

11 February 2018

I Am So Busy, But Am I Productive? Segment 1

Opening Prayer

I Am Very Busy

I am so busy. That is a common statement made by people in our American society. In fact, it often seems to be a response to a greeting. "Good morning. How are you?" The response is just as likely to be "I am so busy," as it is likely to be "I am well." This obsession with being busy is a mark of our late 20th Century and early 21st Century American society. Adults are busy. Children are busy. Even retired people are busy. We are occupied with being occupied. Some of us even state how busy we are with great pride (more on that later).

Do the tasks you have set out for yourself on most days require more of you that you can accomplish? You are not alone. This seems to be the case with many people. Do you sometimes feel that your life is rushing out of control? Again, you are not alone. Do you see yourself as paying less attention to the ones you love as you focus on all the things that you have scheduled? Do you tell yourself that being busy is really helping your loved ones? You can get more things for them by working longer and harder. Guess what. You are experiencing one of the common problems of the person who is very busy.

What is the cause of all this being busy? Is it helping us? Are we happier because of it, or are we actually more stressed? Is there a way to slow down and enjoy the life that God has given us? Do you want to slow down?

These are issues that we explore over the this session and the next.

Describe what makes your life very busy? What things feel overwhelming? How did your life get this way?

What kind of change are you hoping for as we explore an escape from being so busy?

There Is So Much To Do

In 21st Century America, there is so much to do. We are busy with work or overwork. We are busy with recreation. We are busy entertaining ourselves. Television, Netflix, Amazon Instant Video, Hulu, Vudu, HBO and all the other cable networks, Sports and Sports Networks, Movies, and those are just the electronic entertainments. It has been said that we are entertaining ourselves to death, and there is some truth in that. We are busy with the lives and futures of our children. We are busy with Facebook and countless other social media platforms. We are, of course, busy shopping online and at stores for more things. We are busy having the things that we have already bought repaired. Cars, lawn movers, washers, computers, and on and on. We may even be busy with church, which is not the same as being busy with God.

Our lives take us here, and there, and everywhere as we attempt to manage it all. We are distracted. Every day we are preoccupied with so much to do. We don't follow through with things we start. We fail to keep commitments we have made to others. We do not keep appointments with family members or friends because something more important and urgent has come up. We fail to respond to important requests or communications because there is so much to do. We are so busy with endless pursuits that we don't even notice that life and the ones we love may be slipping away.

Why should we be so busy? In the face of all our modern electronic conveniences and luxuries why do we not have more time for family, friends, and God? Is it that we are poor time managers? Are our lives especially difficult? Are our challenges greater than people in other parts of the world or our grandparents and great-grandparents?

Kevin DeYoung suggests that life today presents us with more **complexity** and **opportunity** than at any previous time in history. If that is the case, we have not learned how to handle either. There is more available to us in the way of data and data sources than was available to all the people that came before us. And we want to sample it all. There are more opportunities and experiences available to us than to any other people in the previous history of the world. And we want to take advantage of as many of them as we possibly can. There are no practical limits to what we can learn or experience. We can enroll in all sorts of courses. We can travel the world. We can experience foods and

drinks from every part of the globe. These are things that our grandparents could not imagine. All this complexity and opportunity, and we want more of it than we can possibly process or manage, and we want it every day.

Do you take the time to pray regularly with your family? If no, why?

Do you check work messages at home? If yes, why?

Discuss the risks of making our lives too busy.

Do you agree that complexity and opportunity can create challenges? Explain.

I Am Not Proud, Just Busy

So, can we fix our busy lives and make them more livable by adjusting our schedules? Do we simply need to reduce some of the complexity and give up some of those opportunities, or sleep a little less? If so, why have we not already done it? Is it possible that the core of the problem is not the complexity to which we are exposed, or the many opportunities. Could the problem be how we chose to deal with complexity and opportunity? What is our contribution to the situation? Could the problem be, at least in part, us? What about us draws us to be obsessed with being busy?

Kevin DeYoung, who has written on being busy, says, "Things are not the way they ought to be because we are not the way we are supposed to be." He points out that our understanding of being very busy all the time must start with an understanding that the sin of **pride** is the source of many other sins, including being perpetually busy.

Pride can exhibit itself in many ways. We often do not even realize it when it is at work. We can be overcome with the **desire to please** other people and so take on unreasonable loads so that others will like us and give us their approval. This is a form of pride. Or we may be so busy because we thrive on the **praise** that we receive for what we do. We may make ourselves unreasonably busy so that we can brag about how much we do and how busy we are. We take pride in our **performance**. Perhaps the most familiar evidence of pride is pride in our **possessions**. We work hard to earn money to spend on the latest outfits, the most impressive truck or SUV, a larger and more impressive house when our current house is just fine, the newest flat screen television, the nicest vacation, a weekly spa treatment, the best private university for our children

when the local university is just fine, and on and on. And, of course, we have to tell our friends all about it.

There are many other manifestations of **pride** that cause us to make ourselves very busy: excessive **ambition**, desire for **power**, desire for **position** and status, desire for **prestige**, social media **postings**. The list gets very long and these various manifestations of pride often feed upon each other.

Now work and money and possessions and ambition are not evils in themselves. The evil comes from our motives. When they have their origin in pride and self-praise and not in a desire to make a better world for all, there is the evil.

Tell about a time when you exhibited pride during the past week.

What do you do to try to make yourself look good to others?

Tell about an example of a social media post that exhibited pride.

I Have To Do It All

This brief section is for people involved in church work, both ordained and lay. If you don't do work for the church, you can take a nap or go outside and enjoy the weather until this is over.

The Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) is my favorite part of the Bible. It always energizes me. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Today, we understand the Commission to be more than sharing the Word and baptizing. We may be called to give of our time, our talents, and our treasure (money or wealth). We may be asked to start a new ministry, to work in the church hospitality ministry, to be part of the grounds upkeep, to be a member of the vestry or church council, to facilitate group discussions, to help care for the poor and elderly, to work in a housing ministry, to be a community volunteer, or become a missionary.

It may seem overwhelming. But there is Good News. God has not called you to do more than you can do. We are not asked to save the world. That has been taken care of. We are only asked to do the part we can do to move the ball forward. We may care about

many important issues, and that is commendable, but we have the capacity to do only a few ministries well. Doing what we do well is much more important than attempting to address every challenge we see in the world.

What is your sense of your own gifts and calling? Do you feel free to express them?

Do you feel guilty about not doing enough in your church or community? Why?

Priorities And Expectations

What is important? What are our priorities? Are they the same as the expectations we have for our busy lives?

Jesus was a busy man, but he had clear priorities. These are best stated in the Gospel of John. In the Gospel of John, Jesus tells who he is, the ever living **Word**. That is his first priority. He explains his relationship to the **Father**. He explains that he has come, to bring **Eternal Life**. He states the primacy of **love**. He promises the **Holy Spirit**, and he **sacrifices** his life for the world.

We make a great deal of the works (or miracles) that he performed during his ministry, but they are not really central to it. They are signs that remind people of the love and power of God. Things that they had perhaps forgotten. Healing the sick was not one of his priorities, nor was making wine a priority. The signs caused great approval of Jesus by the people, but he did not come to gain approval. Those signs were evidence of his priorities, but they themselves were not priorities. He had focus. He stayed on mission.

We are also called to have focus and stay on mission.

What are the main priorities for your life (no more than 4)? Are you staying focused?

What is the difference between being driven by the need for the approval of others and being driven by the Spirit? Which of the two most often drives you?

Closing Comments

Closing Prayer

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