

May 10/11, 2025

**Busyness**  
*Everyday Disciples Series*  
**Proverbs 23:1-5 and 1 John 2:15-17**  
Pastor Bryan Clark

Over the years, from time to time, I've referred to what I call the funeral perspective. Over the years, I've done hundreds of funerals and I'm always struck by how much clarity there is in that moment about what really matters in life, and what doesn't really matter at all. I'm going to assume everybody in the room wants to get to the end of their life and realize that I've lived my life for the things that really matter. I can't imagine that anyone wants to waste their life. But there is a roadblock in our culture today that we have to deal with if we're going to live that way. And that is our addiction to busyness, because busyness is a good way to waste a life.

Before we open up the Scriptures and look at some passages, I just want to make some introductory comments. So first of all, when we talk about busyness, what are we talking about? So, God has wired lots of us to like to be busy. I like to be busy. I like to work hard. I like to get things done. There's nothing wrong with that. That's not what we're talking about. We're talking about what Brené Brown calls a *crazy-busyness*, a busyness that affects our mental health, our physical health, our emotional health, a busyness to the extreme that goes beyond what is good and healthy. I think it's also true, if that's one extreme, there's a huge problem in our culture on the other extreme, what the Proverbs refer to as the *sluggard*. That's people that have become lazy. They're indifferent; they're apathetic; they're just wasting their lives away. Both are extremes, and what's interesting about that is that both of them root back to the same fundamental cause.

So, it's been interesting over the last 10 years, let's say, the amount of research by mental health experts, by researchers, by sociologists, and the rising concern over this crisis of busyness. As a matter of fact, many of them are beginning to use the term “addiction to busyness” with all the same characteristics of any other addiction. I don't know if you're familiar with Brené Brown. She's a researcher; she's a university professor, and she has a number of New York Times best-selling books. And in her book, *Daring Greatly*, this is what she says.

*“One of the most universal numbing strategies is what I call crazy-busy. I often say that when they start having 12-step meetings for busy-aholics, they’ll need to rent out football stadiums. We are a culture of people who’ve bought into the idea that if we stay busy enough, the truth of our lives won’t catch up to us.”*

\*(Brené Brown in *Daring Greatly* Publisher: Avery, New York, New York Copyright: 2012)

Many experts are identifying busyness as a numbing strategy like any other addiction. I appreciate the research, because for years I have been saying that my belief is the emptiness of our culture is

what's driving the pace. So, it's helpful for research to affirm that is indeed true. Some addictions invite shame—addiction to alcohol, addiction to drugs, addiction to pornography—but other addictions we wear like a badge of honor.

"Hey, how you doing?" "Busy...really busy." You ever thought about that? That's a really strange answer. We're wearing it like a badge of honor. There's only one reason why I just said that. It's because I want people to be impressed. "I'm busy." "Hey, how you doing?" "Oh, I'm addicted to drugs." (*laughter*) Nobody says that. "How are you doing?" "I'm busy, really busy."

Columbia University has done extensive research on this topic, trying to figure out what's happening. Why are we living this way? What they discovered is the number one reason that people are crazy-busy is *status*. It's status! I've bought into the idea that if I'm really, really busy, it must mean I'm important. It must mean I'm significant. I must have value because I'm really busy.

The second reason is *uncertainty*. People have no purpose in life; they sense no meaning in life. So they're just going 100 miles an hour, trying to grab a crumb of significance anywhere they can find it. "Just stay busy!"

The third thing they discovered is it's become our *numbing strategy*. Just like Brené Brown said, "I don't want to face the fact that my life is a mess, so as long as I stay crazy-busy, I don't have to face the reality of that." This is where we're at as a culture. What's interesting about all this research is all they're discovering is something that the Bible warned us about thousands of years ago.

If you have a Bible, turn to 1 John, Chapter 2. This is a familiar text. We've looked at it several times over the years, but I do think it's the most concise explanation of what we're talking about. But just before we look at this text, I want to give you a little background that I think helps us understand what John is saying. If you go all the way back to the beginning of the story in Genesis, what we learn in Genesis chapters 1 and 2 is that we as people are made in the image of God. We are made to experience a loving, intimate relationship with God. Out of that relationship would flow our work in the garden. It was to be purposeful and meaningful. Out of that relationship would flow our significance and value. That's how God intended life to be. But in Genesis chapter 3, when Adam and Eve sin against God, the human race is separated from God. Adam and Eve are evicted from the garden (Paradise) and that leaves us with a very important question. "Now separated from God, where will mankind find significance and value?"

