



WEEKLY STUDY

WEEK 2: Counter Culture - Busy

As we continue our new series “Counter Culture”, we are exploring some of the values that our culture celebrates and asking ourselves the deeper question - “What does God actually say about these things?” This week Pastor Benson is speaking about the idea of “busy”.

First, ask yourself a few questions:

1. When asked “How are you?” - Is your answer often: “Busy” ?
2. Is it hard to say no to things? Or to cut back on activities?
3. Do you only slow down when you are sick? (Or maybe not even?)
4. Do you find yourself saying - “I have to do it, because no one else will”?
5. Do you have a long to-do list that never gets done?
6. Do you often say - “There is just not enough time in my day”?
7. Do you still have vacation days left over at the end of the year?
8. Do you have a need to feel constantly productive? Or do you feel guilty when resting?
9. Do you feel weary, burdened, bone-tired in your soul and STUCK?

If you said YES to some, or ALL of these. You are not alone. Let’s examine the idea of busyness in our lives this week. Let’s take a journey together, open up our hearts and our messy overcommitted calendars to Jesus...

MONDAY:

Haggai 1:5-9

5 Now this is what the Lord Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways. **6** You have planted much, but harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.” **7** This is what the Lord Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways. **8** Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build my house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored,” says the Lord. **9** “You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?” declares the Lord Almighty. “Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with your own house.

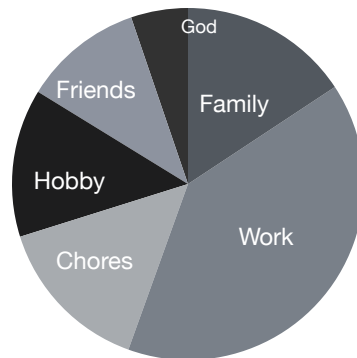
Ephesians 5:15-17

15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, **16** making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. **17** Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.

Many of us are caught in a cycle of: do more, try harder, go faster and never say no. We often think...”If I could just get to _____, then life will slow down”. The problem is, the next big thing is always on the horizon, the goal post moves, and life never actually slows down. Each time we enter into another busy season more tired and burned out than the last. No matter how fast we run or how hard we work, it’s never enough. Our culture pushes us hard in every direction. At work we are expected to give 110%, achieve great things, and leave our problems at the door. At home we try to keep up with the latest design trends, new fad diets or meal plans, exercise routines or an unreasonable expectations of organization & cleanliness.

At school we push our kids to make straight A's, while scoring high on achievement tests, while doing travel sports & other activities...no doubt requiring a multitude of driving around, money and time to get them there. Even at church we can become overwhelmed by signing up for everything that we can possibly squeeze in our busy schedules out of guilt, obligation and fear. YOLO (you only live once) and FOMO (fear of missing out) are all too familiar terms in our culture. These verses in Ephesians speak to this very thing. Life is short, and we do need to make the most of it. However, the key is the last phrase in vs. 17 - "understand what the Lord's will is". How many of us can look at our schedules over the past year and say: "Yes, this is what the Lord's Will was for my life." ? This is not a new problem, we see it clearly in these Old Testament scriptures. In Haggai it talks about how much time we spend striving to build our own house, that we neglect the house God wants us to build in our lives. We build our lives around things that might *seem* good, but they are not the things God has called *us* to do. We give ourselves a false sense of control when we try to be the architect, foreman and builder of our own lives. Then, as these verses state - we never having enough, and never achieve what we are striving so hard for. God wants us to build His house instead. He wants us to focus on Him and not ourselves. Just as it says in Matthew 7:24-27. Those that build their house on the rock will stand strong in any storm. However, if we try to build it on the sands of busyness, or the "try harder" life...our house will crumble as soon as the wind blows. Our house can't stand, and it can't be fruitful without God being the master architect, engineer, designer and general contractor of our lives. **Pray and ask God this week to speak to your heart about the busyness in your life. Open up your calendar and look at all the things you have planned this next month. Are their places you are building your own house & neglecting God's? Are you building houses in the sand? Are there places that you are ignoring God and allowing His house to fall into neglect & disrepair in your life?**

In your prayer journal, using your calendar for the month of September...make a pie chart of what your time looks like. **BE Honest!!!** God already knows the truth, so draw what it looks like NOW - not what you hope it would be. Pray that God would open your eyes to see it clearly.



