

Crazy Busy: A (Mercifully) Short Book About A (Really) Big Problem

by Kevin DeYoung

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Kevin DeYoung is (or perhaps was) crazy busy. He is the much-admired pastor of University Reformed Church in East Lansing MI. He is a very prolific author, conference speaker, blogger, large church pastor, father of five and husband of one (the same one from the start, Trisha). I'm trying not to be impressed with his productivity and the busy-ness that must require. But I did hear him preach two truly amazing, biblical sermons not long ago (on Leviticus Chapter One (try that!) and on Paul and Barnabus's separation over what to do with Mark). I hate to admit it but I rarely hear sermons that I can remember even an hour later but this guy was so anchored into the blazing insights of God's word I am still thinking about the messages in detail months later. And now I have read one of his several books, the one I most needed: *Crazy Busy*.

DeYoung says his other books he wrote because of a passion to share what he had learned. But in *Crazy Busy* he says he was writing in order to try to learn about something he can't say he has completely figured out. Busyness can ruin our joy, rob our hearts, and cover up the rot in our souls, he writes at the outset. Of course, busyness can get lots of great things done, rescue those around us, and represent a huge sacrifice to our Lord, our church, and our community. Those are the temptations I face anyway. And I would stress that busyness can undermine the quality of our work, our relationships, and our physical and mental health. There are lots of unproductive, un-busy people around us, and they need another kind of book. But still, I and lots of my friends and colleagues desperately need help in this area, for all the reasons mentioned.

DeYoung provides seven (nice number) chapter-length diagnoses of why we might be crazy busy: (1) pride (including people-pleasing, performance, pity, perfectionism, prestige), (2) total obligation (trying to do everything rather than just what God gifts and calls us to), (3) mission creep (instead of setting priorities and boundaries), (4) "kindergarchy" (nice word) (obsession to manage our kids perfectly and constantly), (5) unbounded submission to constant information technology, (6) failure to value and embrace some quality rest and quiet, (7) inability to roll with, and even suffer, in the midst of business (we let it drive us crazy instead of "suffering" it as part of life). DeYoung closes with "The One Thing You Must Do" which is to prioritize having a daily quiet/devotional time with the Lord. Work from there at the seven other problems he has discussed.

Great little book. I really identify with this book. In reflecting on an often insanely busy life, never more crazy than now, even at 68 years old, I feel like for me it began as a kid when I would gripe about my youth group being boring or our church having a pathetic outreach to the neighborhood. My dad would say to me "Well, what are YOU doing about it?" That question hit home and all my life since then I find myself constantly looking at opportunities, challenges, organizations, neighborhoods, churches, teams, etc., and imagining how they could be better --- and then sharing such ideas --- and then volunteering to help out. I also grew up with "You are either part of the solution ---- or part of the problem." "Better to light a candle than curse the darkness." "Lead, follow, or get out of the way!" These are the slogans of my existence the past sixty years. I often have them tacked on my office wall or door.

Honestly, it is not about me; I am a virtually unknown, marginal figure in all my arenas and I'm fine with that. But I was born and raised to rattle the cage for the sake of the kingdom of God. I can't stand the idea of passively acquiescing in the way things are in our troubled, sick world. I love trying to make a difference however small. I have often thanked God for making me strong so I can step up when others drop the ball. I am compulsively responsible about following through on details. Especially since the internet came on the scene in 1995, along with cell and smart phones, the technology not only helps me in very wonderful, concrete ways, it also is killing me with quantity. So as extraordinary and wonderful as it all is, my life is insane, I have come to realize, and it is my fault: I create the agenda and schedule, and it won't get better by working faster or harder. I will never catch up. What can I do?

I love my morning devotions, Kevin. I carefully read two chapters and spend time praying. (And I never either shorted my wife and kids or fell into kindergarchy). But it's all insane, then, from that point until midnight. My old friend, the Rev. Earl Palmer, used to say that the place to begin is with your *weekly* schedule, not your day (too short) or year (too long). The fourth command institutes a *weekly* Sabbath. Get your weekly rhythm under control, then work in both directions from there. I think that is probably right. I love Sabbath but haven't got it right. Neither the culture nor the church helps me at all in the Sabbath struggle. We need to keep working on these issues and help each other. Thank you for your helpful input
Kevin DeYoung.