The only possibility is in ourselves. We're going to have to now function as God. I'm going to have to make myself significant. I'm going to have to give myself value. And how does that happen? Through performance. It's through my performance that I'm going to make myself significant and give myself value. Performance then requires that every moment of every day is a competition and a comparison. Every day, all day long, I am competing and comparing. That's why people's self-

esteem goes up and down...and up and down...and up and down...every day. It depends what I'm comparing and who I'm comparing to. So up and down...and up and down...goes my self-esteem, desperately seeking to be significant, to convince the people around me I do have value. It's this desperate performance-based system to tell people that I matter. This makes up what the Bible refers to as the *world* or the *world system*. Both the Old and New Testament used the word world in a couple different ways, but when it's used as John is using it in 1 John, chapter 2, verse 15, he's referring to the world system as I've just defined it. We actually looked at this verse briefly two weeks ago.

**Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.** (\*NASB, 1 John 2:15)

I made the comment two weeks ago that you cannot have two lovers. You just can't. You can't be both single and married at the same time. You just can't make that work. These two systems are completely incompatible. One is a system with God in the center of it. The other is a system without God. You can't have it both ways; you can't love the Father and the world system. That's just not going to work. So, in verse 16, he gets into the specifics of this system:

**For all that is in the world** (In other words, this is what defines it.) **the lust of the flesh...**

**The flesh** is a reference to that which I can do without God. Like the term **world**, the word **flesh** is used in a couple different ways in the New Testament. But when it's used like this, it's simply referencing what I can do without God. It doesn't have to be bad things or evil things; it's just what I can do myself. **The lust of the flesh**, meaning the great desire of my flesh, is to be God myself, and to make myself significant...to give myself value by performing, by competing and comparing all day long. This is what my flesh wants, and we compete and compare about everything.

It has to do with how I look. It has to do with how smart I am, what kind of a musician I am, what kind of an athlete I am, whether or not I'm in the popular crowd. Now, whenever I say that, most people immediately think of teenagers, but the reality is adults struggle with that just as much. What social group...what group of friends...what people do I know...where do I fit in? Why do people find so much significance because they know a celebrity? It's the same thing. I'm trying to be in the popular crowd. It can be my job title. It can be my career...what I do for a living...where I live. It can be about anything. It's a relentless pursuit to compete and compare, and what's at stake is my significance and value. He goes on in verse 16:

**For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes...**

In both the Old and New Testament, the concept of **eyes**, typically, is a reference to covetousness. "I see it; I want it." "I see it; I need it!" Think of it this way. If this performance-based culture,

where competing and comparing was an athletic sport, the question would be, “How do you put points on the scoreboard?” How do you demonstrate to the people around you that you're significant, that you have value? You're putting points on the scoreboard to say, “I'm winning. I have value. I matter.” So the answer is, “Money and stuff.” That's why the text says, **Do not love the world or the things in the world.** We all know this is the way the culture works. How do we put points on the scoreboard? It's through money and stuff. “Of course, I'm significant. Look at my house.” “Of course, I have value. Look at the car I'm driving...how much money I make...what my career is.” A lot of people these days go to college and pick a career just based on this, desperately searching for something to be significant. “How much money can I make?” “What kind of vacations can I take?” “What kind of clothes do I wear?”

You tell me. Why do people buy houses they can't afford? Why do people buy cars they can't pay for? Why do people spend more money than they make? Why do people swipe credit cards and can't pay them off? It's not a math problem; it's a significance problem. “I'm falling behind. I desperately need to demonstrate I have significance, that I have value. Just look at my car.”

When you go back to your high school class reunion, does it matter to your classmates if you're a cardiologist or a high school janitor? Of course it does! Does it matter if you pull up in a beat-up old minivan or a brand-new Lexus? Of course it does! We know that's true. That's the way the culture works. It's a relentless pursuit of significance and value...putting points on the scoreboard.

Over the hundreds of funerals I've done, when I gather the family together, I always ask the question, “What is it you want to remember about your loved one? What is it you want to celebrate? What is it you want people to know and remember?” I've never had anybody say, “Make sure you mention a really big house. Make sure you mention a really nice car. Make sure you mention a lot of money in the bank.” Even though some of those people, that's how they lived, there's something in that moment that's really clarifying. And what's being said in that moment is that nobody is impressed. “Big deal!” That isn't the way to significance and value.

