



WEEK 7

SLOTHFULNESS // DILIGENCE

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2 THESSALONIANS 3:6-12

Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.

KEVIN DEYOUNG, CRAZY BUSY

Busyness, as I've been diagnosing it, is as much a mind-set and a heart sickness as it is a failure in time management. It's possible to live your days in a flurry of hard work, serving, and bearing burdens, and to do so with the right character and a right dependence on God so that it doesn't feel crazy busy. By the same token, it's possible to feel amazingly stressed and frenzied while actually accomplishing very little. The antidote to busyness of soul is not sloth and indifference. The antidote is rest, rhythm, death to pride, acceptance of our own finitude, and trust in the providence of God.

Sloth may be one of the most misunderstood of the vices on this list. While we normally think about sloth as laziness, sloth is more a condition of the heart than the hands. We may be slothful in terms of avoiding work, but we may also be slothful in over-work. Sloth is the vice of avoiding what God has called us to do, whether in busyness or laziness.

Perhaps one of the most common complaints that people have is that they are "too busy." While it is true that modern life has plenty to keep us busy, often our busy lives can be a cover for a reluctance to do what God calls us to do. We busy ourselves with work or pleasure, we indulge ourselves in binge watching TV shows, all to avoid what must actually be done. Sloth is the pursuit of pleasure to numb our hearts and minds to avoid God. We watch our TV's not to enjoy it, but to numb and distract ourselves from life. Sloth can lead us to extreme busyness or laziness, all while following our desires and avoiding what is required of us. The slothful man is just as guilty avoiding his family at work, as he is in front of the TV all night. Both avoid doing what God calls him to do as a husband, father, and Christian.

The greatest problem of sloth is that it numbs our hearts to the beauty of God. In relentless avoidance and numbing behaviours we fail to see the incredible greatness of God and what he has done in the gospel. God has created us for work (Gen. 1:28-30) and call us to work our jobs for the Lord (Col. 3:22-24). God created us with a purpose and prepares us to pursue it with all our might (Eccl. 9:10). God created us to know Him and see others around us come to know Him (Matt. 28:18-20). He has gifted us with spiritual gifts for the building up of the church (1 Cor. 12:7). God has called us to use our time, our relationships, and our gifts for the purpose of seeing Him glorified. It is through the grace of Jesus that God transforms our hearts to use the gifts that he has given us for his glory!

But this does not mean that we are called to work relentlessly; God also created us for rest (Gen. 2:2). Perhaps the biggest problem of sloth is that it has destroyed our ability to rest properly. Our resting is too often apathetic self-indulgence, rather than time enjoyed in the presence of God. True rest is found in Christ, in the trust that He is taking care of us, providing for us, and by His grace we are secure (Heb. 4:10). We are called to rest in the presence of God, rightly enjoying the gifts He has provided. It is only in Christ that we can properly work, for the glory of God, and properly rest, in our enjoyment of Him.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- When you are busy, what do you find occupies most of your time? Is it occupied with the things that God calls you to do?
- What part of your life do you find difficult to motivate yourself? How does the gospel give us true motivation?
- How can you practice proper rest this week?

WEEKLY FAST

Fast from TV, Movies, Scrolling on your Phone, and Procrastination.

- While we often think we rest while watching something, often times we can end up more tired at the end of it.
- Screens can often be avoidance mechanisms that keep us from doing what we should be doing and giving us the real rest our souls need.

Practice the Kingdom Virtue of True Rest this week.

- Enjoy the goodness of God's creation and thank Him for it.
- Spend your time using your spiritual gifts to build up the church, or encourage another believer in their faith.
- Read your Bible slowly and give yourself time to pray more than a few words.
- Allow yourself to rest truly in the completed work of Jesus.
- Get up early this week to spend time in Bible reading and prayer.
- Slow down and simplify. Being perpetually "Busy" with unimportant tasks is a way to identify Sloth.

ADDITIONAL READING

Proverbs 6:9, 10:4, 26:13-16; Matthew 25:24-29; Colossians 3:22-24; Hebrews 6:10-12

Kevin DeYoung, *Crazy Busy: A (Mercifully) Short Book About a (Really) Big Problem*