

**Are You Just  
Busy?**



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**Or Busy for  
God?**

Many companies include various types of workers. The lazy, the laborious, and the average worker all have their places in various businesses. Businesses have attempted to grow in proficiency, but often think that busyness is the same thing. One site noticed that some businesses wrongly assume that the following employees are efficient:

- The employee that sends the most email.
- The person who works the most hours.
- Individuals who create the most documents and paper.
- The last one to leave the office.
- The employee that takes the least amount of vacation.
- The road warrior who logs the most travel.<sup>1</sup>

While such persons may have “put in the time” and be “busy bees,” the overarching question is “are they efficient?” The question then for businesses is not “how busy are we,” but “how proficient are we?” One survey done in 2023, observed over 18,000 workers in 8 different countries. The research found that over 30% of their time was spent doing performative (appearing busy) work.<sup>2</sup> Millions are lost every year due to a lack of productivity.

Such mistakes and losses in business are not the only place where this lack of productivity is seen. Like many secular employees, some church members mistake busyness with productivity; there is a difference (John 6:27). Instead of focusing on the important matters of service to God, some Christians work hard at the trivial work in the kingdom. They are the proverbial Martha (Luke 10:38-42). While Martha labored, it was not the most important thing she could have been doing. Mary chose the better part, the one that would benefit her spiritually. While two personalities are present in Luke 10 (representing the plethora of

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<sup>1</sup><https://timemanagementninja.com/2014/05/busy-bee-syndrome-when-companies-mistake-busyness-with-productivity/>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.statista.com/chart/30591/performative-productive-work/>

personalities in the church), some have a better focus than others. Perhaps Christians are busy, but not productive by focusing on what they can do to “get by” or by things they think will help, but don’t.

- Some members believe when their name is checked for every service they have done what they need to do.
- Some elderships may think that since they hired the preacher, they can wash their hands of evangelism, outreach, and mission work.
- Preachers think that their only duty for the work are the Sunday sermons and conversing with members.
- Some congregations are just excited to have the lights on and the water bill paid!

Instead of “playing church” we want to be busy, “serving the Lord” (Romans 12:11). We want to put in our full effort in our service to God (Ecclesiastes 9:10; Colossians 3:23) and not be lazy. In fact, it was in Jesus’ parable on the talents that further expresses this thought, by condemning the one who would not work (Matthew 25:26). Since we cannot do enough (Luke 17:10), we should be striving to be better every day.

As workers in the kingdom of God, we want to make sure we give our absolute best. We don’t want to short-change God because God did not short-change us! Don’t let “busy” just become another word for “lazy.”<sup>3</sup> We are commanded to redeem the time (Ephesians 5:16) so, how can we increase our work ethic in the kingdom and focus on productivity instead of just being busy? In writing about work proficiency and young entrepreneurs, Forbes described some important aspects to keep in mind about how to be proficient and not just “busy.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>[https://thematthewkent.com/busy-is-usually-another-word-for-lazy/#:~:text=Busyness%20is%20what%20happens%20when%20you%20are%20too,\"busy%20even%20if%20your%20schedule%20is%20booked%20solid.](https://thematthewkent.com/busy-is-usually-another-word-for-lazy/#:~:text=Busyness%20is%20what%20happens%20when%20you%20are%20too,\)

<sup>4</sup>Forbes article serves at the main points for this article.

**Act on the Important, Don't React to the Urgent.**

It is more important to catch the murderer than the speeder, of more value to talk to a doctor than a janitor about medicine, or to get today's stuff done before its due tomorrow than to work on next year's thing done today. We would do well to act on the most important and not overact to urgent things, for anxiety in the heart of the person can cause them to stoop (Proverbs 12:25, ESV).

*Use a written and observable outline.* Perhaps using Covey's Time Management grid will help us use our time for God better. This grid includes four Quadrants, each with a specific title. Churches, elders, ministers, and individual members would do well to use something similar.

	<b>Urgent</b>	<b>Not Urgent</b>
<b>Important</b>	Important and Urgent	Important and Not Urgent
<b>Not-Important</b>	Non-Important and Urgent	Not important and Not Urgent

Written material helps with observation and realization. Placing certain responsibilities we have in the specific boxes will help us accomplish the important and not be unprepared for the urgent things. It will also help us not stress over responsibilities that will be handled in the future because they are not presently important.

*Be prepared* (Proverbs 24:27). We cannot be zealous workers for God if we are not prepared for it. Perhaps we

- Plan a monthly schedule of service projects we will do.
- Organize a calendar of the events for the year we will host for encouragement.
- Plan out our day with specific tasks so we don't have to as the day progresses.

Anxiety will subside and overaction will not occur if we are prepared.

We should focus on the things we can handle now, not be pulled by the things that do not matter as much, or are not as much of a priority.