What's interesting about that is that it's the same core issue for people who have become the **sluggard**...lazy...unmotivated...apathetic, because what's happened is they've given up. I can't compete...I can't take the pressure...I'm never going to be significant...I'm never going to have value...I just give up. So, they roll over. “I don't care anymore. I'm not going to do anything. I'm going to spend my days playing video games, trolling on social media, looking at my phone. I give up!” It's the same core issue with both extremes.

Think again of that study by Columbia University, and the number one driver of this crazy-busy pace is: **Status**...I'm desperately trying to prove I have value. **Uncertainty**...life has no meaning and purpose. I'm just scrambling to do something. **Numbing strategy**...but deep down, I know I'm not keeping up. I know I'm not significant, I know I don't have value. I know I'm not getting

enough points on the scoreboard. So I just have to stay really busy and numb myself to the fact that my life is a mess. It all fits.

A thousand years before John wrote these words, the writer of Proverbs warned us of the very same thing. Turn to Proverbs, chapter 23. It's a proverb we've looked at before, and it's just very interesting. Proverbs 23 verse 1:

**When you sit down to dine with a ruler,**

A **ruler** is maybe not the best translation of this word. It's talking about someone with power and status and significance...a mover and a shaker...somebody that has the potential to make you somebody. This isn't like a nice Sunday afternoon dinner. This is a business meeting where what this person is offering you is the chance to be somebody. The proverb goes on:

**...consider carefully** (There is the warning.) **what is put before you,  
And put a knife to your throat  
If you are a man of great appetite.  
Do not desire his delicacies,  
For it is deceptive food.** (Vs. 1b-3)

I'm always struck by the graphic language of this proverb. **If you are a man of great appetite**, a man or a woman of great appetite, what that means is, "If you are desperately seeking significance, if you are desperately seeking value, if you're going 100 miles an hour to try to be somebody, I need the world to know I matter!" And it's becoming more and more desperate. If that's you, what's about to happen in that dinner with this ruler is such a concern, the writer of the proverb says you better **put a knife to your throat**. That is really graphic language. Quiz question: How many verses in the Bible tell you to **put a knife to your throat**? I'm going to help you with this one. "One!" (*laughter*) I mean, that's just "crazyville". Obviously it's hyperbole, but it's very graphic language. What it's saying is you are about to ruin your life. You're about to waste your life on something that doesn't matter because you're caught up in the world-system, thinking your significance and value come from money and stuff, from competing and comparing, and ultimately, there's no winner in this system. There can't be a winner in this system. Enough can never be enough. There's always going to be somebody better. There's always going to be somebody with more, no matter how good you were today. What about tomorrow? What about the next day? It's a system with no winners! That just drives us into the grave. That's why we're seeing so much of this mental health and physical health and emotional health related to this crazy, busy pace that defines our culture. Verse 4:

**Do not weary yourself to gain wealth,  
Cease from your consideration of it.**

**When you set your eyes on it, it's gone.  
For *wealth* certainly makes itself wings like an eagle  
That flies *toward* the heavens.** (Vs. 4-5)

At the end of the story, what you end up with is a big, big deal! A life wasted! Nobody is impressed! This desperate lifelong search for significance and value has caused you to completely waste your life!

But it doesn't have to be that way. Instead of loving the world, we have another option. We can love the Father. Jesus entered into a culture full of oppression, full of hopelessness and despair and discouragement, and He said these famous words, "***Come unto me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give You rest.***" The world's system drives people into the grave. What Jesus was offering is a better way to live. What he was offering was the alternative. "***I will give you rest.***"

Two weeks ago, we looked at the passage in Mark where Jesus is speaking to the multitudes, and He's telling them, "Hey, if you're going to follow Me, this is what it's going to cost you. You must deny yourself and take up your cross. You must lose your life for My sake in order to find it." What's critical to understand about what Jesus said is He was not inviting these people into a life of less. What he was offering them was relief from this performance anxiety...the world system that's driving people into the grave! You don't have to live that way. There's a better way. "***I will give you rest.***" But to do that, you have to deny yourself. You're not God. You've got to start there. "I'm God; you're not God, and you have to lose your life in order to find it in Me." Through the salvation that Jesus would offer, sinful men and women could stand right before a holy God, and as a result of that relationship, once again, I can find my significance and value in being rightly related to God. I don't have to play God and try to do it myself. And because it's on the basis of God's grace, I don't have to compete and compare every day.

