on what the child achieved or how they turned out (assuming the home environment was stable).<sup>9</sup>
    - Caplan sites a study where kids were asked to grade their parents, comment on what they want to do better, etc. Rarely did the kids ask for more time, but they did say that they wished their parents were less stressed and so prone to anger.
    - Kids suffer, Caplan says, from “secondhand stress.” All the busyness we are pouring into their lives to add value are actually crushing both them and their relationship to us
    - From the other week: **Experience rich, even if it means relationally poor.** Relationship rich/experience poor

### What does Jesus say? “Martha, Martha...” Come be with me!

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<sup>7</sup> <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124355233998464405.html>

<sup>8</sup> Kevin DeYoung, *Crazy Busy*, 36.

<sup>9</sup> Kevin DeYoung, *Crazy Busy*, (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013), 68–69. Leslie Leyland Fields concurs in *Christianity Today*: “One of the most resilient and cherished myths of parenting is that parenting creates the child.” “The Myth of the Perfect Parent: Why the Best Parenting Techniques Don’t Produce Christian Children,” *Christianity Today*, January 2010.

- First of all, his approval is a gift. Doesn't need to be earned.
- Second, Jesus said, all that you're striving for is in me.
  - Bread of life
  - Ps 16:11. Better source of enjoyment and safety.
- Third, I'm omni-competent, so you don't need to be!
  - Think about this... why is Martha stressed about dinner? Isn't this the guy who took a "Lunchable" and fed a whole stadium? That guy is not stressing out about where dinner is going to come from.

## 2 verses we've used in past weeks I want to pull out for you:

- "Trust in the Lord, with all your heart... In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight." **Prov 3:5-6**
  - What's your responsibility? To acknowledge him. To obey. His responsibility is to make your paths work out.
- "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. **2** It is in vain that *you* rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep." **Psalm 127:1-2**
  - What's the sign? Remember the awesome joke I used? That was great.
  - But what about? And what about?
  - Martha: What about dinner? The one who multiplies fish and bread has got that covered!
- **The question is not, "What needs to be done?" The question is: What does *he* want me to do?**
  - (We live in a world of seemingly infinite need, and if we ask it we'll never get rest. One more emergency to plan for; one more thing to obtain; one more need to meet).
  - We are to do the things he has given to us: your success by faithfulness in those.
    - A few years ago I made out a list, carried it around in my wallet—lover of God; good husband; good dad; preach a good sermon... so, all the emails; requests from people for "just a few minutes" over coffee; speaking engagements.
    - Establish those things as priorities: Stephen Covey's **Big Rocks**.
  - **An important element in this is discovering your calling.**
    - Missions
    - Giving to the poor
    - Adopt
    - "Be single"
    - Important lesson I learned: Not everything that comes from heaven has your name on it.
    - Build your schedule around your calling... "The person who never sets priorities is the person who does not believe in his own finitude." (DeYoung)
    - and don't obsess about all the things
      - Sam James: God made him good at these things.
  - **And recognize that just as God establishes seasons in the environment, he establishes seasons in your life:**
    - V: Mission trips I get to go on... usually likes to travel. Not everything at every stage.
    - One of my favorite authors, Peter Kreeft: "What is your favorite book that you've written?" "The ones I didn't write when my kids were young."
- Go sit at the feet of Jesus, find your sufficiency in him, and then do what he tells you! If Jesus says to Mary, "Go get me a cup of water," don't you think she'd do it!
- Do what he tells you to do then...
  - A. **Sleep!** Psalm 127: "He gives to his beloved sleep."
    - It's not your busyness that gives us a picture of your closeness to God, but your ability to sleep!

- My college pastor, “Sometimes the most spiritual, faith-filled thing you can do is take a nap.” (BEST SERMON EVER!)
- B. And **Refuse to worry about tomorrow!**
- Jesus: “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Tomorrow has its own troubles.” (Matthew 6:34) “Don’t worry about tomorrow; it has plenty of its own troubles. *That’s exactly what I was worried about tomorrow.* Jesus is saying, “I’ll be there tomorrow, with provision sufficient for the trouble.”
  - MANNA
  - **Philippians 4:13, 19**, “*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me... my God shall supply all your need in Christ Jesus!*”
- C. **Create some margin!** Don’t have time to go into this to a great extent (because I have left no margin in this sermon), but when your schedule is hyper-packed you can’t deal with the things God genuinely brings to you.
- Good Samaritan: too busy. Me: I’d have compassion, but I’ve got no time for that. “Someone call an intern and have them go take care of that.”
- D. **Observe the Sabbaths** (I’ll tell you why plural in a minute)
- God commanded Israel to take a Sabbath, one day off to cease from labor. That made NO sense, especially back then... In an agrarian society, times were tight; providing for yourself and your family was hard. Crops had to be harvested daily. Water had to be collected daily. To cut your productivity by 1/7 was not prudent. *But God commanded them to do it because he wanted them to leave space for Him to provide for them.*
  - And he promised them that if they would work 6 days and take off the 7<sup>th</sup>, He would multiply their effectiveness on the other 6 days to make up for what they missed on the 7<sup>th</sup>!
  - Two arenas: Tithe and Sabbath. God wants you to do less.
  - Sabbath, tithe and sleep are to be the most restful experiences, relieving us of the stress of trying to play the role of God. They are the unique privileges of the Christian walking with God!

