



MAKING BUSYNESS AN IDOL

RMPP EVENT 35

SCHEDULE

Welcome and Zoom Etiquette

Opening Prayer

Speaker Introduction

Message: *Making Busyness an Idol*

Q&A and Discussion

Breakout Rooms

Closing Prayer

CONTENTS

Event Synopsis and Scripture	4
Reflection, Application, and Reading	6
A Word From...	8
<i>What Does the Bible Say?</i>	10
<i>Are We What We Do?</i>	16
<i>How Do You Prioritize Your Day?</i>	22
<i>Is Busyness an Excuse?</i>	30
<i>What Did Jesus Do?</i>	36
<i>What is My Father's Business?</i>	42
<i>Looking Back...</i>	48
Fast and Pray For Your Wife	52
Introducing RMPP	54
Meet the Team	60
Resources	62
Connect Groups	64

MAKING BUSYNESS AN IDOL

SYNOPSIS

In today's fast-paced world, busyness can represent success, productivity, or even influence and importance. But are you stuck in a cycle of busyness, or are you about your Father's business?

| **Audio Link:** bit.ly/3GS6Mnz

| **Scripture Reflection**

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. - *1 Corinthians 10:31*

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. - *Ephesians 2:10*

EVENT

35

| *Personal Reflection*

1. What are 1-2 points in the message that resonated with you? And how can those points help you apply the life-transforming truth you heard?

2. Because change is not always easy, who are the 1-2 people you can invite to help you grow in this area?

| *Personal Application*

1. What are 1-2 boundaries you can create to help you avoid becoming distracted by busyness?

2. How can you better ensure you are busy doing things with Christ rather than being overly busy for Christ?

| *Recommended Reading*

Crazy Busy: by Kevin DeYoung

Do More Better: by Tim Challies

A WORD FROM...

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

When thinking about busyness, people talk as if hard work is the problem. But we're not actually in danger of working too hard. We simply work hard at things in the wrong proportions. If you work eighty hours a week and never see your kids and never talk to your wife, people may call you a workaholic. And no doubt you're putting a lot of effort into your career. But you may not be working very hard at being a dad or being a husband or being a man after God's own heart. Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. Approximately one-third of our life is spent sleeping, one-third working, and the remaining third free, usually dedicated to family, hobbies and interests, friends or study, etc. I don't know how we can glorify God when asleep, but if we are to glorify Him whilst awake, we must beware of the potential idol of busyness. Our motivation is what we will focus on.

The Scriptures do not provide a convenient list of Godly professions. In fact, no guidance is given at all regarding what job one should take. The key is not what we do but how we do it. Do we spend a third of our lives driven mentally by our

to-do list? Are we over-occupied and distracted by our need to get things done in our own strength or are we abiding in Him, without whom we can do nothing? The Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter XVI, is quite helpful here.

Good works, done in obedience to God's commandments, are the fruits and evidence of a true and lively faith and by them believers manifest their thankfulness, strengthen their assurance, edify their brethren, adorn the profession of the gospel, stop the mouths of the adversaries, and glorify God, whose workmanship they are, created in Christ Jesus, that, having their fruit unto holiness, they may have the end, eternal life. 'Fruit unto holiness' basically means those who by their labours have prepared their souls to obtain eternal life.

Did you get that? Those who by their labours have prepared their souls to obtain eternal life! What you do is largely irrelevant. How you do it is of the utmost significance. The Confession goes on....

Their ability to do good works is not at all of themselves, but wholly from the Spirit of Christ. And that they may be enabled thereunto, there is required an actual influence of the same Holy Spirit to work in them to will and to do of His good pleasure.

What we do with Christ is far more important than what we do for Christ. As you go through these devotionals, I pray they help you devote your endeavours to the Lord.

Nick Chilver

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

DEVOTIONAL 1

Although busyness isn't specifically mentioned in the Bible, biblical principles do apply to this topic. How can the Bible guide us in dealing with the temptation of busyness in our lives?

“By the seventh day God had completed His work which He had done, and He rested...God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work.” - Genesis 2:2-3

“Observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy, as the Lord God commanded you. Six days you labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord your God. On the seventh day you shall not work.” - Deuteronomy 5:12-14

“The Sabbath was made for man.” - Mark 2:27

God's creation included a pattern for work and rest. Of course, God Himself doesn't need to rest. However, He knows that

we do. The Hebrew word Sabbath literally means “to rest.” In God’s wisdom, He designated a Sabbath when we can rest from all our work and labor, and devote special time for worshiping God and reflecting upon His goodness. I believe God’s pattern of work and rest applies to our daily lives as well. Work is good and honorable, but God did not create us to work non-stop for six days, and then collapse on the seventh. We are meant to work for a purpose. Sometimes the work we do is essential to achieving our goals and providing for our needs. But sometimes we are spending valuable time in activities that merely fill up our hours so we can feel like we’ve accomplished something. True fulfillment doesn’t come from “being busy,” but from accomplishing God’s purpose for our lives.

There’s a story about a man who rescued and raised a little bird from when it was young. The man was concerned the bird would forget how to fly, so one day he took the bird outdoors to see what it would do. The bird immediately began to fly in beautiful circles around the man. But after a while, the bird’s flying became erratic, until it crashed into the man’s chest from fatigue. The bird remembered how to fly, but it had forgotten how to stop.

