

Sunday, November 12, 2023 am

CLOSER TO GOD (59)

Challenges (5)

Busy Lives

As we continue our study of our quest to draw closer to God. We are currently examining some challenges we might face in this world. Thus far we have talked about worldliness in general. We then devoted 3 lessons to materialism. This lesson addresses another worldly concern – busyness.

I. The problem of busyness

- a. We are living in times where it becomes very easy to overfill our days. We have so many conveniences now compared to a century ago that you would think life could be simpler. Instead, we have made it more complicated and crowded. We have simply added more things to do and places to go. Work schedules get in our way of assembling with the saints. School and social activities crowd out time for Bible study and prayer. Our pursuit of recreation chokes out time to visit the sick. Our home projects and maintenance hinder the amount of time we spend trying to reach the lost. Associating with our friends cuts into the time we spend with our brethren. Busyness has gotten in the way of many in their quest to draw closer to God.
- b. The dangers of busyness
 - i. God is often put on the backburner. When one is faced with the choice of serving God or pursuing some worldly endeavor (entertainment, sports, extracurricular activities, association with friends, etc.), which one usually wins? Luke 9:57-62 – when Jesus called for some to follow Him, they began to make excuses. Luke 8:14 – again, the thorny ground – the cares of this world choke out the word. God often gets what is leftover. Associated with the previous point. We get busy with our “trivial pursuits”, and soon we find that what we give God is what is left after everything else. Consider Malachi 1:6-8, 13, etc. Recall Matthew 6:33 – IS God really first in your life?
 - ii. We can become distracted. Luke 10:41-42 – Martha was distracted over many things, the more important things. Overcrowded lives often pull us away from the more important things that are not materially monitored. If we fail to do our job or schoolwork – there is a consequence. If we neglect some task that needs to get done – there is a consequence. But spiritually, if we neglect these things – there is often not an immediate, PHYSICAL consequence. We DRIFT – Hebrews 2:1. We sometimes become so busy we do not take time to REALIZE that we are drifting further away.
 - iii. It can rob us of the joy that ought to be in our lives – stress, anxiety, pressures, impatience, irritability, etc. There are many unhealthy attitudes addressed in scripture that can develop because we are so busy. Proverbs 12:25, *Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, But a good word makes it glad.* Philippians 4:4 tells us to *rejoice in the Lord always* (as does 1 Thessalonians 5:16) – the stress of busyness can rob us of that joy.
 - iv. It can hinder our effectiveness spiritually – as Christians, we KNOW we have responsibilities, some of which we have mentioned in this lesson. Are we fulfilling those responsibilities? Maybe we are doing the things we believe are required, but WHY? Are we doing just enough? Is our efforts quality? Are we really giving God our best? How do we respond if the unexpected happens?
 - v. It is often a symptom of worldliness. It can be an indication that one prefers the world more than God. 1 John 2:15-17.

II. The Bible and busyness

- a. We have already addressed several passages while discussing dangers – excuses (Luke 9:57-62), Mary and Martha (Luke 10:41-42), giving God the leftovers (Malachi 1), etc.
- b. Ephesians 5:15-16, Colossians 4:5 – walk circumspectly, redeeming the time.
- c. Matthew 5:8 – the pure in heart. Is our heart “diluted”?
- d. Lead a quiet life – 1 Thessalonians 4:11 – aspire to lead a quiet life, 1 Timothy 2:2 – we should pray for this.