TUESDAY: Matthew 11:28-30 (NIV)

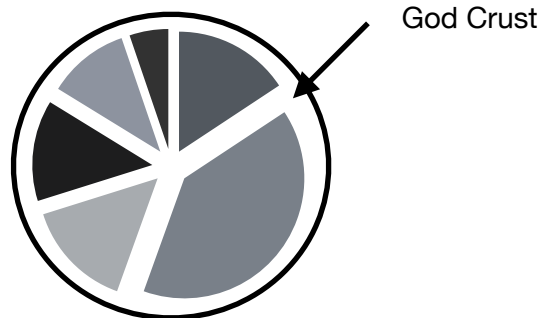
28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. **29** Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **30** For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

(MSG)

28-30 "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

Reading in these verses Jesus talks about being weary, burdened and needing rest. God made us to need rest, and He placed it into our natural rhythm as beings created in His image. God rested on the 7th day in Genesis. Rest or honoring the Sabbath is in the 10 Commandments. There are many instances in the Bible that speak about Jesus being tired, weary, hungry or seeking rest. Take a moment to read these examples and be encouraged: John 4:6, Mark 6:31, Matthew 4:1-11, Luke 5:16, Matthew 14:23, Luke 6:12. This is encouraging because when Jesus speaks about rest, he fully understands the need for it. Often these verses in Matthew are taken out of context and you may only hear verse 28 alone. While this is still true on it's own, it's incomplete. The next two verses are vitally important as they explain the "how". When we continue reading, Jesus speaks about a yoke. A yoke in Jesus' time was a wooden board carved for an Ox to be able to carry a burden during farm labor. Two oxen would have been "yoked" together, or harnessed together with this wooden board. The board was uniquely carved specifically in the shape of each oxen's back. The yoke was specifically only meant for them. As the two were bound together, they became an inseparable team working step by step with each other making the burden much lighter than one Ox trying to carry a load alone. Jesus is calling us to take His yoke on our backs. This is not us asking God to join us in our busy overcommitted burdensome labor. This is us laying down our calendars, and all our things to pick up what He has called us to do. Then as Jesus asks us to do in verse 29, we are to learn from Him. The rest that we need is only gained by allowing Him to guide us, to teach us, and to work with Him side by side. He doesn't say we won't work, or that we won't have a burden. This is not a rest like taking a nap, or sitting still. This is rest for your soul. He says we WILL work, but we will be yoked to Him as he guides us in that work. He says we WILL have a burden, but that it will be His burden and that it will be light. When we are yoked to Him and allow Him to be our teacher and guide, only then, will we will have "rest for our souls".

There are times when we need to stop and have a "come to Jesus" moment. Pray right now about the "come to Jesus" moment in your life. Where do you need to stop trying to pull heavy burdens alone? Look at your pie chart again, especially those big slices. What would it look like to put it down? What would it look like if you allowed Jesus to teach you how to be yoked to Him in that area? What if God became the crust of your pie chart, or the solid foundation for all the slices to rest in vs. just an individual slice of your life?



WEDNESDAY: Luke 10:38-42

38 As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. 39 She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. 40 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!" 41 "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, 42 but few things are needed—or indeed only one.[a] Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

How many of us can relate to this story? Sometimes this story turns into a personality test... are you a Mary or a Martha? This is not really the purpose of the story. We are all Martha at times, and we can all probably remember a Mary moment in our lives as well. This moment between these sisters happened in Jesus' time, but it could easily be taken straight from many

of our kitchens, workplaces, soccer fields, and churches today. When we are so focused on the busyness, our to do lists or schedules, then we often miss God. It could be the distraction of daily chores like Martha, or importance of projects at work, or scurrying kids from event to event, or the commitment to a hobby. It can even happen in the church. Martha wasn't doing bad things, preparing the meal was a good and needed thing. There are moments when we are doing good things, however, we get so caught up in the doing that we miss the point, or the purpose. When we miss the purpose, we miss the chance to rest at the feet of Jesus. Again, just like the verses in Matthew yesterday, we hear Jesus asking us to lay down our burdens, sit at His feet and allow Him to teach us. There is a story that many of you may have heard. God asks you to put 3 rocks in a wagon and take it to the top of a hill. You start to easily walk up the hill. Along the way you pick up a few more rocks because you have room and that would surely be helpful to God right? Then someone asks if you can carry their rocks in your wagon and it seems like God would like us to help them right? All of the sudden you can't pull the wagon anymore, the wheels come off under the load and you are exhausted. God asks why you put all these rocks in your wagon. Of course, you try to justify it. Ultimately he takes every rock away and puts the 3 back in, and He walks with you up that hill. I love this little story, it illustrates so well what so many of us do. It illustrates what Martha did with adding the rocks of busyness to her wagon, when Jesus just wanted her rest at His feet like Mary.

Again, pull out your calendar and the pie chart that now has a crust. Prayerfully ask God what do you need to lay down in order to sit at His feet like Mary. Ask God if you have picked up rocks that he never meant for you to carry. Where are the places in your week where you are distracted and bothered by many things, just like Martha?