In the past, I had a tendency to push myself and work faster and faster throughout the day until I realized I was rushing

from one activity to another. When I caught myself, my body was tense, I was feeling anxious, and my breathing was more rapid and shallow. I had to intentionally stop what I was doing, take a deep breath, and then begin working again but at a normal pace. I also remember things I did as it got close to the end of my work day. Although I'd already finished all my work, I would end up doing little things - anything - just to make myself "look busy" for my supervisor.

This tendency to "look busy" or "be busy" became even more noticeable when I retired from my chosen career. All of a sudden, I had all these hours to fill! At first, I tried to fill my time with working around our home, but I had a very small yard to take care of. Then we moved to Thailand and into an apartment. Now I had no "regular" job, no yard, and no car to take care of. What was I going to do? This is when I learned that life is not about filling up the time with meaningless activities just to "be busy." Busyness itself doesn't result in fulfillment. True fulfillment only comes from doing the things we were created for - God's purpose for our lives.

Since I am now retired (but not retired from life), I have the luxury of devoting my time to the tasks God has created me for and called me to do. I also take time to rest and enjoy my relationship with God, the friends He's given me, and His

creation. I think this is more difficult if you are still “working for a living” - working scheduled hours, having to accomplish assigned tasks, and supporting yourself and your family. But this is when God’s concept of the Sabbath is especially important. The quality of your life depends upon it! We need to prioritize the things we do, and probably cut out some of the not-so-important things we try to squeeze into our daily routine. And we need to take time to “be still and know that I am God (Psalm 46:10).” God says, “Rest a bit, and take a look at what I’m doing!” Take time to enjoy God, your family, your friends, and God’s other blessings. Life is more than merely surviving day to day.

Here are two biblical principles I suggest we try to live by, in order to avoid the temptation of busyness:

“Whatever you do, do your work heartily as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive your reward. It is the Lord you serve.” - Colossians 3:23

Work diligently, work hard, be busy - but do what is important to God. Cut out the “busyness” and focus on what really matters.

“Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while...” - Mark 6:31

“Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened down, and I will give you rest.” - Matthew 11:28-29

Make time/take time to rest, enjoy God, and His blessings. These are the things which make living worthwhile, and bring true fulfillment, purpose, and meaning to your life.

After several careers, Roger is now retired and living in Bangkok, Thailand with his wife. He continues to learn about following Jesus, and welcomes others to join him in this adventure.

| **Discussion Questions**

1. How does busyness reveal itself in your life?
2. How would your life be different without busyness?
3. How can you guard against the tendency towards busyness?

| **Read**

1 Corinthians 10:31

| **Reflect on This**

“Beware the barrenness of a busy life.” - *Socrates*

ARE WE WHAT WE DO?

DEVOTIONAL 2

It is easy to find our identity in what we do. What can the Bible teach us about the difference between what we do and who we are?

When we meet new people, we often introduce ourselves like this:

W: “Hi, Mike. My name is William - how are you?”

M: “Hi, William - it’s nice to meet you!”

W: “What do you do in Chiang Mai?”

M: “I’m a secondary teacher. What do you do?”

W: “I’m a pastor.”

M: “Okay, nice to meet you, William.”

W: “You too, Mike.”

And if my new friend doesn’t ask any more information about me - the conversation often ends there. Which makes me ask myself the question, “Is this all there is to me?”

So, if I'm a teacher - is that who I am? No, there's a lot more to me than just being a teacher. Did you know that I love to travel? That I love riding motorcycles? That I love to play tennis, golf? That I'm a counselor and love to help people through their emotional trauma? That I've been married to a wonderful woman for 28 years? That I have 2 handsome sons? That my ancestors come from the countries of Norway, England, Germany? That I've lived in Thailand for a total of 28 years? That I love to read and watch movies? But most of all, that I've been a follower of Jesus since I was 4 years old? This is a whole lot more information about who I am; way more than just 'This is what I do.'

As Christian men, God has given us more than what we do. After all, our jobs can change quickly and often. Or, we could be in one job for our whole lives. Either way, there is more to me than what I do. As humans we have an inner need to be known by other people. Our parents, if we come from a healthy family, are the first to instill safety and confidence in us as children and assure us that we are loved, valuable, cared for, nurtured and taught. If those things are not given to us by our parents or guardians, we grow up wondering who we are and battle against inner fears. However, none of our parents were perfect – therefore we all have needs that haven't been met.

That is why we can set up our jobs and what we do as idols in our lives. Work-a-holism or ‘over working’ is a term we use to indicate how much time we put into what we do. If we use our activities as a way to avoid pain or live in reality - then we’re using it like alcohol or a drug! It’s addictive!

We often wrap our identities around what we do. I’m a teacher. What does that mean to me, and what does it mean to my new friend and to the wider community I live in? In most countries teachers are well-respected and admired. Parents look to us to partner with them to teach their children. Teaching is important work. I do take my job seriously. But sometimes I want people’s praise for what I do. To be appreciated more. To be told I’m doing a good job.

