

THE IDOL OF BUSYNESS

DATE: SUNDAY 22ND SEPTEMBER 2019 | SERIES: IDOLS - PART 4

LUKE 10:38-42

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, 'Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!' 'Martha, Martha,' the Lord answered, 'you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed - or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.'

NOTE TO LEADERS:

In the final week of our Idols series, we are focusing on the idol of busyness. It's important to note that busyness does not have as much to do with our calendars as it does with our state of mind. We can equally be very productively busy and still be at peace in our hearts and minds. Conversely, we can not have much on, and still feel harassed and overwhelmed in our thoughts.

START TALKING

1. What has been your key take-away from the idols series?
2. When your life becomes over busy, what do you tend to sacrifice: exercise? Sleep? Family time? Time with God? Something else?

START THINKING

1. Read the story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38-42
 - a). Who do you identify more with - Mary or Martha?
 - b). Martha lashes out and blames her sister for her busyness when, according to Jesus, it was her own poor choice. Who, or what, do you blame when your life becomes chaotic?
2. On Sunday, Steve shared the following quote from essayist, Tim Kreider, "busyness is pretty obviously a boast disguised as a complaint," "Your life cannot possibly be silly or trivial or meaningless if you are so busy, completely booked, in demand every hour of the day." Have you ever felt this way? Do you boast (complain) about how much work you have? Why does it make you feel better to have more to do than others?

START SHARING

1. What does it mean for something to be urgent vs. important? Are there things that are both? Neither? Do you spend more time on urgent things, or important things? What are some of the urgent things that hinder you? How does time spent

with God help you discern the important things in life?

2. Refer to the story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38-42.
 - a). In what ways do you sometimes find yourself busy, upset and troubled like Martha?
 - b). Martha was doing something good, but she was so consumed with doing something good she missed the best thing right in front of her. What good things do you need to pass on, so you don't miss the best things right in front of you?
 - c). What practical steps can you take to avoid over-busyness and move towards the life that Christ designed for you?

START PRAYING

Pray this declaration over yourselves as a group:

I am accepted by You.

I am loved by You.

I am guided by You.

I surrender my time to You.

I surrender my mind and heart and emotions to You.

I choose to pause and be still and be guided by You.

I acknowledge that You are in control.

START DOING

Do you plan your week? Does your planning include planned time with God? Commit to spend more time planning your upcoming schedule, including time with God.

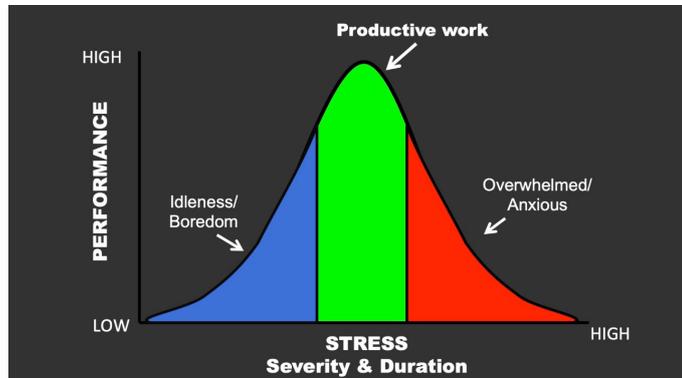
SUMMARY

OF SUNDAY'S MESSAGE

This Sunday, in the final week of our Idols series, we looked at the idol of "busyness". When we consider nature, one of the things that stand out is the amazing rhythms: day and night; the phases of the moon; the seasons - autumn, winter, spring and summer. We notice the stately majesty that governs our planet's movements. Animals giving birth, raising their young, grazing, hunting. Trees standing, waving their branches in the breeze. Occasional storms with rain, thunder and lightning and clouds, which give way to sunshine again... Then you get us - humankind. Often frantically running around. If you observed the pace but couldn't hear the volume, you might think that the world was about to end - based on how we drive, how we speak, etc.!

