



CRAZY BUSY

A (MERCIFULLY) SHORT BOOK ABOUT A (REALLY) BIG PROBLEM

KEVIN DEYOUNG

STUDY GUIDE

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Study Guide for "Crazy Busy"

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Chapter 1

Hello, My Name Is Busy

In chapter 1, Kevin introduces the book by sharing his own personal struggles with busyness. He then reveals the frantic busyness of many of us by recalling the story of a woman from another culture who came to the US and began to introduce herself as “Busy” because that was the first thing she heard when meeting any American. Finally, he sets out how the book is structured to help bring about change in our lives.

1. How would you describe the busyness in your life? What feels overwhelming? How did your life get this way?

2. How do you think our culture has impacted our pace of life? What cultural assumptions or values have influenced our sense of time, punctuality, productivity, leisure, etc.?

3. What kind of change are you hoping for as you read this book?

Chapter 2

Here, There, and Gone: Three Dangers to Avoid

Chapter 2 begins with the story in 1 Kings 20 of a prophet who confronts King Ahab by telling a fictional tale of how he let a prisoner escape. He says to Ahab, “And as your servant was busy here and there, he was gone” (v. 40). Though the prophet was not attempting to deal with the problem of busyness, his words describe well our contemporary problem. We are terribly busy, flying here and there, until we are gone. Kevin alerts us of three dangers to avoid.

1. What kinds of things tend to distract us from completing our tasks in a timely way? When your mind wanders, where does it typically wander?

2. Which of the twelve questions on pages 21–22 are most convicting? Why?

3. Which of the three dangers in this chapter do you think is most dangerous? What evidence of this do you see in your life or church?

4. Do you typically plan margins into your weeks? What might it look like to begin doing this?

5. How would you answer the following questions (from page 31) regarding your busyness: What biblical promises am I not believing? What divine commands am I ignoring that I should obey? What self-imposed commands am I obeying that I should ignore?

Chapter 3

The Killer P's

This chapter exposes twelve expressions of pride that contribute to our frantic busyness. Kevin shares a question he uses to help him discern pride and people-pleasing from genuine service: “Am I trying to do good or to make myself look good?” (p. 39).

1. Which of the following expressions of pride have you fallen into in the last week: people-pleasing, possessions, proving yourself, poor planning, perfectionism? What do you think made you vulnerable?

2. Reflect on the present decisions you need to make about how to invest your time and energy. How could the question, “*Would I be trying to do good or make myself look good?*” help you make wise decisions?

3. Has trying to look good ever negatively impacted your hospitality? How might Romans 15:5–7 help us to evaluate and discern our motivation?

Chapter 4

The Terror of Total Obligation

Here Kevin uses personal experience and his understanding of others to confront the pressure many Christians feel that every opportunity to do good is also an obligation. He shares seven truths to help free us from the low level guilt and discouragement that often accompany the “this-is-what-good-Christians-do” syndrome.

1. How vulnerable are you to “this-is-what-good-Christians-do” (all opportunities are obligations) pressure? What are you currently feeling guilty about not doing (or not doing enough)? Whose standards do you think you are failing?

2. Have you ever thought that “I am not the Christ” (John 1:20) is an important part of our confession of faith? How does confessing that you are not the Christ feel to you? Freeing? Frustrating?

3. What are some specific examples of people turning the good news of Jesus into bad news about how much more we should be doing to fix the world? Why do you think this happens?

4. What is your sense of your own gifts and calling? How can this free you to minister joyfully without comparing yourself to others?

5. Why did Jesus spend thirty years training for just three years of ministry? What does God want us to learn from this?

Chapter 5

Mission Creep

Chapter 5 points us to Jesus as our model of busyness without anxiety or distraction. Jesus was driven by the Holy Spirit in his mission, not the needs or approval of others. “Coming to grips with three unassailable truths” (p. 57) leads us to right priorities, right expectations, and a life of restful service.

1. What was it about Jesus that enabled him to understand and accept that he was not responsible to do every good thing he *could* do? Is this a communicable attribute for us?

2. What is the difference between being driven by the needs or approval of others and being driven by the Spirit? Which of the two most often drives you?

3. As you reflect on how you have lived this past year, what have been the three main priorities for your life? How do you feel about these priorities? What is God calling you to change?

4. Which of the three truths in this chapter is most compelling to you? Why?

5. How do your expectations of others get in the way of loving them as Christ has loved you? How could you pray about this in the coming week?