This reminds me of the story about Mary & Martha in Luke 10:38-42. Jesus and the disciples traveled to the town of Bethany to visit the two sisters (their brother’s name was Lazarus) on their way to Jerusalem. Martha’s job was to make dinner for Jesus and the disciples. She expected Mary’s help in making all the preparations. But Mary was so excited that Jesus was visiting that she chose to sit at Jesus’ feet to listen to His teaching and talk with Him. Martha becomes angry because in her mind nothing could be more important than working towards making dinner. What was Martha’s motivation for her anxiety to prepare food for her guests

rather than sit with the man she knew to be the Messiah and be with Him? Is Martha concerned about her reputation? It appears that Martha placed a higher value on working than sitting down and listening to Jesus and getting to know Him better. I think Jesus knew that His time on earth was drawing to a close and wanted Martha to come and listen to His words. I also think Jesus wanted to help Martha build her character in Christ.

Today we can elevate many things to a god-like status. Money, fame, work, or even pleasure can become idols when we concentrate too much on them for personal identity, meaning, and security. It's the amount of time we devote to them and how much value we place on them that can ultimately control our thoughts and energies. Let God hold the central place in your life and choose to prevent these things from turning into idols. He cares about you and your character far more than what you do.

Mike is married to his wonderful wife of 28 years. He is a pastoral counselor in the field of sexual recovery therapy. He is a man in process, passionate about bringing men together to share life together as we study God's word together and share the challenges we face. This inspires us to accept what God has freely given us: His love, mercy, grace, and acceptance. He and his wife have lived in Chiang Mai, Thailand for 18 years.

| ***Discussion Questions***

1. What job do you have as a source of livelihood for yourself and your family?
2. How well do you balance your job with your family life?
Spiritual life?
3. Who do you most relate to in the New Testament story of Mary & Martha? Why?

| ***Read***

Matthew 6:33

| ***Reflect on This***

“When wealth is lost, nothing is lost; when health is lost, something is lost; when character is lost, all is lost.” - *Billy Graham*

HOW DO YOU PRIORITIZE YOUR DAY?

DEVOTIONAL 3

How can we be the best stewards of our limited time, resources, and energy?

I never realized how quickly time slips away. My days were long as a kid. I was constantly searching for ways to fill the hours, and I'd often agonize over how long a certain activity stretched—especially if it was boring. But as I grew older, my days somehow grew shorter. More work emerged to fill the cracks, more relationships entered into my life as I married and started a family, and more cares stacked higher on my shoulders. The winding thread of time of my childhood snapped into a tense line between two shrinking points, and suddenly twenty-four hours was too short to fit in everything I wanted to accomplish.

We all probably relate in some way to this gradual shift in how we perceive time, but why does this happen? There are a few factors at play. For one thing, extra responsibilities arrive with

the advent of adulthood, which naturally leads to losing track of time in a sea of to-do lists. But I think there's something deeper at play here. The world is increasingly globalized and interconnected. A sea of information is at our fingertips at a moment's notice. And the more we have access to, the more we want to achieve. We see the capabilities and opportunities around us, and we think that if we can just work a little harder—push a little more—then we'll finally achieve the success or accomplishment that will fulfill us. This isn't a new problem. The Apostle Paul writes nearly two thousand years ago about his journey to contentment in both the face of plenty and scarcity (Philippians 4:11-13). We're naturally hardwired to keep grasping after more and more, and the modern-day constant consumption of content exacerbates that problem.

But is this how it has to be? Or can we avoid the trap of trying to fit more into our days? Jesus seems to think so. The book of Matthew records Jesus urging his listeners to not be anxious about their life but to be content with seeking after God (Matthew 6:25-33). In another instance recorded in the book of Luke, Jesus encourages one of his followers to not be so focused on getting work done that she misses the bigger picture of her relationship with her Lord (Luke 10:38-42). It's more important to seek God, Jesus appears to be saying, than to seek fulfillment in busyness.

This sounds great from a theoretical perspective, but it needs some practical application in our lives. We have a limited amount of time and energy. How will we use it to seek God's Kingdom instead of our own? I've personally found that I have to intentionally plan my commitments and days if I want to have a healthy, God-honoring balance of work, relationships, and rest. These things are not mutually exclusive. I can find relationships and rest in my work and vice versa. But in order to truly thrive as a good steward of my God-given time and abilities, I need to be thoughtful in my approach. Do I want to take care of my body? I'll need to schedule in time to exercise and rest. Do I want to engage in purposeful work that is spun throughout with my devotion to God? I'll need to focus my efforts at work to do so. Do I want to cultivate God-honoring relationships with my friends and family? I'll need to set aside time each day or week to build these things.

There's one final trap to avoid if we want to choose a life well-spent. Too often followers of Christ have the mindset that serving God requires more work: more time spent in Scripture study, more time spent in ministry, more time spent pouring out their life in self-sacrifice—the list goes on. When taken to its natural conclusion, this perspective can lead to a performative life that borders on ascetic self-deprivation and is damaging both to yourself and to your family relationships. Scripture is clear that we are created as image-bearers, mirrors

reflecting our Creator to the universe (Genesis 1:27). If this is true then yes, we should echo our Creator’s attitude in how He sacrificed His Son to save others. But it also follows that we should mirror His creativity, His rest, His laughter, and His wonder. These things cannot be explored through perpetual sacrifice of our time and energy in the name of “service.”