III. Dealing with busyness

- a. Realize that being busy is not wrong.
 - i. As I read my Bible I find that we ought to be busy! There is much to do and little time. Jesus noted that in John 9:4. Jesus was very busy. Paul and Peter were busy doing the Lord’s work, and so were many others.
 - ii. Sloth and laziness IS wrong! Proverbs 18:9, *He who is slothful in his work is a brother to him who is a great destroyer.* 2 Thessalonians 3:10 – if anyone will not work...; Proverbs 21:25, *The desire of the lazy man kills him, For his hands refuse to labor.*
 - iii. Laziness IS OFTEN tied to one who refuses to be busy. Think of the parable of the talents – Matthew 25:14-30. While the master was gone, what were the 2 faithful servants doing? Likely they were busy! They were called faithful (25:21, 23). What was the 1 talent servant doing? NOTHING! He wasted his days (or months) and was thus called “wicked”.
 - iv. BUT laziness is NOT necessarily the opposite of busyness. If one chooses to not do something or overbook their lives, that is not necessarily laziness. It is using wisdom to ensure your priorities are in balance.
 - v. Our challenge here is to understand that we need limits! We cannot make ourselves so busy that God gets put on the backburner or only gets the leftovers!
- b. Examine yourself – 2 Corinthians 13:5. 1 Corinthians 10:31 – is what you are doing “to the glory of God”? Is everything you are doing necessary OR is it choices you have made? Is closeness to God suffering because of your worldly pursuits that are robbing you of your time? Are you robbing God? (Malachi 3:8) – this can include our talents and time.
- c. Learn the importance of prioritizing –
 - i. Matthew 6:33 – Seek first God’s kingdom.
 - ii. Ephesians 5:15-16 - redeem the time. Walk circumspectly (mindfully, or carefully) and use your time wisely and with PURPOSE!
 - iii. Romans 12:2 – renew your mind. It is about the mindset.
 - iv. The truth is, we cannot do everything. Thus we have make wise choices. It is not always about good vs. bad. Sometimes it is about good, better and best. What is really the best? Think about what Mary chose (Luke 10:42 – the good part).
- d. Make time for God – BECAUSE our lives are busy we need God’s word and prayer more than ever.
 - i. Can anyone deny that Jesus was busy? Acts 10:38, Yet He found time to pray and for solitude - Mark 1:35. Mark 6:30-32 – after the apostles return from teaching others, Jesus TELLS them to find a deserted place (to rest).
 - ii. Paul was certainly busy. But how often do we find him praying and writing?
 - iii. We need to SCHEDULE personal time with God – listening to Him and talking to Him (Bible study and prayer). It is the only thing that will preserve us as we face the busyness of life.
- e. “Clean house” –
 - i. As we examine our lives and discover what is making us busy, we are faced with the reality that SOMETHING(s) HAS TO GIVE!
 - ii. What are you willing to give up for Him? The Christian life is about serving God – Romans 12:1-2 – I am a living sacrifice! Mark 10:28 – the apostles said they had left all to follow Jesus. They were busy serving Him, BUT there were things they needed to walk away from. We address this in relation to material things, but what about our time?

- iii. ARE we willing to give up some of the pleasures of life to draw closer to Him? Time spent on “screens”, hobbies, extra-curricular activities, etc. NOTE: It goes without saying that these things are not wrong within themselves (unless they are sinful pursuits), but when we overcommit to secular activities, they can become wrong.
- f. Budget your time
 - i. What is a budget? Budgeting means you are aware of what you have and what your needs are. A budget is a plan that is put in place to ensure that all your needs are taken care of.
 - ii. If there is something in your budget that you cannot afford – you have to decide what you have to do without or reduce.
 - iii. Budgeting applies to our time as well. That is what “redeeming the time” is about. Make a schedule of your time. And BUILD INTO it what is most important (think Mary over Martha). IF that means you don’t have time for everything you want, SOMETHING has to give. You have to decide what you are going to give up!
- g. Balance –
 - i. As noted, we need to be busy. The challenge is to avoid being too busy.
 - ii. Do not use what you “have to do” as an excuse to not do what you need to be doing. Yes there are things you are required to do or are needed – rest, providing for your family, maintaining what you do have, but rarely is that all of your time. We KNOW there are wants and choices built into our time.
 - iii. Work to balance in your life. This means building in time for rest and recreation, as well as time for God.
- h. Build in extra time –
 - i. Anyone who has been around knows that life will throw you “curveballs”.
 - ii. As we budget and balance our time, we need to have some margins in place. A margin is “the space between our load and our limits”.
 - iii. We need to build in time to recharge and think. WE need to build in time for unforeseen circumstances.
 - iv. ALSO, build in time to rest and relax. There is NOTHING wrong with a vacation or a day off. It is actually healthy and resting the mind. Mark 6:30-31 – Jesus told His apostles to rest awhile.
 - v. Recall Mark 2:27 – the Sabbath was made for man. While not addressing the theological ramifications of the Sabbath per se, it was a day of rest that God COMMANDED Israel to observe. While on that day they were to think about God, it was also a time to pause and rest. Our bodies AND souls need that!
 - vi. If we build in margins, we will not be in a hurry all the time. We will not be CONSISTENTLY late! We will not be stressed when something goes wrong at the last minute.
- i. Learn to say “no!” -
 - i. We all only have 24 hours in a day. We CANNOT do everything for everyone.
 - ii. Do you ever find your heart saying “no”, but then your mouth says, “yes”? This is what I am talking about! And it is not good for you physically or spiritually. It can lead to stress, bitterness and even exhaustion. It can lead to others taking undue advantage of you.
 - iii. And we must not villainize ourselves for saying “no” when appropriate (And we should not be the one who always says “no”, to pursue our desires).
 - iv. We should not let our priorities suffer because we do everything for everyone.
 - v. We need to learn to ask for help rather than doing it all ourselves. Even Jesus did not take on evangelizing the whole world Himself. He appointed 12 men just to get it going! Consider Mark 1:38 where Jesus said no to staying so he could go to another town! It was needed!

Time management is a major concern in our efforts to draw closer to God. Let us resolve to use our time wisely so that our faith will not suffer. What about you? How are you using your time? Think about it!