

Wesley Celebration

September 6, 2009

“Too Busy”

We are in many ways a weary people. Literally and figuratively, we are tired.

A survey conducted by the National Sleep Foundation found that 47 million American adults suffer from sleep deprivation. That's almost a quarter of the adult population in America. That's a lot of weary people. And it is a serious problem. Fatigue and exhaustion can have serious consequences. Lack of sleep can affect our physical and mental health. It can also be deadly. Sixty percent of licensed drivers reported that they drove cars while drowsy. Fatigue has contributed to too many auto accidents and fatalities. Sleep deprivation is a serious problem, and it has a number of causes: from lifestyle choices, to work, to illnesses, to sleeping disorders. The results of the survey are clear: many Americans, too many Americans, both adults and children, are not getting enough sleep. We are, quite literally, tired people.

However, we really didn't need a survey to tell us this. Just ask someone how they are doing these days, and listen to what they say. Have you ever heard people say things like: “I'm exhausted.” “I'm running myself ragged.” “I'm wiped out.” “I'm spent.” “I'm running on empty.” “I just need a nap.” “I need caffeine.” But does anything change? We say these things and we allow our calendars to fill up and up, sometimes with no end in sight.

We are over-worked, over-committed, over-extended, stretched-thin, stressed-out, and burnt-out. We are too busy and we are too tired, and we will tell you about it. It seems like there is some kind of strange competition going on where we try to outdo each other with how busy and how tired we are. I am sure you have all been in conversation with another person and you are explaining about all the things you have been doing and how tired you are, and all of the sudden they pipe in and say, “Oh, well that's nothing compared to my week. Let me tell you what I had to do.” In a curious way, busyness has become a socially desirable good; if you're not busy then something is wrong with you. You are almost deemed socially inept or an outcast. Kerby Anderson, in an essay “Time and Busyness,” puts it this way, “Being busy is chic and trendy. Pity the poor person who has an organized life and a livable schedule. Everyone, it seems, is running out of time.” But this chic and trendy lifestyle is killing us-physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

I don't need to quote you some statistics on what busyness does to your body or health. You all know either personally or know of someone who has had health issues related to stress, poor diet, and busyness. It's the domino effect: your busy, so you don't take the time to eat or you only have time for a burger in the drive thru as you are going to your next thing, and don't even

mention being able to exercise. Then there's the issue of sleep which we have already talked about. All of these things are major causes of heart attacks, strokes, diabetes, you name it. Is this what God has called us to do with the life he has given us?

As for our emotional health, I know personally that when I am so busy doing things, and they maybe good things for others, the church, or things I have to do; but yet they are things that keep me so busy I begin to lose my connection to those closest to me. Christa and I have been so busy, we can't remember the last date we went on, which is something that we know we need to do to reconnect with each other and check in, in order to keep our relationship strong and healthy. I also don't remember the last time we hung out with our friends. These things can also begin to take a toll on us because we cram everything in to a day, a week, or whatever. We need those connections, those relationships to keep us balanced. Is this the way he has commanded us to live?

Finally, when we take a look at how busyness affects our spiritual life we find ourselves pushing it to the side or rushing through it just to get it done and on to the next thing. How many of us have done the short prayer on our way to something else in the car. Oops, I forgot to pray this morning, well I will do it now and mostly that prayer is filled with, "Help me. I need. I want. Lord please," with little time for response or any time to reflect on what we are truly saying. I think we can also get caught up in serving, where we are so busy serving others and doing good things for the church we begin to burn ourselves out. Is that what God has called us to do as followers?

There are several passages in the bible that we can turn to for answers to the questions I posed. Jesus gave us two specific commandments, directives, orders, demands, charges, instructions and they are, **"Jesus replied, The most important commandment is this: 'Listen, O Israel! The LORD our God is the one and only LORD. ³⁰ And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.'** ^[g] ³¹ **The second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'** ^[h] **No other commandment is greater than these."** He didn't mention how much to accomplish in a day, how many good deeds you need to do before you can stop. He simply told us what our mission is in life: Love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Which to me encompasses all parts of us, our physical, emotional, and spiritual; if we are run down and ragged, I don't see how we are loving the Lord with all of these things because we are too tired from being too busy that we have nothing left to give. The second commandment is just as important as the first but again, if we are so busy serving, doing, helping, are we loving ourselves, taking care of ourselves, nurturing ourselves to then be able to do that to our neighbors? I think sometimes we really kind of skim over the love your neighbor **as yourself**. To me that implies that you have to love yourself before you can love someone else. If you love yourself you will take care of you: getting enough rest, knowing your limits, spending time recharging your relationships, being in communion with God. It's then you are able to know how to love your neighbor because you have learned to love yourself.

So, we have these 3 guidelines to live by and hopefully will give us the guidance we need to live as he has called us to live. But he also used real life situations to show us how to accomplish these 3 things. In his ministry Jesus was bombarded by people in need of healing and it seemed he never could get a chance to catch his breath. He would go to city to city, preaching, teaching, and healing. But he took care of himself, so that he could do this. For example in Mark 1:35-37, he shows us how he recharged himself. **³⁵Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. ³⁶Simon and his companions went to look for him, ³⁷and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"** Can you just here what Jesus wanted to say, "Well, you found me. Now leave me alone for a bit, I am talking to God." Almost like a child interrupting their parents while there on the phone. But of course he headed the call and said, **"Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come."**The point I want to make is that he went off by himself and prayed. He took time out for himself and made sure that he stayed connected to the one who had sent him. He rested but he also was taking care of himself spiritually; which then gave him the strength to go out and do what he was there to do. Do you take time out for yourself? Do you stop and give yourself time to recharge from the one who knows you the best?

My last example that I want to share tonight is from Mark 6:30-32. Here's what it says, **"The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. ³¹Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.** Here I just want to point out that Jesus didn't respond to the apostles' reports about what they were doing by going over a new strategic plan. Notice he didn't respond to their reports of what they were teaching by going over a new curriculum. No. He said to his weary apostles, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." Don't we all long to hear these words spoken to us by our Lord? Don't we all desire to hear the invitation to come to a place all by ourselves and simply rest a while in the presence of our gracious God? Our Lord knows what we need, even when we do not. When we gather around him, we may want to tell him all the things we have done and all the things we have taught others. We hold up before him our busyness and our weariness as objects worthy of praise and reward. We tell him that we have been so busy that we haven't even had time to eat. And we say to ourselves, surely all these things will prove how important and valuable we are. And our gracious Lord looks past all our illusions and he doesn't even mention them, because if he did, he would have to remind us that all that we are and all that we do are gifts from God in the first place. Rather, he looks into our hearts and sees what we truly desire, what we truly need. He makes us lie down in green pastures and leads us beside the still waters and restores our souls. And he says to us, "Come away to a place all by yourselves and rest a little while with me."