Time is short. This makes it precious. But instead of fearing a lack of accomplishments or grasping after each fleeting hour, we can rest in the words of Jesus as we seek to balance our time well: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” (John 14:27).

Ben Miles lives with his wife and son in Bangkok, Thailand. He chooses to prioritize his time well by spending time with his family, teaching at an international school, reading, writing, creating music, playing games, and cultivating relationships with friends.

| ***Discussion Questions***

1. Are you seeking fulfillment in your list of accomplishments rather than who you are in relationship to God?
2. Are you filling your days with too many activities that leave you feeling consistently overwhelmed
3. Are you living a performative lifestyle in order to seek God's favor or resting in your relationship with Him?

| ***Read***

Ephesians 5:15-17

| ***Reflect on This***

“Time is lost when we have not lived a full human life, time unenriched by experience, creative endeavor, enjoyment, and suffering.” - *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

IS BUSYNESS AN EXCUSE?

DEVOTIONAL 4

We can be tempted to throw ourselves into our work or other activities as a way to deal with unpleasant or uncomfortable situations, people, or feelings. But in doing so, are we missing what God wants to do in our hearts and lives?

There is no denying that being busy is not something that we have to go looking for. In fact, many of us even feel like victims of the busy pace of the world around us. But what if there is a part of us that wants to be busy? Whether consciously or unconsciously, perhaps we are using busyness as a coping mechanism to hide from or alleviate pain inside of us, including the emotional turmoil from our relationships. In his book *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*, John Mark Comer lists 10 symptoms of “hurry sickness.” Number 5 is Emotional Numbness. He writes, “You just don’t have the capacity to feel another’s pain. Or your own pain for that matter. Empathy is a rare feeling for you. You just don’t have the time for it.” I found myself feeling that way a few weeks ago. My wife expressed that

she wanted to spend time with me, but I still had a long list of to-do's to knock off that evening, and it was getting late. Rather than pausing and taking time to care for my wife and address her desire for closeness, I simply reminded her of my tasks that needed to be accomplished and ignored her. Naturally, it left her feeling dismissed and hurt. I used my busyness as an excuse not to connect with my wife emotionally and tend to the relationship that I made a covenant before God to care for.

Of course, there is no shortage of excuses we can use to justify our busyness. We can even use scripture to back up our unhealthy addiction to “good” sources of busyness. A lot of us do this with work. Proverbs 6:10-11, “...a little folding of the hands to rest—and poverty will come on you like a thief...” (NIV). Or, if we have a family, we can justify the long hours at the office by seeking solace in 1 Timothy 5:8, “Anyone who does not provide...for their own household...is worse than an unbeliever (NIV).” We tell ourselves, “I don’t want to be worse than an unbeliever, so I need to work hard to provide for our family. The extra hours at work will keep poverty at bay.” And that’s great, until we begin using busyness with work as a way to numb our emotions or ignore the emotions of those we love.

Maybe you’re not using busyness to numb your feelings; maybe for you, it’s a desire to prove yourself through work to show

how important you are. However, note how Jesus himself—the most important person ever—rejects busyness at every chance. In Mark 5 we see Jesus on His way to actually save a girl's life. While on his way, a woman who had been bleeding for years touches His cloak and is healed. Jesus stops everything to inquire who touched Him and ministers to the woman—potentially causing a life-or-death delay! Jesus was never too important to be interrupted even when the stakes were higher than anything I've ever faced. Why can't I be the same?

Maybe we are working for God's kingdom and we justify over-working ourselves because "it's for God." According to Scripture, God doesn't want us to burn ourselves out working for Him, especially to the point where we neglect taking time to participate in a relationship with Him. This is demonstrated in Luke 10:38-42 when Martha is working hard to serve Jesus Himself and points out "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" Jesus responds, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." Mary chooses to take time to be in relationship with Jesus rather than occupy herself serving Him. Is our busyness preventing this kind of intentional intimacy with God?

It is easy to make excuses for our busyness. But God wants something better for us. He wants us to put down our idol of busyness and address the insecure feelings we have about ourselves and our relationships and give them over to Him and trust in Him for our identity and wellbeing.

Nick is a husband and father living in Maryland, U.S.A. He works as an analyst in the state correctional system and has a heart for walking with men to pursue God and the vision He sets out for purity in their lives.

| ***Discussion Questions***

1. Do you keep yourself busy as an excuse in order to avoid uncomfortable feelings about yourself?
2. Do you stay busy as an excuse to avoid conflict or closeness with your spouse or loved ones?
3. What would your relationship with God look like if you trusted Him to provide your physical needs and your identity rather than trusting your ability to work for them (i.e., superiors, employers, etc.)?

| ***Read***

Philippians 2:3

| ***Reflect on This***

“None are more unjust in their judgments of others than those who have a high opinion of themselves.” - *Charles Spurgeon*

WHAT DID JESUS DO?

DEVOTIONAL 5

Who better to look to than Jesus when wanting to learn how to blend and balance numerous demands? What can Jesus teach us about the difference between busyness and being busy?

