

Busy Families: Learning to Say “No” in Order to Say “Yes”

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- I. Busyness—curse or blessing?
 - a. “How’s it going?” “Busy.”
 - b. We have a love/hate relationship with busyness.
 - c. “When the time bind catches me, it seems impossible to come out ahead. I have gotten too little done or I have done so very much that I failed to share time with people I love.” (Dorothy Bass, *Receiving the Day*, 9.)
 - d. Brené Brown: “What a lot of us do is that we stay so busy, and so out in front of our life, that the truth of how we’re feeling and what we really need can’t catch up with us.”
 - e. “Hurry squeezes life out of the present moment” (Alan Fadling, *An Unhurried Life*, 181)
 - f. So how do we move out of the fast lane? How do we recover God-given rhythms of work and rest that bring nourishment and not depletion to our family life?
- II. Assess the particular species of your busyness
 - a. We feel pressed and overburdened but we haven’t really assessed *why* we are so busy.
 - b. Two types of busyness: unchosen busyness and chosen busyness. Often our lives are a mix of both kinds.
 - c. “Unchosen” busyness
 - i. This is busyness that is thrust upon you by no choice or fault of your own.
 - ii. Season of life—newborn; multiple younger children; new job responsibilities; work deadlines placed upon you; etc.
 - iii. Significant suffering
 - iv. What do we do in the face of this kind of demand on our time?

1. The call of Christ here is to be faithful and to endure and to persevere. 1 Peter 4:19.
 2. Scripture reminds us to look for and lean into God's mercies that are new each day.
 - a. Lamentations 3:22-23
 - b. Hebrews 4:15-16
 3. This is not a stoic, passive acceptance. The Puritan Jeremiah Burroughs in his book, *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*, says that contentment "is not opposed to all lawful seeking for help in different circumstances, nor to endeavoring simply to be delivered out of present afflictions by the use of lawful means."
- d. "Chosen" busyness
- i. This is busyness we create in our families. Choosing good things over the best things.
 - ii. Luke 10:38-42: Jesus at the home of Martha and Mary
 - iii. Unlike unchosen busyness, the call of Christ here is to prayerfully ask God to search our hearts and to repent when necessary! The cure for this kind of busyness is not simply overhauling our schedules but overhauling our hearts in submission to God.
 - iv. Why so much "chosen" busyness in our lives?
 1. Fear
 2. Pride—"I hurry, in part, because I labor under the false belief that I don't have enough time for what is good and necessary for me." (Alan Fadling)
 3. Works > grace orientation
 4. Extracurricular activities for our children
 5. Inability to separate work from rest—"Many of us are less busy than we think, but life feels constantly overwhelming because our days and weeks and years have no rhythm . . . We have no routine, no order to our days. We are never completely 'on' and never totally 'off.'" (Kevin DeYoung, *Crazy Busy*)

6. Procrastination
7. Poor prioritizing
8. The creep of technology
9. Desire for novelty

III. Biblical-theological framework

- a. Time is not our own. It's a gift to be stewarded.
 - i. Stewardship—the wise management of a resource entrusted to one's care. We are stewards of time, not masters of it.
 1. 1 Corinthians 4:1-2
 2. 1 Peter 4:10
 3. Psalm 90:12
 4. Psalm 118:24
 5. Stewardship frames the discussion of time in relational rather than numerical categories.
 - b. We live with kingdom urgency—"So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Cor 10:31)
 - i. Walking with Jesus
 - ii. There's a godly busyness that stems from being faithful with God's kingdom calling.
 1. Romans 13:11
 2. 1 Corinthians 7:29
 3. Ephesians 5:15-16
 4. Colossians 4:5
 5. 1 Peter 4:2
 - iii. This is why a goal is the right kind of busyness, not the absence of busyness.
- c. The importance of Sabbath rest

- i. The Sabbath is “the way in which God’s kingdom reclaims us, revitalizes us, and renews us so that it can reign through us.” (Marva Dawn, *The Sense of the Call*, 33)
 - ii. Creation pattern (Gen 2:1-3)
 - iii. Prescribed for human beings (Ex 31:12-18; Deut 5:12-15). Why?
 - 1. Reminds us that we are creatures not the Creator. Resting one day a week is an exercise in trust.
 - 2. The Sabbath reminds us that our lives begin with grace.
 - 3. The Sabbath is a foretaste of eternal rest. Sabbath rest is celebration.
 - iv. It takes work to rest well!
- d. Living with a body
 - i. We are creatures with bodily limitations. The need for sleep.
 - ii. Lack of sleep is not only a physical problem—it’s a spiritual problem. “Few things are as theological as sleep. Show me your sleep pattern and I’ll show you your theology, because we all preach a sermon in and by our sleep.” (David Murray, *Reset*, 54)
 - iii. “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.” (Ps 127:2)
- e. Living as a body (the role of community)—1 Corinthians 12
- f. Biblical view of technology—a talk in and of itself!
 - i. “Micro practices have macro implications for our lives. The rituals we adopt around the tiny computers in our pockets can either eat us alive or release us for relationship.” (James K. A. Smith from his endorsement of Andy Crouch’s *The Tech-Wise Family*)
 - ii. Contributes to the blurry line between work and rest

IV. Living in time

- a. Diagnostic questions for when you get home:

- i. What is your internal experience of time as a family? Hurried, Harried? Relating constantly on the fly? Rich times of fellowship? Meaningful conversations?
- ii. How often do you eat meals together?
- iii. What are your Sabbath practices?
- iv. How much are you and the members of your family sleeping each night?
- v. What does your use of technology look like? Do you have family guidelines for its use?
- vi. What are you actively saying “no” to in your family life so you can say “yes” to better things?
- vii. How consistent and meaningful are your personal and/or family devotional practices?
- viii. What does your participation in your church family look like?
- ix. Are there other particular patterns/themes you notice? (e.g., never having the time to be hospitable to others; never taking a family vacation)
- x. Which of the heart-oriented reasons for chosen busyness apply to you or your family as a whole?
- xi. How would you answer the question, “If I could change just one thing about the level of busyness or time stewardship in our family’s life it would be: _____”

b. Suggestions for living in time

- i. Start with your heart
- ii. Start small
- iii. Don’t despise the beauty and power of the ordinary
- iv. Establish family rhythms and rituals
- v. Serving together as a family

- vi. Plan and prioritize
- vii. Tame the technology beast

V. Resources

- a. Kevin DeYoung, *Crazy Busy: A (Mercifully) Short Book about a (Really) Big Problem*
- b. David Murray, *Reset: Living a Grace-Paced Life in a Burnout Culture.*
- c. Alan Fadling, *An Unhurried Life: Following Jesus' Rhythms of Work and Rest*
- d. Zack Eswine, *Sensing Jesus: Life and Ministry as a Human Being* (or his more recent *The Imperfect Pastor*)
- e. Charles E. Hummel, *Freedom from Tyranny of the Urgent*
- f. Paul Miller, *A Praying Life*
- g. Marva J. Dawn, *The Sense of the Call: A Sabbath Way of Life for Those Who Serve God, the Church, and the World.*
- h. Tish Harrison Warren, *Liturgy of the Ordinary*
- i. Dorothy Bass, *Receiving the Day: Christian Practices for Opening the Gift of Time*