

DAY 9

COME WITH ME BY YOURSELVES TO
A QUIET PLACE AND GET SOME REST
MARK 6:31

Michael Zigarelli, an associate professor at Charleston Southern's School of Business, polled more than 20,000 Christians of all ages from 139 countries about the busyness of their lives and how it affects their relationship with God.

His report tells us the obvious: we're busy people! In fact, almost 60% of Christians around the world say their hectic lives prevent them from spending time with God. Even more interesting is that pastors are the most likely to say they often or always rush from task to task - beating out business owners, lawyers, teachers, and salespeople!

Writing as a pastor, Zigarelli says, *"But maybe a study like this will wake some of us up to this reality: We, of all people, must find a way to place the Lord above every urgent need, every pressing appointment, every desperate cry."*¹⁸

You probably don't need statistics to tell you we are busy. It's hard for us to spend significant amounts of time with God.

But when we fill our schedules every minute of the day, we lose focus. We get wrapped up in things that aren't important and just don't matter. My grandfather, who is also a pastor, recently watched a basketball game on TV with me. I am a huge sports fan and so was my grandfather, but over the years, his passion for sports has dwindled. While we were watching the

game he said to me, "Sports are interesting, but not important."

I realized I spend a lot of time on interesting but unimportant things. I put a lot of hope, time, energy, money, and passion into following sports, but I am always supporting teams that let me down (I am a Cleveland fan after all!).

Then I realized I also follow a lot of important things in this world, but they too will let me down. Family, friends, job, house, and money are all important, but all of them will let you down at some point.

Some of you have families that ended in divorce, or your kids rebelled against the way you tried to raise them. Perhaps you've been there for your friends when they needed you, but when you needed them, they were nowhere to be found. Some of you have lost jobs. Others bought a house and couldn't keep it. Or maybe you are like me and bought a home only to sell it later and lose tons of money. Speaking of money, it has the potential to let you down, as well. Many of you experienced that in the early 2000's with the economic recession.

My point is that Jesus wants to be our top priority. We fill our lives with interesting and even important things, but fail to create time for Jesus, the most important thing! **We need to say "No" to many good things, so we can say "Yes" to the best thing.** What's amazing is that we spend time, money and energy on things that will let us down, but Jesus will never fail us. He will never leave us or forsake us. We are focused on the wrong things!

Jesus wants us to make Him the most important thing in our lives. In fact, in Luke 14 He demands to be our top priority. We need to get more serious about spending quality time with God, even times of solitude where it's just us and God. In solitude, we purposely abstain from interaction with other human beings and shut ourselves off from other distractions.

Jesus modeled this. Before He made the very difficult decision of which twelve disciples He would choose, the Bible says He went up on a mountainside and prayed through the night. Many times Jesus sought out places to either rest or pray, which were both ways of being alone with God. If Jesus needed this time, how much more do we! Not only do we benefit from spending time alone with God, but He loves it when we come to Him. After all, He created us for His pleasure. It gives Him joy when we make Him a priority. But when we squeeze Him out of our lives and place other things where He should be, it's the opposite of what God wants. This is one area where Christians really struggle. We can do better!

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#REDLETTERCHALLENGE

Here Jesus tells us to hate our families. That's awkward! His point is that if you want to follow Him, you have to put Him first. He asks you to give everything you have for Him, just as He gave everything He had to us.

LUKE 14:25-33

25 Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said, 26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. 27 And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

28 "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? 29 For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, 30 saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.'

31 "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? 32 If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. 33 In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciple."

SPEND SOME TIME IN SOLITUDE TODAY.

Take your Bible with you and get away from all the distractions. Try it for 30 minutes and if you are able, do it even longer.

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