Chapter 6

A Cruel Kindergarchy

We live in a child-centered age—a *kindergarchy*. We assume their total well-being depends on us and anxiously strive to live up to the “myth of the perfect parent.” Kevin’s point there is “with a good dose of prayer, a shot of biblical redirection, and a little common sense, we can avoid freaking out about them quite so much” (p. 75).

1. How did we come to assume that our children’s failures “will almost certainly be our fault for not doing enough” (p. 65)? What cultural and spiritual forces have contributed to this?

2. What specific parental pressures have you felt raising your children? Where did these pressures come from? Do you see any negative impact? If you are not yet a parent, how does this chapter affect the way you think about being a parent in the future?

3. How would you grade your parents in the way they raised you? How do you think your children would grade you? What might be one thing they wish was different?

4. Leslie Leyland Fields writes, “Parents with unbelieving children, friends with children in jail, the discoveries of the geneticists, and the faith heroes in Hebrews 11 are all powerful reminders of this truth: We will parent imperfectly, our children will make their own choices, and God will mysteriously and wonderfully use it all to advance his kingdom” (pp. 71–72). How could this quote free us to parent with a realistic yet radiant hope?

Chapter 7

Deep Calls to Deep

This chapter alerts us to the dangers of media addiction and its relation to *acedia*—apathy and lifelessness. Kevin offers five ideas to overcome our slavery to technology and to engage more meaningfully with others.

1. Describe the technology use in your home. Who uses what to do what? What are the positives about this? Any negatives?

2. Any evidence of electronic addiction in your life? What was the progression from use to abuse?

3. What is *acedia*? How does our use of technology contribute to this? What is the cure?

4. Do you ever feel the “desire to never be alone . . . ‘to be harried and hassled and busy’” (p. 83)? What might you be avoiding?

5. Which of the suggestions on pages 85–88 resonate most strongly with you? What is one thing you can do this week to bring your use of technology more under the lordship of Christ?

Chapter 8

Rhythm and Blues

One of the differences between futility and fulfillment for us is the loss of meaningful rhythms in our lives. Views of Sabbath keeping are discussed so that we might receive the gift of rest from idolatrous busyness and live more fruitful, fulfilled lives.

1. What are some different views about the Sabbath? Which view, if any, does your church teach? How do you and your family typically do Sabbaths?

2. Do you tend to see the Sabbath more as a *gift*, “an island of get-to in a sea of have-to,” or as a *test*, “an opportunity to trust God’s work more than our own” (p. 91)? What Scriptures inform your understanding of the Sabbath?

3. Why is a rhythm of work and rest essential to a healthy and fruitful Christian life? What does the rhythm of your week look like? Is there a time for “soul-enriching procrastination, taking a nap, throwing a Frisbee, singing a song” (p. 94)?

4. Do you get enough sleep? What adjustments do you need to make?

Chapter 9

Embracing the Burdens of Busyness

Chapter 9 points out that the “busyness that’s bad is not the busyness of work, but the busyness that works hard at the wrong things” (p. 102). Kevin explains that we are called to be busy with the challenges of sacrificial love without succumbing to self-pity, resentment, or escape. The apostle Paul is given as a model of dealing with the pressures, weaknesses, and sufferings of life and ministry through the sustaining grace and power of God.

1. What is the difference between good busyness and bad busyness? How do you discern the difference in your own life?
2. How do Jesus’s words, “And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Matt. 10:38–39) relate to our discussion of busyness? What is Jesus calling us to? How are you responding?
3. Matthew 11:28–30 is Jesus’s invitation to a restful service. What do you think that would be like? Pray right now responding to his invitation and asking him to make restful service a deeper reality in your life.

Chapter 10

The One Thing You Must Do

This final chapter leads us to a simple but powerful practical application. Kevin unpacks the story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10 to nail home the importance of the “one thing necessary” (v. 42): sitting at Jesus’s feet to learn and worship. The book concludes with a passionate appeal to set the “resolute goal to spend time every day in the Word of God and prayer” (p. 115).

1. Who do you relate to more in the Mary and Martha story (Luke 10:38–42)? Why?
2. How is what Mary chose “the one thing necessary”? What kinds of things do we often think are more necessary than sitting at Jesus’s feet? Where did we learn this?
3. What are three things that have distracted you from learning from and worshipping Jesus this past week? What made them seem so urgent?
4. Describe your devotional practices. How important is this time to you? To Jesus?
5. Imagine your life if you were to grow to be more “Mary-like.” What new freedom and fruitfulness might you enjoy? What will you do to spend time this week with Jesus through the Word and prayer?