THURSDAY: Mark 3: 23-28

23 One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. 24 The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?" 25 He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? 26 In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions." 27 Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. 28 So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

In the Jewish culture of Jesus' time the sabbath, or day of rest, was taken very seriously. There were many laws that had been added to the duties required for this day of rest. Many of the religious leaders of that day had turned this beautiful gift of rest and sabbath into a list of tasks on a to-do list rather than a time of worship. They had missed the purpose in the rest. They had surely missed their Mary moment. As we talk about the worship of busyness, it's also important not to make good gifts from God, like the sabbath, another item on our spiritual "to-do" list. This story in Mark is a good reminder that our good works don't save us. God cares more about the posture of our hearts than simply checking off a "to-do" list. Especially for those of us in the church family, we can justify our overcommitments, busyness, lack of boundaries and ability to say no by saying that they are good things. Just like Martha, are we filling up our calendars and applying that "try harder" life to God? God doesn't operate on our human scales, He doesn't keep score, or a grade book of all the good things you are doing. We are saved by grace alone, and not by any number of good things we are doing. As it did for Jesus on the day he picked grain, Sabbath may take look different for us, and that's ok. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says - "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." A good example of this is a book written by a monk named Brother Lawrence, "Practice of the Presence of God". He was a cook at a monastery and couldn't always stop working to attend mass with the others. However, he learned to rest, pray, sabbath and worship while he was doing the work God had called him to. God is not a "one size fits all" God. The important thing is our hearts. God desires for you to lay everything down, yoke yourself to Him, allow Him to teach you, follow Him, and take His gift of rest into your rhythm of life.

Look at your calendar again. Are there good things you are doing to try and earn grace? Where in your weekly rhythm is God calling you to rest & sabbath? Where in your weekly rhythm can you put aside time to spend in worship & rest with God? Plan it, write it down and pray over it.

FRIDAY:

Psalm 42:10

*He says, "Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth."*

Exodus 14:13-14

"Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today.... 14 The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still."

In these verses we see the words "be still". For most of us, "being still" probably sounds like the opposite of our everyday lives. In our striving, wheel spinning, daily grind, we might even be slightly annoyed at the thought of being told to "be still". How can we "be still" when we have a mile long to-do list? We might be imagining "stillness" as quietly sitting in a field of daisies. However, this phase is used over and over in the Bible and it actually means so much more. The word is often translated as "rapha" which is a more aggressive term than our English translation of "be still". It more literally means - "stop", "cease", "stop fighting", "stop frantic activity", "drop your weapons", "lay down". It's the same phase that Jesus used to calm the storm and stop the waves. It's a verb and an active command. In both of these scriptures, God is asking us to "CEASE" and to wait on Him. He is practically yelling for us to stop our crazy hamster wheel lives addicted to busyness, and lay everything down for Him. He is asking us to trust Him, learn from Him and know Him. He is asking us to give the fight, the busyness, the chaos of our lives over to Him. We only need to "be still" and KNOW that He is God. When we can do this, we can finally find rest for our souls.

Let's think about the week as we see this repeated theme...

Monday - BE STILL - stop trying to build your own house / KNOW God - let Him instruct you to build His house

Tuesday - BE STILL - lay down your burdens / KNOW God - pick up His yoke and learn from Him

Wednesday - BE STILL - stop being busy and distracted like Martha / KNOW God - sit as His feet like Mary, and let Him teach you

Thursday - BE STILL - lay down the need for "earned grace" in your busyness / KNOW God - let Him teach you true Sabbath and rest that will bring Him Glory

Friday - BE STILL - stop your fighting and striving / KNOW God - trust Him & obey

Prayerfully look at your calendar and your crusty pie chart again.

Be STILL - Literally as an act of giving it to God, lay it down on your floor or somewhere in your home. Pray over it, ask God to fight this battle for you. Ask Him to go ahead of you in all the months and days coming up.

Know - Prayerfully seek His guidance and obey what His Spirit calls you to do in this moment.

RESOURCES: If you truly struggle with overcommitting, busyness, hurry, boundaries, and rest in your life we want to offer a few resources that may help in your journey.

Books

The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry (By John Mark Commer)
To Hell with the Hustle (By Jefferson Bethke)
Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World
Three Mile an Hour God (By Kosuke Koyama)
Boundaries (By Henry Townsend)
The Best Yes (By Lisa Tyrkherst)
The Practice of the Presence of God (By Brother Lawrence)

Podcasts

Fight Hustle End Hurry (John Mark Commer & Jefferson Bethke)
Rule of Life - Season 1 - Sabbath (John Mark Commer)
Simply Sabbath (Rachel Fahrenbach)