It's not based on my performance. It's based on God's grace, on His goodness. It's a gift. It's constant every day...on my best days and on my worst days. And I find my identity and my relationship with Christ, not on how well I compare and compete in the world. In the Sermon on the Mount, right at the end of the sermon—Matthew Chapter 7—Jesus tells this familiar story. "*All those who hear My words, and act on them, will build their lives on the rock, and the storms will not prevail. But all those who hear My words but don't act, you're going to build your life on the sand, and the storm is going to wash it all away.*"

What's the difference between the rock and the sand? It's the difference between those people who hear what Jesus said and do something about it, and those people that hear the words, but nothing ever changes. It does raise a question. What did Jesus just say? What are those words He's talking

about? Probably just a couple minutes before He uttered those words, in Matthew chapter 6, verse 33, this is what He said.

**Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added unto you.**

That's a summary of the Sermon on the Mount. **Seek first the kingdom of God.** There is a better way to live. Jesus offers **rest** instead of this crazy-busy, self-destructive way of life that defines our culture.

So think about it. What is it that drives the busyness in our culture?

**Status** - I don't need that anymore. I find my significance and value in being rightly related to God through Christ. That's my status. I don't need to search for significance and value. I have it in Christ.

**Uncertainty** - I don't live with uncertainty. I have a laser-like focus. **Seek first the kingdom of God**, because at the end of the story, I'm quite clear, that's what's going to matter. That's what I should live for.

**Numbing strategy** - I don't need a numbing strategy because it's not on the basis of my performance. I'm not competing and comparing all day. I've been set free from that. It's on the basis of the grace of God, which gives me the freedom, every day, to no longer compete and compare, but to find joy in life, in seeking first the kingdom of God. I have no need for a numbing strategy.

This is what I would suggest for the coming week. Everyone needs to take an activities inventory. What are we doing and why are we doing it? It's just easy to get caught up in the pace of the culture and not even think about it. I have no problem understanding why someone who has not experienced new life in Christ would be driven by crazy-busyness, because they have no other option on the table. They're in a desperate search for significance and value. They're trying to figure this out, but they know they're failing, so they have to numb themselves with more busyness. I understand that that's where they're at.

What's confusing to me is, "Why do we as Christians live that way?" You can't love both the Father and the world. You can't be both single and married. Now that we have experienced new life in Christ, my significance, my value, my identity, is all connected to my relationship with Christ. On the basis of His grace, I don't have to compete and compare and live with that stress and anxiety every day. I have been set free. **"Come to Me, and I will give you rest."** It's the better way to live.

So, what are we doing? Why are we doing it? Why does this matter to us? Why is this so important? Why is this a priority? If you were to die six months from now, why does what you've made a priority matter? Why would it matter then? What, instead, does it look like to **Seek first the kingdom of God**? Because that's what must define an *everyday disciple* of Jesus.

*Our Father, we're thankful that You have provided a better way to live. Lord, even the secular world, apart from You, is growing more and more concerned of the devastation of this crazy busyness that defines our culture. But, God, You have invited us into something very different: busy, but good busy about the things that ultimately matter. May that be true of us. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE  
Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1987, 1988, 1995  
The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.  
Lincoln Berean Church, 6400 S. 70th, Lincoln, NE 68516 (402) 483-6512  
Copyright 2025 – Bryan Clark. All rights reserved.



SPRING 2025 // WEEK 6

Life Group Questions

Everyday Disciples // May 10/11, 2025

Busyness // Proverbs 23:1-5, 1 John 2:15-17, Matthew 6:33

EVERYDAY DISCIPLES

Following Jesus in the 21st Century



Don't forget the Life Groups Picnic Celebration scheduled for Sunday, May 18<sup>th</sup>! We invite you to come together for an old-style Pot Lunch meal to celebrate all that God has done in Life Groups this past year. Weather permitting we'll enjoy outdoor games and activities and there will be a few ways to share some of what God has done in your life through your Life Group this year. The Life Groups Team is providing the main meat dish. When you register, let us know

how many are attending (including kids) and also what side dish you are bringing. We also need to know allergy notes related to your dish (i.e. your side dish contains gluten or dairy, etc.). The link to sign up is:

<https://www.lincolnberean.org/LG-picnic>

## Introduction

As we are learning what it means to live as disciples of Jesus, we've noticed that it takes intention and effort. In our hectic and hurried culture, wrestling with the impulse toward busyness is common for all of us. Pastor Bryan took us to passages in the Old and New Testaments to show us how to understand the root issue in this struggle.