One of my favorite authors once wrote, “The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult; and left untried.” – G.K. Chesterton

One Christian ideal that I have found consistently difficult to understand relates to what needs to be done. What do I need to do this week, what do I need to do today, and what do I need to do right now? Sometimes I am overwhelmed by all that I see needs to be done so I respond with a type of paralysis; instead of doing something I do nothing - idleness. Sometimes I am overwhelmed by what I see needs to be done and I respond by doing many different things, things that seem “easier” than what I know should be done - busyness.

Extremes...

It is interesting to me that when I was growing up, I was consistently cautioned against these two different dangers and was given what seemed to be contradictory advice. Fairly often, I heard variations of a line from Canterbury Tales quoted to me: “Idle hands are the devil’s workshop.” I was told this to help me see the many ways in which being idle, or lazy, could negatively affect me. As I grew older, I also heard cautions against busyness. One such caution even defined being busy as, “being under Satan’s yoke.” You may see my dilemma as I considered these together: if I shouldn’t be idle, then I guess I should be busy? If I shouldn’t be busy, then I guess I should be idle? I believe we need both sides of this warning, against idleness and busyness, because we as humans are bent toward extremes. In different seasons of life, we can find ourselves struggling to accomplish things we know we should be doing. In other seasons, we may find it terribly difficult to engage in rest, biblical sabbath rest. If I shouldn’t be busy or idle, what should I do? For that we look, as always, to Jesus.

Balance...

“I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.” – John 17:4

Jesus is our example to follow and the question of how we

fill our time is no exception. When we consider this verse from Jesus' "High Priestly Prayer" in John 17, I think we are confronted with some extraordinary truth. In reading the gospels, we see that there were many people who were healed by Jesus, many people who heard Jesus' teaching, many people with whom Jesus met. However, we are also confronted with the realization that there were many people who did not receive the same interaction; there were towns in Israel where he did not spend any time. In this realization I think we see that our call is to complete the work we are supposed to do. Our call is to heed the Lord's leading in our lives as He leads us to rest and as He leads us to work. We are called to a balance of work and rest and that balance is difficult to achieve if we are focused on "all that needs to be done," or if we are distraught by all the things we think will never be completed. The way that we can hope to achieve this balance is by focusing on God and following His lead. Jesus said He had accomplished the work He was given. He did not accomplish all the work existed, but the work that God the Father had assigned Him. The example Jesus gives us is one completely in tune with the Holy Spirit. He worked and rested. He developed deep friendships. He spent time with others and time in solitude. He had balance.

But how?

Our call is to imitate him:

“Therefore, be imitators of God as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” – Ephesians 5:1-2

This imitation of God is shown to be true in our lives as we fill our lives, our words and actions, with love for God and for those around us. This loving imitation of God is designed to help those around us to see Jesus more clearly. And we show Jesus most clearly when we spend our life following the Lord’s leading & loving people well.

Jonathan is currently teaching Bible at an international school and is a regular speaker at his church. He served as pastor in Western New York for a decade prior to moving to Bangkok, Thailand where he now lives along with his wife and their four children.

| **Discussion Questions**

1. At this point in my life, am I being pulled toward idleness or busyness?
2. How does reading about what Jesus said about accomplishing the work he was given change the way I approach my schedule?
3. When was the last time I asked the Holy Spirit to lead me today? Am I willing to ask for His guidance now?

| **Read**

Philippians 4:4-7

| **Reflect on This**

“Work with all your might; but trust not in the least in your work. Pray with all your might for the blessing of God; but work, at the same time, with all diligence, with all patience, with all perseverance. Pray then, and work. Work and pray.” -
George Muller

WHAT IS MY FATHER'S BUSINESS?

DEVOTIONAL 6

Knowing and doing the Father's business is the perspective you need in order to avoid the trap of worldly busyness. Do you know what the Father's business is and what that looks like for you today?

Is it possible that we can become so busy with work, family responsibilities and leisure activities that we forget to pause, ask the big questions of life, find out God's will and follow His guidance? In our stressed-out and caffeine-dependent generation worldly busyness can often be the very opposite of Christianity, because in it we can miss God's plan for our lives.

Perhaps many people would take the issue to a counsellor and receive coaching to be a better planner and a better steward of time. But Psalm 119:105 says that "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path." As a Jesus follower I believe that the Bible is not an outdated, irrelevant or a boring book, but that it is the very word of God that can guide our own lives and offer

the answers we seek. As we read it, it reads us and enables us to meet its Author, which makes those very words we read alive in our hearts. In the busyness of the day, I found it fundamental to have my time with Scripture early in the morning before the day starts. Jesus did it, and I don't really think that we can improve on Jesus (Mark 1:35)!

The Bible presents not only God's grand plan for humanity, which is to save as many as will receive Jesus (John 1:12, John 3:17), but that we are to also partner with Him as His children in bringing that plan to fulfilment. In Matthew 28:18-20 we read of the Great Commission, where Jesus is sending us to 'make disciples of all nations,' by witnessing to all of what God has done in our lives. God's desire is to save us and make us His people. Acts 15:14, Revelation 5:9,10 and other passages tell us that God desires a people for His name, after His own heart, who would gladly desire to spend eternity with Him. That time will not come until the Gospel is preached into the whole world as a testimony to all nations (Matthew 24:14). And that job is ours (Romans 10:14).

