



Advent at Faithbridge: Room in the Inn?

Text: Luke 2: 1-7

Business Administrator Michael Sullivan

1. We use two powerful words – yes and no – to make wise decisions. The words ‘yes’ and ‘no’ are also great words you can use to get to know each other better. Go around the group and respond to as many of the following questions as you have time for. See how much you can find out about each other simply by answering ‘yes’ or ‘no’.
 - a. Do you like spicy food?
 - b. Have you ever Googled yourself?
 - c. Did you laugh out loud today?
 - d. Have you ever broken a bone?
 - e. Have you ever had your name in a newspaper or other publication?
 - f. Do you still have your tonsils?
 - g. Have you ever secretly skipped pages when reading a bedtime story?
 - h. Can you say the alphabet backward?
 - i. Have you ever fallen asleep at work?
 - j. Did yesterday turn out like you thought it would?
 - k. Do you like to spend time by yourself?

2. It’s easy to think that our daily ‘yes’ and ‘no’ decisions aren’t all that important, but over time, they can add up. The decisions we make dictate the schedules we keep; the schedules we keep determine the life we live; the life we live determines how we spend our soul – and how we spend our soul matters. Briefly recall a recent decision you made about your time.
 - a. How did that decision impact your schedule?
 - b. How did your schedule then impact your life?
 - c. As a result, how would you say you spent your soul in that situation?

3. There was no room for Mary and Joseph in the inn. The innkeeper was busy distracted by the inn full of guests, and because of his distraction he failed to make room for the Christ.
 - a. What keeps you busy?

- b. Have you ever considered that busyness and distraction can be a weapon of the enemy?
 - c. What distracts you at Christmas?
 - d. What yes or no decision can you make to focus more on Jesus and less on the busyness and distractions of the season?
4. Making room for Jesus is a heart issue way more than it is a practical issue.
- a. Read Matthew 13:44-46. Would this describe your life?
 - b. Do you truly view Jesus as your supreme treasure?
 - c. Read Matthew 6:19-24. Jesus said that our treasure follows our hearts. This applies to more than just money. Where we are putting our time, money, and energy reveals what we truly treasure. If someone were to audit your weekly schedule, your bank account, etc., what would it reveal about what you treasure?
5. Many of us desire to be more faithful to Jesus, but haven't found a way to get closer to God or grow in our faith. If we're going to find time for Jesus we must evaluate our priorities and then choose how we're going to use our time, talents, and resources.
- a. In what ways did Sunday's message stir your heart's affections or desires?
 - b. Be honest with yourself, you actually want to change? If so, say a short and simple prayer expressing this to the Lord now.
 - c. Do you feel called to make specific changes? If so, write them out with now.

Challenge: How can the group pray against distraction and busyness in our lives? How can we hold each other accountable for maintaining our focus on Christ?

Prayer: Father God, we confess that in this season in particular we are busy people. We, like the innkeeper, often don't have room or margin in our lives for the things of you. Forgive us of all the ways that we put other things first; when in reality they are all insignificant and empty compared to the life You have for us, abundant and full of joy! Help us to reorder our priorities. Help us to slow down, sit at your feet, study Your Word, engage You with our hearts and lives. Give us opportunities to show Your love to those who need it most in this season. You are good. You are merciful. Thank You for your grace and the gift of your Son this Christmas. In Jesus name, Amen.

STUDY DEEPER

4 Ways to Win the Battle Against Busyness

I'm a busy person. I interact with busy people all the time. Chances are, you're a busy person (which is why you're not even reading this introduction . . . you're already skimming my four points below). Busyness is in the air. Not many of us like it, but few of us have managed to escape it.

Busyness isn't just uncomfortable, it's dangerous. There are few things as damaging—and potentially soul-destroying, as busyness. As Blaise Pascal once noted, busyness sends more people to hell than unbelief.

The draw of busyness is that it gives us a sense of importance. When my schedule is full, I feel like I'm in demand. Without me, we think, all of this would fall apart. As Christians, we all too often baptize this idolatry by assuming that busyness equals faithfulness. And all the while we're "burning ourselves out for Jesus," we're running on the fumes of our own self-importance. Meanwhile, Jesus is unimpressed.

Jesus shatters the myth that busyness equals faithfulness; he confronts all of our fears that lead to our busyness, then he points us to a better way forward—resting in him. We sit at the feet of Jesus, find our sufficiency in him, and only then fill our schedules with whatever he tells us.

But how can we do that? Here are four precepts from Scripture and other wisdom that can help us diffuse busyness and sit at Jesus's feet.

1. Sleep. Psalm 127:2 says, "It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep." The sign that you are God's "beloved" is that you are able to sleep. It is not your busyness that indicates closeness to God, but your ability to rest in the midst of a restless culture. Many times, our inability to sleep comes from the myth that we need to hold everything together. We need to learn that while we are sleeping, God is building the city. A lack of sleep doesn't just lead to physical problems; it quickly fosters a spirit of cynicism that ruins our spiritual life. It's no good burning the candle at both ends if it sours our view of God, deprives us of our joy, and ends our life prematurely. As a mentor of mine once told me, "Sometimes the most holy thing you can do is to just take a nap."

2. Refuse to worry about tomorrow. This one comes directly from Jesus: "Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself" (Matt. 6:34). I used to find this verse a little odd. "Tomorrow is worrying about itself, Jesus? Well, that's exactly what I was worried about!" Jesus is saying that he'll be with us tomorrow just like he's with us today. The Israelites in the

wilderness were only given manna for one day to teach them that God would provide for their tomorrows. And he's still trying to teach us the same lesson.

3. Create some margin. You've heard of the "big rocks" and "sand" metaphor. Fill a jar with rocks and the sand will fill in to the cracks. Start with the sand and you'll never be able to fit the rocks in, too. It's a simple metaphor, but it's still an insightful one: prioritize the "big rocks" of your life and allow yourself margin for the "sand." Stress and busyness can come from doing too many things. But often they are the result of leaving no margin between the various items on our calendar. I've written elsewhere about the importance of rhythm and margin in maintaining our sanity. To summarize: ensure that you have time for the "big rocks" of your life, and keep the peripheral items peripheral. You need to take control of your calendar, because if you don't, someone will take control of it for you.

4. Observe the sabbaths. The plural isn't a typo; yes, I meant sabbaths. There are a number of sabbaths that God has given us: the weekly sabbath (a day of rest and worship), the tithe, and sleep. Most of us know about the first one, but we rarely think of tithing or sleeping as sabbath-keeping. The principle of the sabbath given to Israel was to intentionally cease from labor, and—paradoxically—God promised that he would multiply their efforts on the other six days. The tithe is simply a monetary application of that principle, and sleep is a sort of mandated daily sabbath. Each of these is like a pill to take to remind yourself that you are not God; to remind you that you do not bear the strain of providing and taking care of . . . you! God does! The more we remember that these sabbaths are gifts and privileges, not duties, the more they will lead us to rest in Christ.

Let us escape the dangers of busyness and find rest for our soul.

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/4-ways-to-win-the-battle-against-busyness>