So, come to Jesus, find your rest in him, hear what he wants you to do, and then go do those things! That’s the better way forward. Jesus told Martha that she was busy about many things and had forgotten “the best thing.” “Best thing” is not “only” thing. “Best” thing means “first” thing. Start at the feet of Jesus, resting in him and hearing from him.

- In the OT, evening came before morning. For us, morning comes before evening. Morning is when we work; evening is when we rest. Man rested with God, then went to work in the garden. That’s a pretty good pattern.
- Even for us.... Sunday is the first day of the week, the day Jesus resurrected. It’s the day that we rest in who God is and what he has accomplished for us before we go through six days of labor.

Now, one more thing... there’s a very a somber warning Jesus gives to us... greatest problem with our busyness. *The great danger of busyness is that it keeps us from the feet of Jesus.*

- “You are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary...” (10:41–42)
- The real problem with being busy with everything else is it keeps us from the one *necessary* thing.
  - Pascal: “Busyness sends more people to hell than outright rejection of God.”
  - “When we are crazy busy, we put our souls at risk.” (DeYoung)
- “Mary has chosen the good thing, which can never be taken away from her.” All the other things you are consumed with can be taken away from you!
  - Career. Kingdom. Wealth. Health. Family. *Knowing Jesus and teaching your family to know Jesus is the one thing that can never be taken away!*

- To die with him and nothing else is not really different than dying with him and everything else. Eternity matters.
- To die without him and everything else is to lose it all.
- **Psalm 90:12:** Teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to learn wisdom!

## CONCLUSION:

**I want you to think about this: What you do with your time shows what you really believe. What does what you do with your time say about...**

- Where you find your value?
- Your trust in God?
- What kingdom you are building? Some of you are not stressed because you are lazy... I'm definitely not Martha... you will give an account!
  - Leisure; retirement.

How you spend your time (each day) is how you spend your life, because your life is essentially a series of days. How are you spending your life? If we looked at your calendar, what would we see you prized most, and pursued most? What you prize the most is what you pursue the hardest.

## Bullpen:

- “How you spend your time is how you spend your life.”
- But who is going to get it all done? Martha: who is going to make the hors d’oeuvres? Just do what you are supposed to do. Jesus has no needs: do what he gives you to do, and then trust that the one who multiplies loaves and fishes and walks on water will get the rest done!
- Sleep deprivation causes obesity, diabetes. D.A. Carson once preached a sermon on the 6 causes of doubt. 5 of them were pretty standard, but one was “sleep deprivation.” He said, “When you burn the candle at both ends, you engage in more and more cynicism...” God made us complicated beings, uniting our spiritual health to our physical well-being.”
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- Create margin
- We are commanded to rest more often than we are commanded to not have adultery. This conversation is very common: How you doing? Fine, just too busy. Imagine this conversation, “how you doing spiritually?” fine, I just keep sleeping with my neighbors wife
- Why crucial: How you spend time is how you spend your life. Judged one day: time.
- It’s dumb for us never to think about it. Time is the one commodity we all get a fixed amount of, and that we can’t make any more of.
- Listen to this: *“We don’t expect to be able to buy anything we want, because we know there is a limit to our money. But somehow we live as if time knew no bounds, when in fact time is much more limited than money. Wealth can be created, but no one has the ability to grow more time.”* Kevin DeYoung, *Crazy Busy*
- The best thing means it comes first in priority. Just like in the OT, evening came before morning. For us, morning comes before evening. Morning is when we work, evening is when we rest. Rest comes before walking with God in the cool of the day, it comes before the work. Sunday is the first day of the week, the day Jesus resurrected. It’s the day that we rest in what God has accomplished for us before we go through six days of labor.
- The other sweet thing about this story is that the only one who knew about this besides Jesus was Martha. Luke went around collecting stories, funded by Theophilus, and then put these stories in a collection. This means that Martha is the one who repentantly shared this story about Jesus.
- Again: He is not saying that no one should ever prepare meals and we should all just sit around and do our quiet times all the time.
- “Stewarding my time is not about selfishly pursuing only the things I like to do. It’s about effectively serving others in the ways I’m best able to serve and in the ways I am most uniquely called to do.” (DeYoung)
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Omni-competent (failing to Sabbath)