

“While I was Busy Here and There”

(Compiled by Paul R Blake)

Introduction: 1Kings 20:38-43

- A. We are not too busy; we have chosen to be busy with other things.
 - 1. “Instead of saying “I don’t have time” try saying “it’s not a priority to me,” and see how that feels. Often, that’s a perfectly adequate explanation. I have time to iron my sheets, I just don’t want to. But other things are harder. Try it: “I’m not going to edit your résumé because it’s not a priority.” “I don’t go to the doctor because my health is not a priority to me.” If these phrases don’t sit well with you, that’s the point. Changing our language reminds us that time is a choice. If we don’t like how we’re spending an hour, we can choose differently.” (Wall Street Journal)
 - 2. “When someone tells you they are too 'busy,' it’s not a reflection of their schedule; it’s a reflection of your place in their schedule.” (S. Maraboli)
- B. Americans have a dangerous vice today: over-commitment, the tendency to commit to too many responsibilities and activities.
 - 1. This problem afflicts far too many Christians. If the Adversary cannot get us to do evil, he will get us to be too busy to do good.
 - 2. Remember Martha - Luke 10:40-42
- C. Unlike other temptations and sins, the difficulty in dealing with this one is the failure to see that we are overtaken by it.
 - 1. We equate being busy with doing good; they are not the same.
 - 2. Being too busy is like the weather: everybody talks about it, but nobody does anything about it.
 - 3. But lest we think this is no big deal, understand that over-commitment is one of the main reasons churches shrink and Christians become weak; it isn’t sin or the evil around us or the economy or anything else we like to blame. It’s being too busy with things other than what the Lord said is the most important.
 - 4. When the Lord comes, will it matter that you got all of the leaves raked up in the yard, or that you paid off your mortgage two years early, or that you were able to buy new cars instead of used?
 - 5. What will matter then? Shouldn’t you be busy with those things FIRST!?

I. PERSPECTIVE ON THE PROBLEM

- A. Two main factors in over-commitment are materialism and fixation on fun.
 - 1. We spend an inordinate amount of time working and making money.
 - 2. We spend an equal amount of time on entertainment and recreation.
- B. We comfort ourselves with the excuse that our over-commitment is “only a temporary condition.” That’s what narcotics abusers say about their addiction.
 - 1. As a wise man once said: “There is nothing more permanent than a temporary situation.” Somehow we move out of one set of exigencies into another, so that life becomes one unbroken chain of temporarily overcommitted situations.

2. And second, by the time the crunch is over we are apt to have missed critical windows of opportunity in our relationships that can never return.
 3. Your children are only children briefly.
 4. Dr. James Dobson makes this observation: "Over commitment is the number one marriage killer." (Straight Talk, Dallas: Word, 1991, p. 161)
- C. While we tell ourselves we are doing just fine, the cares of this world are choking God's word within us - Matt. 13:22
1. Realize, rather than rationalize about, what is going on in your life.
 2. Rom. 13:11-12
- D. The same thing is true with our recreation as with our material things; we have trouble saying NO. We are activity junkies.
1. The negative effects of a culture that offers too much choice. Presented with an almost limitless variety of things that are possible for us to do, we are like kids in a candy store. We can't make up our minds. We want one of each. We want to do it all.
 2. We make two mistaken assumptions:
 - a. We believe we have a right to do anything we want to do.
 - b. We believe there is a way to do everything we want to do without any of our God given priorities suffering. We assume that if there is a problem, it is merely a matter of scheduling and efficiency.
 3. The word sacrifice does not enter our minds when we are thinking about the things we want to do.
 4. But no one gets more than 168 hours a week. We cannot do everything that captures our interest.
- E. We end up giving the Lord our leftover time and money - Mal. 1:8, 13