**Go for Extraordinary, Do not Settle for Ordinary.**

Charles Mims said, “A religion that does nothing, that gives nothing, that costs nothing, that suffers nothing, IS WORTH NOTHING!” God deserves our best and nothing less. Our service to God should be with all our might (Ecclesiastes 9:10). Punching a time clock is for secular workers, but not for heaven’s laborers. The status quo and ordinary effort are not good standards by which to live. We want to serve God with everything we have, not just half (Mark 12:30). In his book entitled *Excellence*, John Gardner says,

Some people have greatness thrust upon them. Very few have excellence thrust upon them...They achieve it. They do not achieve it unwittingly by 'doing what comes naturally' and they don't stumble into it in the course of amusing themselves. All excellence involves discipline and tenacity of purpose.<sup>5</sup>

Excellence for the Lord is determined by hard work and dedication. Extraordinary work:

*Means we should put away the ordinary.* Ordinary work is what all church members do, but we should excel and strive for higher things. Instead of attending the worship services, attend the fellowship gatherings. Instead of just listening to the preacher’s sermons, study them at home for yourself. Practice the things learned IN the assembling OUT of the assembling. Having our eyes lifted up will help us get out of the rut of ordinary work (John 4:35).

*Looks different for everyone.* Extraordinary effort is not based upon the same baseline results. Instead, this type of effort looks different all throughout the kingdom. One member may only baptize 15 people but that was because he lived in a community with only 150 people. Another member may appear to be doing “more,” but God’s

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<sup>5</sup><https://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/e/excellence.htm>

scale is much different than ours. God is satisfied when we do what we can (Mark 14:8); this is extraordinary work.

*Demands that we perfect what we CAN do.* Focusing on the things we are not good at or cannot do, will discourage us from the things we can do. We don't want to be like Korah and forget the talents God has blessed us with (Numbers 16). Serving God is about using the talents He has given us and furthering the kingdom from those (Matthew 25:14-30). God does not expect us to do the things we cannot do, but He does expect us to perfect the things we can do.

God's service demands our best. There was a "Harvard professor who had given an assignment and now was collecting the papers. He handed them back the next day and at the bottom of one was written, 'Is this the best you can do?' The student thought, 'no,' and redid the paper. It was handed in again, and received the same comment. This went on ten times, till finally the student said, 'Yes, this is the best I can do.' The professor replied, 'Fine, now I'll read it.'"<sup>6</sup> God won't applaud or appreciate our work unless it is our best.

### **Let Go of Perfection.**

Edwin Bliss once said, "The pursuit of excellence is gratifying and healthy. The pursuit of perfection is frustrating, neurotic, and a terrible waste of time." Perfectionism distracts servants from the true task by creating impossible responsibilities, prolonging activities, and harming our work results. Perfectionism is dangerous to our service because "Some people are so afraid of making a mistake that they simply do nothing."<sup>7</sup>

Servants of God know the difference from excellence and perfectionism. In the 1990's, some research was done examining the Cognitive problems of perfectionism. There were six areas: "(a) personal standards, (b) concern over mistakes, (c) doubts about actions, (d) parental expectations, and (e) parental criticism. Further research

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<sup>6</sup><https://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/e/excellence.htm>

<sup>7</sup>Tom Wacaster, *The Majesty of Jesus*, Sain Publications, 2019, 511.

revealed a sixth dimension, (f) preference for order and organization.”<sup>8</sup> Each of these must be curbed in order to overcome perfectionism.

*Instead of heightening personal standards, heighten God’s standards* (Galatians 6:16). Some imagine God’s standards to be as high as Mount Everest when they are only three stories tall (cf. Matthew 25:24). Liberalism shortens the measuring rod, but perfectionism lengthens it. Obey the “manual” by what it says, placing no additional comments or rules to it. Perfectionism destroys our work because we require too much of ourselves.

*Don’t dwell on mistakes; learn and move on* (Proverbs 24:16). Perfectionists are tied to the end of the string of their past. Our service to God will be filled with a plethora of mistakes, so we should accept them, learn from them, and move on to our goal. David, Peter, and Paul did not allow their mistakes to murder their mission.

*Practice acceptance* (John 8:32). Doubt is a constant thorn in the side of perfectionists, often creating false realities and it dims futures. Some Christians may doubt if they did something with the right motive, question if their choice was correct, and be anxious about if they are worthy enough. They also may worry about things they cannot control. Instead, we should accept the things we KNOW are true and cast aside the things of which we are uncertain (Matthew 6:34).

*Overcome peer, peoples, and parental expectations.* Christian service is not about pleasing others, but God (cf. Hebrews 11:5). Servants know that they must please one person: their master, for it would be impossible to please everyone else. WWJT (What Would Jesus Think) is better than WWOT (What Would Others Think).

*Welcome criticism, but don’t be drowned by it* (cf. Ecclesiastes 7:5). Someone said, “Don’t let compliments get to your head and don’t let their criticism get to your heart.” Perfectionists exaggerate criticism causing an unhealthy examination of their hearts. Instead, we should examine the critic’s assertions and fix any problems in our service to God (Proverbs 15:31-33), but not be so consumed by critics who just

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<sup>8</sup><https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1582&context=irp>

want to tear us down. Allowing others to rip us apart will lead to no more meat left on the bone!