When we acknowledge these truths, and if we have indeed experienced God as our Father, then it is imperative that "we must be about our Father's business (Matthew 2:49 NKJV)." Peter goes even further by saying that we are to "speed the

coming of the Lord (2 Peter 3:12).”

After only a few months since I surrendered my life to Jesus, it became clear that I wasn't saved only to be a member in a church – God had clear plans. He did not only desire to have a close, personal relationship as my Heavenly Father but he was also inviting me to join His commission. I have always esteemed missionaries that gave away everything to advance the Gospel. Having been saved off the streets of Romania by one of them, the desire to become one was deeply rooted into me. The Lord had other plans though. There are hundreds of refugees, asylum seekers, migrant workers, and students of other nations here in Plymouth, UK. And when my church became intentional in reaching them, I joined a team whose focus was ‘to reach the nations on our doorstep.’

Early on I had some tough lessons to learn. Whilst the busyness of the world is intended to keep us busy and entertained to create a distance between us and finding Jesus, the busyness of serving the Lord can at times lead to burn out and doing life out of a servant mentality. And this is where I'd like to raise awareness that we can easily become so busy with church activities, outreach programs and meetings that it seems 24 hours are not enough to do it all. A friend once made a comment that “even if you'd have 36 hours in a day,

you'd fill them all in and still need more hours!" And she is right. It's an honour to be in the Lord's service, but in many ways, I've realized that as we busily labour, it's easy to forget that 'It's all about Jesus!' and we are to serve him out of rest. Just a 'by the way' - after God created Adam, he had him rest (Genesis 2:2,3). Serving out of a place of strife makes service a burden. 'God does the saving!' is something that I have to constantly remind myself.

Maintaining a balance between personal time with the Lord, time with family, work, serving in different ministries - time to refresh and rest is crucial. I find that the Lord does have fresh mercies every morning (Lamentations 3:22), reminding me not to lose focus about what my Father's business is, but to also do life from a place of joy, peace and righteousness!

Catalin serves in a cross-cultural outreach team within Redeemer Church, Plymouth and serves as a trustee at the ODILS Learning Foundation, whose main role is to teach English and help integrate refugees and asylum seekers moving to the UK.

| ***Discussion Questions***

1. How have you experienced worldly busyness?
2. What is God's specific call for your life?
3. List the priorities that guide your life.

| ***Read***

John 8:29

| ***Reflect on This***

“Jesus didn’t come to start a religion. He came to have a relationship with you. He has a purpose and a destiny for your life.” - *Unknown*

LOOKING BACK...

DEVOTIONALS 1-6

During this connect group cycle, we pray that you have been challenged, encouraged, and inspired as you pursue greater sexual purity, spiritual wholeness, and Christlike maturity in your life. We want to encourage you to now take some time to reflect on the last six devotionals and see how you can consistently apply the many truths that have been shared and that you have learned in your life.

Devotional 1

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life?

Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

Devotional 2

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life?

Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

Devotional 3

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life?

Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

Devotional 4

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life?

Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

Devotional 5

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life?

Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

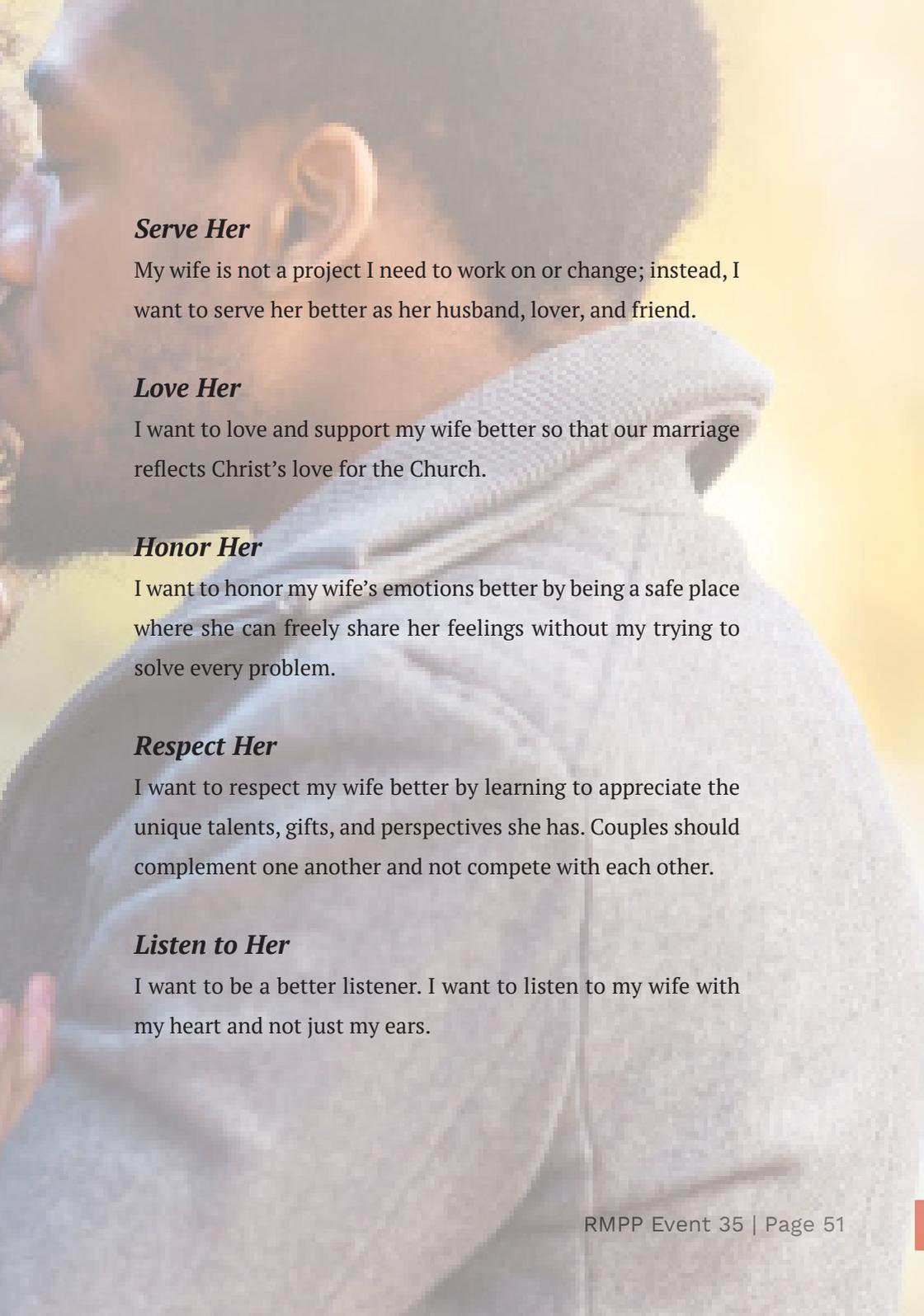
Devotional 6

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life?

Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

FAST AND PRAY FOR YOUR WIFE

Each month, we encourage you to set aside a time to fast and pray for your wife (or future wife) for one or all of the following points. As husbands (or future husbands) commit to praying and fasting for their wives, we will see a significant spiritual breakthrough and a spiritual legacy created.



Serve Her

My wife is not a project I need to work on or change; instead, I want to serve her better as her husband, lover, and friend.

Love Her

I want to love and support my wife better so that our marriage reflects Christ's love for the Church.

Honor Her

I want to honor my wife's emotions better by being a safe place where she can freely share her feelings without my trying to solve every problem.

Respect Her

I want to respect my wife better by learning to appreciate the unique talents, gifts, and perspectives she has. Couples should complement one another and not compete with each other.

Listen to Her

I want to be a better listener. I want to listen to my wife with my heart and not just my ears.

INTRODUCING RMPP

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

| *What Is RMPP?*

Real Men Pursuing Purity (RMPP) is a community of men who are committed to growing in integrity, purity and wholeness through relevant teachings, accountability, mentoring and honest dialogue. You might not be sure that you really need to be part of a community like this because you don't struggle with compulsive addictions or sexual sin. While it is very important for many men to focus primarily on resisting sexual temptation and sin, we want to inspire and challenge you to pursue more. Although growing in purity is a big part of the vision for RMPP, it's much more than that. It's also learning about deep-rooted insecurities, developing proper work boundaries, embracing our identity in Christ, confronting fears and anxiety, expressing ourselves emotionally in a healthy way, and pursuing holiness in a safe environment with like-minded brothers. We believe that when we invite Him into these areas, He will extend His healing hand and bring about wholeness. Max Lucado says this very well.

EST. 2014

“Our Savior kneels down and gazes upon the darkest acts of our lives. But rather than recoil in horror, he reaches out in kindness and says, “I can clean that if you want.”

We are men who are not willing to settle for a life of spiritual mediocrity. We choose to relentlessly pursue greater depths of purity and wholeness for ourselves and for our families. Welcome to the RMPP community.

| How does RMPP support the local church?

RMPP does not intend to replace or represent a church; it only creates a safe place for men who want to stay active in their own church community. When a man joins the RMPP community he joins other like-minded men who desire to pursue greater spiritual growth and Christ-likeness. He is choosing to walk out in greater honesty and vulnerability. He is choosing to pursue purity in all aspects of his life. Aspects such as deep-rooted insecurities, developing proper work

boundaries, embracing our identity in Christ, confronting fears and anxiety, expressing ourselves emotionally in a healthy way, and pursuing holiness in a safe environment.

We then pray that as these men grow in greater maturity that they would influence their families. That they would impact their communities and their work places, and that they would be an example for other men in their home church. We believe that as men take hold of the awesome and holy call to live lives that reflect Christ, that the church will be inspired and the world will take notice.

| *What happens next?*

If you have ever attended a men's retreat, you probably remember being deeply impacted by worship, challenged by teaching, and being in community with many men who shared your excitement and enthusiasm for growth and change. A few weeks or months down the road, the gathering became a distant memory as you settled back into the routines of daily life. We don't want to create just another mountain top experience. We are committed to creating a long-term mentoring relationship for everyone who attends an event. That is why you are holding this devotional book in your hands. As you flip through these pages you will see that there devotionals with corresponding

questions. Each devotional is meant to solidify the teaching of the event by encouraging and challenging you, as well as helping to stimulate discussion through thought provoking questions, verses and quotes.

| *Who writes the devotionals?*

Christian men from around the world have written these devotionals and have overcome real issues in their life through God's grace, goodness, mercy and love. We hope and pray that their testimonies and stories inspire, challenge and point you to Christ.

| *What are RMPP connect groups?*

RMPP connect groups are a safe place for men to pursue both purity and wholeness within an environment of peer support and encouragement. The journey to greater purity and wholeness is a journey that involves inviting other men to walk alongside of you. It is a place where you can share your prayer requests, victories, and struggles and where you can be heard, prayed for and challenged to grow in all areas of life. A connect group is designed to be a support system for you for as long as you want.