Busyness has become a badge of honour that we wear. Essayist, Tim Kreider, writes that moaning about how busy you are is "pretty obviously a boast disguised as a complaint," "Your life cannot possibly be silly or trivial or meaningless if you are so busy, completely booked, in demand every hour of the day."

One blogger even asks: "Is it even right to not feel busy? Imagine with me that someone asks you, "How are you doing?" and you reply, "I'm doing well. I don't have a lot going on." Is that an acceptable answer? If you answer like that, will people think you are lazy? If we don't claim to be busy, will people think we have no ambition and no goals in life?"



It's important to distinguish between idleness (blue), productive work (green) & overwhelmed/anxious (red).

Over-busyness is primarily a feeling/mindset. It does not have as much to do with our calendars as it does with our state of mind. We can equally be very productively busy and still be at peace in our hearts and minds. Conversely, we can not have much on, and yet still, feel harassed and overwhelmed in our thoughts.

A mindset of over-busyness is often the result of:

- 1. Low-level guilt** - for all the things that we feel we should be doing, but are not. "We know it well: the feeling of having too much to do and not enough time to do it all. This is true not only of work - where we have too many projects, meetings, emails, admin tasks, calls, requests, messages - but also of our personal lives. We want to exercise, eat well, meditate, learn something cool, travel, go out with friends, spend time in solitude, go for hikes, read a million books, take care of finances and errands, keep up with podcasts and news and interesting online content and our loved ones on social networks and fascinating people on social media, while finding space for contemplation and quiet. Whew." Leo Babauta, author of Zen Habits
- 2. Comparison** - trying to keep up with others. We try to fit more and more into our lives, thinking that somehow equals success in God's eyes. Very subtle thing!
- 3. Poor planning** - as the famous saying goes: when you fail to plan you plan to fail. There is merit in time spent planning. When we are too rushed

and don't plan, we often end up doing things the long way.

- 4. Lack of self-reflection** - asking ourselves, "should I be doing all of this?" helps us to acknowledge that we chose to do this thing. *So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.* Psalm 90:12
- 5. Lack of faith** - we don't trust that God is truly in control of the world and our lives. In Exodus, we read about when the Israelites were in the desert, and God sent manna daily to sustain them. They were told to gather only what they needed for the day, and not to store the manna; except for on the sixth day - then they were to collect enough for the seventh day too. But some didn't have faith in God's provision and still tried to look for manna to collect on the seventh day. God said to them: "How long will you refuse to keep my commands and my instructions?" Exodus 16:28.

The antidote to over-busyness is to re-focus our minds on God so that the 'wheels' of our lives stay centred. *You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.* Isaiah 26:3 (ESV)

One of the most beautiful re-focussing passages is Psalm 23, especially if we look at it from a devotional perspective:

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

The LORD - reminds me of His greatness and power. The word "my" is very personal. *Shepherd* - shows a deep level of care. *I lack nothing* - He has everything I need.

He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me...

He makes me, leads me, refreshes me and guides me. Green pastures and quiet waters are "soul language" that speaks to making our over-busy minds "lie down", our "rushing waterfall" thoughts to quiet waters, and refreshing our exhausted souls.

He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.

Guidance - still small voice, wisdom from others. He reminds me that it's not all about me, but for His name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

He's there through the dark valleys (our most difficult times). *Rod* - speaks to protection and counting the sheep. A staff was used for lifting a sheep/lamb that had fallen down a ledge (or similar). He is fighting on my behalf. He knows each one of us by name. He knows when we go missing! He lifts us up when we are down.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

We don't need to fight; we can feast. Oil speaks of blessing. Overflow = abundance.

Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

While we may be unsure of what the future holds, we do know that His goodness and mercy will be with us forever.

Finally, we ended the service with a declaration over our lives:

I am accepted by You.

I am loved by You.

I am guided by You.

I surrender my time to You.

I surrender my mind and heart and emotions to You.

I choose to pause and be still and be guided by You.

I acknowledge that You are in control.