



Q & A WITH KEVIN DEYOUNG

Author of *Crazy Busy: A (Mercifully) Short Book About a (Really) Big Problem*

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Q: A lot of books have been written on this concept of busyness and time management. Why do you think you are qualified to write this particular book?

A: My life is crazy busy. I don't say that as a boast or a brag. I'm not trying to win any contest. I'm just stating the facts. Or at least describing the way my life feels almost every single day. I do not write this book as one who has reached the summit and now bends over to throw the rope down to everyone else. More like the guy with a toehold three feet off the ground, looking for my next grip. I'm writing this book not because I know more than others but because I want to know more than I do. I want to know why life feels the way it does, why our world is the way it is, why I am the way I am. And I want to change.

Q: What is the result of being too busy?

A: I can think of several moments in just the past couple months where I've muttered to myself, "What am I doing? How did I get myself into this mess? When will I ever get my life under control? How long can I keep this up? Why can't I manage my time? Why did I say 'yes' to this? How did I get so busy?" I've bemoaned my poor planning and poor decision-making. I've complained about my schedule. I've put in slipshod work because there wasn't time for any other kind. I've missed too many quiet times and been too impatient with my kids. I've taken my wife for granted and fed important relationships with leftovers. I've been too busy to pursue God with my whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. In other words, I've likely been just like you.

Q: Do you think *everyone* is busy—is this a universal problem?

A: We are all busy in the same sort of ways. Whether you are a pastor, a parent, or a pediatrician, you likely struggle with the crushing weight of work, family, exercise, bills, church, school, friends, and a barrage of requests, demands, and desires. No doubt, some people are quantitatively less busy than others and some much more so, but that doesn't change the shared experience: most everyone I know feels frazzled and overwhelmed most of the time.

Q: How does this book help "put an end to busyness as usual"?

A: I'm not interested in giving time management techniques or tips on how to set your email filter. I want to understand what's going on in the world and in my heart to make me feel the way I do. And I also want to understand how to change—even just a little. Both tasks require theology. Both are begging for practicality. I don't promise total transformation. I offer no money back guarantees. My goal is more modest. I hope you'll find a few ways to tackle your schedule, several suggestions to reclaim your sanity, and a lot of encouragement to remember your soul.

**Q: Why are “margins” so important?**

A: Years ago I listened to an interview with Richard Swenson, a Christian physician, about the concept of “margin.” There’s nothing uniquely Christian about the idea itself, but there is something very un-Christian about ignoring it. “Margin,” Swenson says, “is the space between our load and our limits.” Planning for margin means planning for the unplannable. It means we understand what’s possible for us as finite creatures and then we schedule for /ess than that.

Q: How does busyness relate to worry?

A: For most of us, it’s not heresy or rank apostasy that will derail our profession of faith. It’s all the worries of life that are choking the spiritual life out of us. Jesus knows what he’s talking about. As much as we must pray against the devil and pray for the persecuted church, in Jesus’s thinking the greater threat to the gospel is sheer exhaustion from worry. Busyness kills more Christians than bullets. We need to guard our hearts and learn to trust God.

Q: What do you say to people who claim to be busy but can’t change because so many people are depending on them?

A: We are busy because we say “yes” to too many people because we want them to like us and fear their disapproval. It’s not wrong to be kind. In fact, it’s the mark of a Christian to be a servant. But people-pleasing is something else. Doing the cookie drive so you can love others is one thing. Doing the cookie drive so that others might love you is quite another. Not only is that a manifestation of pride and therefore a sin, it also makes our lives miserable (living and dying by the approval of others) and usually hurts those who are closest to us who get what’s left over of our time and energy after we try to please everyone else. People often call it low self-esteem, but people-pleasing is actually a form of pride and narcissism, and we need to check ourselves to see why we are saying “yes” all the time.

Q: What does social media have to do with busyness?

A: If we’re honest, pride lies behind much of the social media revolution. I’ve often had to ask myself, “Why am I blogging? Why I am tweeting? Is it for my name and my fame?” It doesn’t matter how big or small our following; we can turn Facebook and Twitter into outposts for our glory. Or—and this is more my struggle—we can fear what others will think if we don’t show up for hours, days, or weeks. We don’t want to disappoint hundreds or thousands of people we’ve never met, so we work all night and ruin the evening of the few people who depend on us every day.

Q: Do you think Christians carry unnecessary expectations on their shoulders?

A: In a word, yes. I believe many Christians are terribly busy because they sincerely want to be obedient to God. We hear sermons that convict us for not praying more. We read books that convince us to do more for global hunger. We talk to friends who inspire us to give more and read more and witness more. The needs seem so urgent. The workers seem so few. If we don’t do something, who will? We want to be involved. We want to make a difference. We want to do what’s expected of us. But there just doesn’t seem to be the time.



Q: What do you mean when you say “the reason we are so busy is because we’re supposed to be busy”?

A: To some degree, busyness *is* part of life—we have been given things to do by God. We can embrace our responsibilities. The nuance is that while we live our days in a flurry of hard work, serving, and bearing burdens, we can do it with the right character and a right dependence on God so it doesn’t have to feel *crazy* busy. The busyness that’s bad is not the busyness of work, but the busyness that works hard at the wrong things. It’s being busy trying to please people, busy trying to control others, busy trying to do things we haven’t been called to do. The antidote to busyness of soul is not sloth and indifference. The antidote is rest, rhythm, death to pride, acceptance of our own finitude, and trust in the providence of God.

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*For more information or interviews,
please contact Jana Muntsinger, MMPR
281.251.0480
jana@mmpublicrelations.com*