

Soul Cleanse: Busyness

Busyness is rampant in our society today, and it's toxic to our souls. Nothing steals our joy, kills our relationship with God, and destroys our sense of focus and purpose like unbridled busyness. Like Martha, we find ourselves "worried and upset about many things," when, according to Jesus "few things are needed—indeed, only one." But how do we unclutter our lives and leave the kind of "white space" or margin that makes for beautiful art?

Key Verse:

Psalm 127:1-2 - *Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain. In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat—for he grants sleep to those he loves.*

Opening Discussion:

Reflect on your own relationship to busyness, then share with the group:

What kinds of activities are you most tempted to become overly busy with?

What kind of signs let you know you've become too busy?

Why do you think you struggle saying "no" to busyness?

What do you most feel you miss out on when you're busy?

Looking at Scripture:

Read **Mark 1:21-34**.

This was clearly a very busy day for Jesus, that involved helping and pouring into others from morning until night. Review all that he did that day, and describe how you would have felt by bedtime if you were in his shoes.

Jesus' busy day came on a Sabbath, a day when the Jews had strict rules about what could be done. Many religious people in his day would have thought that he was breaking the Sabbath by "working" (healing) on a day of rest. Why do you think Jesus felt justified in allowing this Sabbath to be filled with stuff "to do"?

Continue reading, **Mark 1:35-37**. What can we learn from Jesus about how to handle the inevitable busy periods of life?

On Sunday we talked about the Sabbath as a day of “ceasing” or “stopping,” a God-ordained way to fight busyness and bring much needed margin into our lives. Far from just good advice, the Sabbath is one of the Ten Commandments. Read the command (given for the second time) in **Deuteronomy 5:12-15**.

The ancient Israelites all practiced Sabbath together, rich/poor, servant/master alike, on the same day. What challenges would this have offered? What opportunities? How would their experience have differed from our experience of Sabbath today?

Verse 15 connects their obedience to their newfound freedom from slavery. How would the Israelites be tempted to bring the mindsets and values of their enslavement into the Promised Land? How would Sabbath help to preserve their freedom?

Does busyness ever feel like slavery to you? What would be the personal benefit to having a day free of obligation?

Personal Application

If you were to choose a period of time (preferably 24 hours, but less if necessary to begin) to practice Sabbath on a weekly basis, when would it be?

Much discussion has taken place within Judaism about what is permitted/forbidden on the Sabbath. Brainstorm some things that you enjoy and are life-giving (permitted), as well as things that feel like obligations (forbidden). Share your thoughts with the group and discuss.

Permitted _____ Forbidden _____

How will you practice the principle of Sabbath (stopping, resting) in your life on a daily, weekly, and annual basis?