

# Keeping Focused amid Life's Busyness

The elementary school children come bounding in the door from school, excited to share the news of their day. The big kids are already home. The oldest reminds she needs a ride to work. The baby wakes up hungry and in need of a diaper change. Walking past the pantry, the mother discovers the two year old "baking" with ingredients spread all over the floor. She sighs, and silently prays, "God grant me patience." Still hoping to go to Bible class in the evening, she knows supper and homework must get done right away. Life is busy in a household with many children.

The busyness increases during days of preparation for the congregation's fund-raiser craft and bake sale. Everyone able is baking, painting, and preparing crafts. Still other days, the household is busy scrubbing, preparing to host language camp guests who will be staying for a few days. In the midst of activity, the busy father is working long days at work; perhaps even gone for several days at a time while traveling for work. In some families, the mother might also be working to help support the family. The family calendar becomes a work of art, as activities and schedules fill the squares.

A common theme in today's society is the busyness of life. Quiet evenings at home are rare. Youth, parents, and elders all seem to share this experience. What is it that makes life so busy? What has changed in the past decades to make life seem busier? Is it healthy to be busy? Is there a "good busy"?

Sometimes, the things that make us busy are activities we choose to participate in. Other times they are responsibilities that we have been given. When the economy weakens, perhaps more time is spent trying to provide for the family. Still, other things that make us busy are the numerous church activities that we are blessed with. Being busy isn't necessarily bad, but it creates challenges. It is important to evaluate our schedules, commitments, and activities and their effect on our families.

## **Challenges of a Busy Life**

What are the challenges of a busy life to a family? As I contemplated this question, I asked my children for their thoughts. The first insightful answer was, "We get mad at each other faster." As the stress level mounts, patience wanes. Parents and children alike feel the impatience and react by being short with each other.

Another challenge is finding time to visit with each other. We can live with each other in the same home, but not take the time to share our plans, fears, joys, and sorrows. The songwriter understood this when writing, "With selfishness and hurry, how blinded we become. We scarcely even notice our dear ones' needs at home." Fostering relationships with our spouse, our children, and between children requires time and attention. It doesn't happen simply by living under the same roof.

As children fill the home, parents have a responsibility to both guide them in their walk of faith and in their future plans. Getting to know their friends helps in this duty and is a source of great joy. Yet, as children grow to teenagers, it can be challenging to find time to visit with them and to host haps activities. The teens also, experience a fast pace of life. Our society is structured in a way that promotes early independence. Already in their early teens, many are working. Schoolwork and socializing consume large amounts of time for most young people. The activities that keep teens and young adults busy, generally also keep them away from home. This makes it more of a challenge to visit, instruct, and guide them.

A similar challenge is maintaining meaningful relationships with friends and extended family. That, too, takes time. How well can we know our friends if we don't have time to visit them? When a person or family is going through hardships, it is vital that they have support from friends. If our own lives are too busy, it is difficult to find time to help others.

Sometimes, it is work in God's kingdom that keeps a person or family busy. Even here, it is worth considering the workload from different angles. Do I take on too much? Or, is there more that I can do to help relieve the workload of others? Sharing work and responsibility lightens the load for the workers. It is worth considering time and commitment. The SRK Family Committee report noted that, "as personal responsibility and commitment diminishes, there is a danger of responsibility piling on the shoulders of just a few. This is why everyone should be encouraged to take part in mutual activities."

The societal norm around us, perhaps due in part to the economy, places significant pressure to "shoot for the stars" or to perform at the top. This is true both in work and school environments. Of course we want to do our best at everything we do. However, this pressure can put excessive demands on individuals. Long hours spent at work cuts into time spent with our families. Pursuing higher levels of education or job training are necessary, but also consume time otherwise spent with family. When working and studying, it is important to remember the meaning of reasonable responsibility. It is enough to do one's best. Contemplate the ability to cope from the point of view of both work/school and of the family's wellbeing.

Feelings of weariness and poorness can come close when we consider what we want to do, but can't find the time to do. Visiting elders and those who may not have large circles of friends and family around them is one such desire. Caring for the emotional needs of our young ones, guiding older children, and teaching God's Word in our homes are others. Yet, God knows our situation and our desires.

## **Maintaining Focus**

When the song mentioned above reminds of our poorness, it doesn't leave us hopeless. There is also comfort in it. "But

then we pray, dear Father, and share our stress and burden within the care of Christ.”

In addition to prayer, there are practical aspects of our lives that we can consider and adjust. As people with varied interests, we place value on different things. For some, time spent on education and a career takes a higher priority; for others pursuing hobbies is important. Still others prefer to spend time away from the routines of life, either with coffee outings or on distant vacations. All of these things are good when kept in moderation and when considered from the perspective of their impact on the family. We are immersed in a culture that emphasizes pleasure, individual will, and instant gratification. Without realizing it, our focus can shift from considering the good of the family to pursuing personal interests and wanting an “escape” from the role we have been given.

God, in His infinite wisdom, already from the beginning of time, knew of man’s need to rest and study His Word. When God created the earth, He rested and sanctified the seventh day to be the day of rest. When He gave the commandments to Moses, He instructed to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. These instructions are important for us still today. It is good to put daily cares away and spend a day at services and visiting with fellow believers. Being at services offers a time to refocus and maintain perspective. When we together as parents and children quieten to hear God’s Word, we share an unhurried moment. The children sense the value of going to services and of the need to live of the gospel. Especially when the stresses of life feel heavy and weariness sets in, we need the support of others. “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Heb. 10:24,25). Take time to attend services, to visit, and to sing. Most importantly, take time to preach the gospel.

Our strength is in the gospel. It is what each of us needs, from the very youngest to the oldest in our homes. When impatience occurs, when settling children for the night, when teens are struggling, or when weariness sets in, use the gospel. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Rom. 1:16). It enables us to keep our sights on heaven where time and busyness don’t exist. The faster time passes, the sooner we will be in heaven, rejoicing with the saints.

Text and photos: Becky Randall

#### **Points for Discussion:**

- Read and discuss the chapter, “The Lord of Time and Time-Bound Man” in the book by Juhani Uljas, *The Treasure Hidden in a Field*.
- Sing song #431 and visit about the thoughts expressed in it.
- What fills our calendar? Evaluate the activities within your family in light of your priorities in life.

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