## Busyness

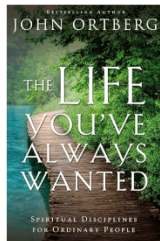
Are we making time for what matters in our hurried lives?



Margin  
Richard A. Swenson  
[Amazon Link](#)



The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry  
John Mark Comer  
[Amazon Link](#)



The Life You Always Wanted  
John Ortberg  
[Amazon Link](#)

In addition to the sermon and these discussion questions, LBC is recommending resources each week that you could look at if you want to dig further into this topic. **After the sermon each weekend**, you can find links to these resources on our website. To the left is a picture of the resources for this week. There are no links to these resources here. Here is a link to the webpage:

[www.lincolnberean.org/everydaydisciples](http://www.lincolnberean.org/everydaydisciples)

**We invite you to look over all the questions on the following pages and write your thoughts down before you meet with your group. Some people even use these questions to take notes during the sermon. The questions are meant to stir your thinking and prompt open discussion, and we do not expect you to cover every question each week.**

## **Warm Up** *(Suggested time: 30 min)*

---

- 1) What song on your playlist (or the radio) is meaningful to you lately? Share it with the group.
  
- 2) Would you rather have a remote control that can pause time or fast-forward through boring moments?

## **Getting Started**

---

Transition into group discussion.

- 1) Open group discussion with prayer. Here are a few potential prayer items:
  - a. For the Spirit of God to lead you in truth
  - b. For the fruit of the Spirit to be cultivated in your lives
  - c. For grace to hear and apply what the Spirit says to you
- 2) Choose someone to read the passage aloud for the group or read them as you come to them in the questions.

## Study Questions *(Suggested time: 40 min)*

---

1. **What has surprised or inspired you about our series, Everyday Disciples?**
2. Pastor Bryan described the *busyness* in our culture. **What are some factors that drive that busyness?**

**When you think about your own schedule and pace of life, would you rate yourself as too busy, not busy enough, or just right? Give an example, if possible.**

3. Read Proverbs 23:1-5 and 1 John 2:15-17 and notice the warning they give us. **What is the great risk we all face according to these verses?**

**What's the relationship between busyness and the search for significance?**

4. It's one thing to keep a full social calendar, but busyness has a way of creeping into all areas of life. **What are some reasons why you might bring busyness into your spiritual life?**

Read Matthew 11:28-30 together (reading in the Message paraphrase might be fun). **What does Jesus offer to all of us who have made our spiritual life a hectic performance?**

**To what extent are you experiencing the kind of relationship Jesus offers?**

5. Both overwork and laziness are components of our culture, and neither are God's desire for us. Matthew 6:33 says, "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided to you." **In your own words, describe what it means to "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness".**

**How might knowing and acting on these words of Jesus keep you from being ruled by busyness?**

**What can you do as a Life Group to encourage each other in this area of discipleship?**

## Personal Spiritual Exercises

---

Just like physical exercises help strengthen and stretch our bodies for healthy living, these spiritual exercises are meant to move us spiritually in ways that may be new so we might experience inner growth. Since God longs for us to experience Him with our whole selves—mind, body, spirit—we invite you along each week to strengthen your souls with suggestions and prompts.

**Scripture Focus:** In Matthew 5:1-12 Jesus describes the value system of His Kingdom. Make a plan to read this passage each day and take note of the words that are most meaningful each time. When you get to the end of the week, journal a response to all that God taught you in that simple act of faithful reading. God's Word is living and active!

**Prayer Focus:** A good way to resist busyness is being intentionally silent and still to focus on God. Try setting a timer for 10 minutes. Sit upright but comfortably in a chair with your palms open and upward on your lap. Focus on a word or short phrase about the character of God the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. When your thoughts wander to the things on your to-do list or other people's needs, redirect them back to the character of God. When the 10 minutes is up, close in a short prayer of gratitude.

## Prayer *(Suggested time: 20 min)*

---

A significant part of "coming together" is being open and honest with our lives. Sitting in a group of people for prayer may be new or it may be familiar to you. If you would rather not pray aloud when it is your turn, feel free to pray silently and then say "Amen" aloud signaling the next person in the group to pray. Whether or not you choose to verbalize your prayer, everyone is a participant in sharing this time before God together.

Take a few moments to prepare a prayer request. What did the message, working through the above questions or the discussion cause you to notice about your own relationship with Jesus? Would you be willing to share your prayer request with the group?