II. IDENTIFYING THE INJURIES

- A. Overcrowded lifestyles are not just an unpleasant problem, but has also created other problems.
- B. It diminishes our spiritual mindedness - Luke 8:14
1. "Busyness, including busyness with religion and church activities, has been called the 'archenemy of spiritual maturity.' Busy lives have little time for reflection. Never-ending waves of activity keep us from thinking carefully about the important issues in our lives: God, relationships, goals, service. Busyness can destroy our relationships. It can stifle spiritual growth and keep us from becoming effective difference makers." (Gary R. Collins, You Can Make a Difference Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992, p. 49).
- C. It diminishes our spiritual effectiveness - Ecc. 5:1-6
1. We don't do personal evangelism, not because we are afraid or don't know how, but because we have other things we would rather do.
 2. Churches are canceling Gospel meetings, ending Sunday night assemblies, making Wednesday Bible study optional, not because the members are studying so much more on their own, but they are too busy to assemble and study together.

D. It diminishes our spiritual influence - Eph. 6:4

1. "A team of researchers wanted to learn how much time middleclass fathers spend playing and interacting with their small children. First, they asked a group of fathers to estimate the time spent with their one-year-old youngsters each day, and received an average reply of fifteen to twenty minutes. To verify these claims, the investigators attached microphones to the shirts of small children for the purpose of recording actual parental verbalization. The results of the study are shocking: The average amount of time spent by these middle-class fathers with their small children was thirty-seven seconds per day! Their direct interaction was limited to 2.7 encounters daily, lasting ten to fifteen seconds each! That, so it seems, represents the contribution of fatherhood for millions of America's children." (James C. Dobson, Straight Talk, Dallas: Word, 1991), pp. 63, 64)

III. BUILDING BALANCE

A. Get our priorities into focus.

1. When we place more emphasis on one thing than is warranted or reasonable it takes something away from other matters in our lives.
2. The prodigal son in his pursuit of recreation neglected his relationship with his family and robbed himself of financial security - Luke 15:12-14
3. Jesus charged the religious Pharisees with focus on some minor things to the neglect of other more important matters - Matt. 23:23

B. Take control of our commitments.

1. We are stewards of the time entrusted to us. Time, no less than money, has to be managed well to achieve worthwhile spiritual ends.
2. Eph. 5:15-16 - Take a close look at how you budget your time.
 - a. "The unexamined life is not worth living." (Socrates)
 - b. "We need to learn to distinguish between the important and the urgent and to spend more time on the important." (Charles E. Hummel, Tyranny of the Urgent, Grand Rapids: Meridian, 1991).
3. Don't make promises we should not keep - Jephthah - Judges 11:30
4. Learn to submit our schedule to the Lord for His approval - Col. 3:17
5. Much of what we choose to think is important is not really all that necessary, and it is not necessarily a priority with God.

IV. SAVORING THE SCRIPTURES

A. Jesus was busy, but He did not allow His priorities get out of balance; He never became so preoccupied with one concern that He forgot about other matters. As important as His work was, He made time to pray for hours.

1. Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16, 6:12

B. Paul instructed Timothy to make time for meditation that would lead to spiritual growth - 1Tim. 4:15

C. Christians are taught to live orderly, peaceful lives.

1. 1Tim. 2:2; 1Thes. 4:11; 2Thes. 3:12

- 2. Quietness of lifestyle does not demand absolute inactivity; any more than quietness of spirit demands absolute silence - 1Peter 3:4
- D. Christians are taught to avoid obligations that will take them away from the more important spiritual matters - 2Tim. 2:3-4; Heb. 12:1
- E. Christians are taught to avoid internal division from conflicting priorities, theirs versus God's - James 1:8, 4:8; Phil 3:13; Matt. 6:24

Conclusion:

- A. It is nearly impossible to be very busy and stay strong spiritually. An exceptional individual here or there may be balanced and disciplined enough to keep his or her spiritual mindedness in the midst of a hectic schedule. But for the great majority of us it is quite unlikely that it will happen. To attempt to do so is, at the very least, quite dangerous. The life to which we ought to aspire is - 1Thes. 4:11-12
- B. "We need quiet time to examine our lives openly and honestly, spending quiet time alone gives your mind an opportunity to renew itself and create order. In quiet moments when you think about it, you recognize what is critically important in life and what isn't. Be wise and don't let good things crowd out those that are essential." (Richard Scott)