

Topic: Facing Busyness

Introduction

Q: How would you describe your level of busyness?

- A. Not busy enough
- B. Just right
- C. Too busy
- D. Crazy

Q: Why are you this way?

Q: What are some of the traps we fall into that keeps us busy?

Q: What would it take to slow you down?

Read Luke 10:38-42

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. 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." ⁴¹ But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, 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."

Q: What was Martha doing? What was Mary doing? Why do you think they were doing this?

Q: Were either of them "wrong"?

Q: What is Martha's complaint in verse 40? Who is she criticizing and why?

Q: What is Jesus really getting at in his answer to Martha?

Q: According to this passage, what should we prioritize?

Q: What gets in the way of these priorities and why?

Read Luke 14:16-24

¹⁶ But he said to him, "A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. ¹⁷ And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' ¹⁸ But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.' ¹⁹ And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.' ²⁰ And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' ²¹ So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.' ²² And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' ²³ And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. ²⁴ For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.'"

Q: What are the excuses given for not accepting the invitation to the banquet?

Q: Were any of the things used for excuses wrong in themselves? What is wrong?

Q: How does Jesus respond to their excuses?

Read Matthew 6:31-33

³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Q: Verse 31 says we shouldn't be "anxious" about the stuff in our life that can preoccupy our thinking. Instead what are we to do?

Q: What does it mean to seek **FIRST** the kingdom of God?

Q: What should our priorities include? (See Acts 2:42: "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.")

Q: What is the promise at the end of verse 33 if we have our priorities right?

Q: What will you change as a result of this study? How will you go about making that change?

C.S. Lewis' book "The Screwtape Letters" is a book (fiction) about a series of letters written from Screwtape, a senior-level demon, to his nephew Wormwood, a younger demon just starting out in the temptation business. In these letters, Screwtape gives advice to Wormwood on how to keep his "patient" (the Christian he has been assigned to tempt) distracted from his relationship with God. Screwtape's advice rings as true today as ever. Here is the advice he gives about busyness.

"Certainly, one key strategy would be this: *Keep the subjects burdened with busyness!* In other words, make them feel guilty if they are not producing something. Use every possible means—from e-mails and texts, to calendars and systems—to fill their lives with infinite busyness. Tie their self-worth to what they *do* rather than who they *are*. Cast a spell of confusion on their minds so that they no longer believe they have time for the things that once brought them true fulfillment and peace."

This "*Curse of Busyness*" has too many of us in its clutches. The Apostle Paul referred to the fact that our struggles are against the rulers and authorities of a dark world (see Ephesians 6:12). It is these "authorities" that are in part to blame for our busyness. The good news is that we can do something about this. We must ask God to help us turn away from the busy world we have created and prioritize spending time with Jesus. We need to get back to reading and reflecting on God's Word, praying, worshiping, and getting together with fellow Christians. We also need to remember to take time to connect in a deeper way with those people who are closest to us.

Scriptures about Busyness to meditate on.....

"You have decided the length of our lives. You know how many months we will live, and we are not given a minute longer." Job 14:5

"It is useless for you to work so hard from early morning until late at night, anxiously working for food to eat; for God gives rest to his loved ones." Psalm 127:2

"Don't trap yourself by making a rash promise to God and only later counting the cost." Proverbs 20:25

"I ask God...to make your eyes focused and clear, so that you can see exactly what God is calling you to do." (Ephesians 1:18 The Message)

"But don't begin until you count the cost. For who would begin construction of a building without first calculating the cost to see if there is enough money to finish it? ²⁹ Otherwise, you might complete only the foundation before running out of money, and then everyone would laugh at you. ³⁰ They would say, 'There's the person who started that building and couldn't afford to finish it!' ³¹ "Or what king would go to war against another king without first sitting down with his counselors to discuss whether his army of 10,000 could defeat the 20,000 soldiers marching against him? ³² And if he can't, he will send a delegation to discuss terms of peace while the enemy is still far away. ³³ So you cannot become my disciple without giving up everything you own. Luke 14:28-33

Rocks, Pebbles, Sand - A story about setting priorities, managing your time and The Important Things in Life!

What are the important things in life? How do you know what they are? How do you find happiness? "*Rocks, Pebbles, Sand - The Important Things in Life*" is a story that explains in plain words, that in order to be happy we need to pay attention to the important things in life *first* and then deal with the lesser stuff later. It is a story about recognizing what's important and prioritizing.

Rocks, Pebbles, Sand - The Important Things in Life

A philosophy professor stood before his class with some items on the table in front of him. When the class began, wordlessly he picked up a very large and empty mayonnaise jar and proceeded to fill it with rocks, about 2 inches in diameter.

He then asked the students if the jar was full. They agreed that it was.

So the professor then picked up a box of pebbles and poured them into the jar. He shook the jar lightly. The pebbles, of course, rolled into the open areas between the rocks.

He then asked the students again if the jar was full. They agreed it was.

The professor picked up a box of sand and poured it into the jar. Of course, the sand filled up everything else.

He then asked once more if the jar was full. The students responded with a unanimous "Yes."

"Now," said the professor, "I want you to recognize that this jar represents your life. The rocks are the important things – your family, your partner, your health, your children – things that if everything else was lost and only they remained, your life would still be full.

The pebbles are the other things that matter – like your job, your house, your car.

The sand is everything else. The small stuff."

"If you put the sand into the jar first," he continued "there is no room for the pebbles or the rocks. The same goes for your life.

If you spend all your time and energy on the small stuff, you will never have room for the things that are important to you.

Take care of the rocks first – the things that really matter. Set your priorities. The rest is just sand."