During your time in a connect group you will be:

Challenged: You will be challenged to grow in your love for Biblical truth. The men in your group will challenge you to grow in your knowledge and application of God's Word thereby enabling you to stand firm in the midst of life's trials.

Encouraged: You will be encouraged to persevere when life, work, and numerous responsibilities may seem overwhelming. The men in your group will support you through prayer, encouragement and a listening ear.

Inspired: You will be inspired to pursue greater spiritual growth and Christ-likeness. While pursuing Christ-likeness may not always be easy, it will also be worth it. The men in your group will be there to inspire you on that journey.

Accountable: The men in your group, as well as your group leader, will support you and hold you accountable as you pursue greater freedom and victory. Be assured that whatever you share in your group will be strictly confidential.

| ***When are the events held?***

RMPP events are held online 4x a year in February, May, August, and November.

| ***Who can attend?***

RMPP events are open to all men worldwide.

| ***What about privacy?***

Because of the sensitive nature of RMPP events, video or audio recording by participants is not allowed. Also, details of personal testimonies are not to be published via email, social media, or in any other form. Thank you for contributing to a safe and secure environment that helps build honesty and vulnerability.

| ***Who started RMPP?***

Real Men Pursuing Purity was founded in 2014. RMPP is a joint initiative of The MST Project and New Counseling Service.

MEET THE TEAM

THE GLOBAL LEADERSHIP TEAM

Christian Lentz is the founder and director of The MST Project, a ministry that seeks to mentor men into a pursuit of sexual purity, spiritual wholeness, and Christlike maturity. Christian has lived in Thailand for over 21 years and resides in Bangkok with his wife.

Rex DeKoning is the 60-year old husband and father of a large family. A former nurse and pastor, he now works in Thailand with New Counseling Service as a counselor. Rex has experienced great healing of addictive behaviors after he confessed everything and began to live an accountable life. Rex is highly motivated to inspire other men to seek out a mentor, as it has helped him to walk freely, build honesty and vulnerability.

Nick Chilver is married and is part of a blended family containing 6 children. He is grateful for the people God has brought into his life and across his path. And as he continues to learn to better reflect Him, it is his prayer that God will grant

him the privilege of helping others on the path to freedom and into the Light. He resides in Thailand with his wife.

Roger Mitiska and his wife are retired and living in Thailand. They are members of Evangelical Church of Bangkok. Greatly blessed by God, Roger desires to be used by Him to assist others in walking with Jesus. Roger's passion is Christian discipleship through understanding God's Word and applying it to everyday living.

Mike B. Wood is married to his wonderful wife of 28 years. He is a Pastoral Counselor in the area of sexual recovery therapy. He is a man in process, passionate about bringing men together to share life together. This is where we study God's Word together and share the challenges we face. This inspires us to accept what God has freely given us: His love, mercy, grace and acceptance. He and his wife have lived in Thailand for 18 years.

RESOURCES

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

| *New Counseling Service*

New Counseling Service provides counseling and therapy for individuals and families in Bangkok. NCS provides services for expatriates as well as for locals.

W: ncsbkk.com

E: newcounselingservice@gmail.com

| *Pathway To Purity*

The book, Pathway to Purity, is meant to transform your way of thinking about purity, taking you through an initial 16 sessions of encouraging, challenging and application of the material. Pathway to Purity will transform the way you think and live, putting you on a lifetime path of purity and wholeness leading to consistent victory.

W: mstproject.com/p2p

E: hello@themstproject.com

THANK YOU

| *With Gratitude*

We would like say thank you to the following for their contribution to RMPP events.

Financial Donors

Thank you for generously providing the funding for this event.

Devotional Authors

Thank you for writing devotionals that inspire, encourage and challenge each of us to pursue greater sexual purity, spiritual wholeness and Christlike maturity.

| *Scriptural Oversight Team*

RMPP has a Scriptural Oversight Team consisting of several pastors from local churches that review all devotionals for theological integrity.

CONNECT GROUPS

RMPP connect groups are a safe place for men to pursue sexual purity, spiritual wholeness, and Christlike maturity within an environment of peer support, encouragement, and accountability.

Connect groups are held worldwide on a weekly basis. To inquire about joining a group or to find out more information please email hello@themstproject.com.

If you are interested in starting an RMPP connect group at your church, men's ministry, Bible study, college group, etc., please contact us. We'd love to support you and have the resources to help you.

A close-up photograph of a man with a beard and short brown hair, looking down with a gentle expression at the hand of a young child. The child's hand is resting on a light-colored surface. The background is softly blurred, showing another person's head in profile. The overall mood is intimate and caring.

**JOIN ONE
TODAY!**

NOVEMBER 2022