*Be organized, but also flexible.* God is not confused, but organized (1 Corinthians 14:34, 40), so it would make sense for His servants to be organized too. Overdoing this though may hurt us, for spontaneous events may arise. Organizing study, prayer, and evangelism is good, but we must make sure we are flexible. Perfectionists have every half-hour planned, but Christians go day by day.

Perfectionism is wrapped in the bow of ourselves. Instead, we must find sufficiency in God (2 Corinthians 3:5) and give our hearts some grace.

### **Fuel Your Fire, Don't Burn Out.**

Paul said, "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9). Burnout is a type of stress that results from unresolved situations at work. The workload, lack of control, no support, or poor work-life balance may be some of the causes.<sup>9</sup> Sometimes Christians find themselves burnt out in their service to God, new Christians especially do. Because of overzealous hearts, some Christians then burn out due the overload of work (Exodus 18:18). Martha seemed overwhelmed with her work, and when we feel similarly, we should take precautions, else our work may turn to busyness instead of productivity. Fueling the fire is essential, else the fire will go out (Proverbs 26:20a); we don't want to be weary in doing good (2 Thessalonians 3:13).

*Take vacations* (Mark 6:31). Jesus had just sent the apostles on a missionary journey, traveling to various places (Mark 6:7-13). Upon returning, they began to tell Jesus all of what they did (Mark 6:30). Instead of continue working, Jesus suggested they take a break. Hard work in the kingdom demands that we often take breaks of relaxation, mediation, and easiness. The Sabbath was made for man to rest; vacations fulfill the same purpose. Dr. Rachel Goldman says, "The key is

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<sup>9</sup><https://mcpress.mayoclinic.org/mental-health/breaking-down-burnout-in-the-workplace/>



to prevent ourselves from getting to the point that we absolutely need the break.”<sup>10</sup>

*Don't take on more than you can handle* (Acts 6:1-6). One said, “you can do anything, but you can't do everything.”<sup>11</sup> It were the apostles who recognized that they could not “serve tables.” When we take more work than the day or week requires, we will become burned out. One part of the body was never destined to control the whole (1 Corinthians 12:14). Each member is to do their own part so the body may function properly (Ephesians 4:16).

*Do good* (Galatians 6:10). After Paul's admonition to not lose heart, he admonishes these Christians to go about doing good. Doing good is the fan to the flame of service. Having an eye for the poor and a heart for the hurt will encourage us to keep on keeping on.

*Keep the spark alive* (Luke 24:32). Fire will go out if there is not a spark. The spiritual spark for service will fade if it is not kept going. Sometimes Christians are burnt out because they feel alone (cf. 1 Kings 19:4). Surrounding ourselves with Christians fans the flame of faithfulness. Attending Gospel meetings, traveling to Polishing the Pulpit, and going to as many outside events as we can, will encourage our dedication to God.

Fire goes out ONLY when we allow it to. If we keep feeding the fire, we will not burn out! We want to be “fervent<sup>12</sup> in spirit” (Romans 12:11).

### **Remove Distractions.**

One survey done showed that each year \$468 billion dollars are lost because of distractions.<sup>13</sup> Technology, friends, family, and entertainment often are the reasons for distractions in many places. Martha was distracted by unimportant things. She was busy, but not productive with things that did not matter. Sometimes we may find ourselves distracted by temporal and fleshly, but unimportant things. When we are

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<sup>10</sup><https://www.verywellmind.com/why-you-should-take-a-break-3144576>

<sup>11</sup><https://illustrationideas.bible/we-cant-do-it-all/>

<sup>12</sup>Word means to “boil with heat” (Thayer) or bubble (Vincent).

<sup>13</sup><https://www.forbes.com/sites/carolinecastrillon/2023/12/20/efficiency-vs-productivity-at-work-how-to-increase-both/?sh=4bec5ff21bee>

distracted, it often takes a while to get back to focus (many minutes in fact). Distractions disrupts dedication, so we should:

*Recognize the distractions.* Usually, sin pulls us away from service (Matthew 13:22; 1 John 2:15-17). Every fish is enticed by different bait (James 1:14-15), so we should examine the specific bait Satan uses as he throws his line. Ask questions like, “why am I not getting this done,” or “what is the reason I feel this way?” Paul had to subject his body so that his work was not worthless (1 Corinthians 9:27).

*Remove the distractions* (Hebrews 12:1). Both sinful and non-sinful things can inflict spiritual laborers. Christians are proverbial runners and the less baggage they have the better. Sinful practices should be repented from, and worldly distractions should be curbed. The word for, “let us lay aside” means to take off like a garment. This is often easier said than done because it takes sacrifice, commitment, and love for God.

*Remember the goal* (Proverbs 4:25-27). Fixed eyes do not turn right or left. If we have our eyes set on Jesus (Hebrews 12:2) and heaven (Colossians 3:2), then we will work harder for God. As the paycheck prompts hard labor, so should heaven prompt heavenly labor. Salvation of souls, spiritual maturation, and serving others should increase our laborious drive for God.

We don't want to let anything distract us from our mission (1 Corinthians 7:35). God wants laborious workers (1 Corinthians 15:58). He seeks those who seek His work and are not just busybodies. So, are we just busy or are we busy for God?