

*"You can't afford to miss what DeYoung
says here in Crazy Busy!"*

RICK WARREN



CRAZY BUSY

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

KEVIN DEYOUNG

“Everything Kevin DeYoung writes is biblical, timely, and helpful for both life and ministry. You can’t afford to miss what he says here in *Crazy Busy*. He rightly reminds us to beware of the barrenness of a busy life, since activity and productivity are not the same thing.”

Rick Warren, #1 *New York Times* best-selling author,
The Purpose Driven Life; Pastor, Saddleback Church

“I’m a fan of Kevin DeYoung’s writing, partly because I know what to expect. He’s always clear, biblical, and to the point—with a good dose of humor peppered in. *Crazy Busy* is no exception. It’s a quick and engaging read that busy people can find time for. DeYoung helped me think about the heart issues behind my busyness, and even gave me some practical ways to fight it. As a pretty busy guy, I encourage other busy folks to squeeze this little book into their schedule.”

Trip Lee, hip-hop artist; author, *The Good Life*

“A great book for the stressed-out. DeYoung shows that Jesus was busy and Christians should be busy discipling nations, parenting children, and bearing burdens. He rightly differentiates that from ‘crazy busy,’ a frenzied trying to please some and control others—and he shows how biblical rhythms and trust in God’s providence can keep us sane. Also a great book for parents who live in a Kindergarchy, over-programming their children: DeYoung says let them play, because it’s not easy either to ruin them or to assure their success.”

Marvin Olasky, Editor-in-chief, World News Group

“I’m glad to take time out of my busy life to endorse *Crazy Busy* by Kevin DeYoung. As Kevin makes abundantly clear, our busyness can be evidence of our faithfulness or, on the other hand, evidence of our pride, ambition, and unbridled activity. As always, Kevin DeYoung is a careful thinker, a gifted pastor, and a writer who keeps us on the edge of our seat.”

R. Albert Mohler Jr., President and Joseph Emerson Brown
Professor of Christian Theology, The Southern Baptist
Theological Seminary

“Habitual, sinful busyness is something that many struggle with and yet, it’s rare to hear teaching on this important topic. With refreshing transparency and his trademark humor, Kevin DeYoung identifies the problem and gives helpful practical instruction on how to find our rest in Christ. DeYoung has served the church well (once again). I highly recommend this book.”

Shai Linne, hip-hop artist

**CRAZY
BUSY**



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

KEVIN DEYOUNG

 **CROSSWAY**
WHEATON, ILLINOIS

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

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To Mark, Lig, C. J., Al, Thabiti, Matt,
John, and David, busy friends,
who have made time for me.

Contents

1	Hello, My Name Is Busy	11
2	Here, There, and Gone: Three Dangers to Avoid	19
3	The Killer P's—Diagnosis #1: You Are Beset with Many Manifestations of Pride	33
4	The Terror of Total Obligation—Diagnosis #2: You Are Trying to Do What God Does Not Expect You to Do	43
5	Mission Creep—Diagnosis #3: You Can't Serve Others without Setting Priorities	53
6	A Cruel Kindergarchy—Diagnosis #4: You Need to Stop Freaking Out about Your Kids	65
7	Deep Calls to Deep—Diagnosis #5: You Are Letting the Screen Strangle Your Soul	77
8	Rhythm and Blues—Diagnosis #6: You'd Better Rest Yourself before You Wreck Yourself	89
9	Embracing the Burdens of Busyness—Diagnosis #7: You Suffer More because You Don't Expect to Suffer at All	101
10	The One Thing You Must Do	109
	General Index	119
	Scripture Index	123

Hello, My Name Is Busy

I am the worst possible person to write this book.

And maybe the best.

My life is crazy busy. I don't say that as a boast or a brag. I'm not trying to win any contest. I'm just stating the facts. Or at least describing the way my life feels almost every single day. I often made the quip, "I'm supposed to write a book on busyness, if only I could find the time." And I wasn't joking.

How did I get this way? How did you get this way? How did we all get this way? I've yet to meet anyone in America who responds to the question "How are you?" with the reply, "Well for starters, I'm not very busy." I suppose there must be a six-year-old somewhere out there who doesn't "have anything to do" and some dear folks at the nursing home who could use a few more interruptions, but for almost everyone in between there is a pervasive sense of being unrelentingly filled up and stressed out.

I do not write this book as one who has reached the summit and now bends over to throw the rope down to everyone else. More like the guy with a toehold three feet off the ground,

looking for my next grip. I'm writing this book not because I know more than others but because I want to know more than I do. I want to know why life feels the way it does, why our world is the way it is, why I am the way I am. And I want to change.

Same Kind of Busy as You

As long as I can remember—which takes us back aeons and aeons, all the way to the 90s—I have been busy. In high school I ran track and cross-country, played intramural basketball, did National Honor Society, tried the Spanish club, took multiple AP courses, played in our insanely time-consuming marching band, sang in a musical, and did church twice on Sunday, Sunday school, youth group, and a Friday morning Bible study. No one made me like this. My parents didn't force me (though church was not up for discussion). I wanted to do all these things.

In college I did even more. I ran a season of track, played intramural sports, worked part-time for various professors, organized one of the country's largest Model UN programs (yes, it's true), signed up to be a DJ at the campus radio station, led our Fellowship of Christian Students group, went to voluntary chapel three times a week, sang in a church choir, sang in the college chapel choir, participated in my church's college ministry, helped with Boys' Brigade on Wednesday nights, went to church on Sunday morning, then Sunday school, then evening church, then chapel back on campus late into the night.

Same story in seminary. In addition to normal course work and wading through my denomination's labyrinthine ordination process, I interned at my church, preached regularly, sang

in up to three different choirs at the same time, went to an accountability group every week, did the usual with church twice on Sunday, plus Sunday school, plus a midweek catechism class I taught for little kids, plus leading the seminary's missions committee and attending chapels and frequent prayer meetings. I could go on and on.

And this is before I was *really* busy. The only people busier than single grad students are people who aren't single and aren't grad students. All those years in school, except for one semester, I wasn't married. I wasn't in full-time pastoral ministry. I wasn't blogging or writing books. I wasn't leading elders' meetings. I wasn't speaking anywhere. I wasn't a slave to technology. I didn't have a mortgage to figure out or a lawn to mow or a furnace to fix or a dead raccoon in my fireplace (long story) or weekly sermons to prepare. I didn't have to travel. I didn't have Facebook or Twitter. Hardly anyone e-mailed me. And I wasn't parenting a child, let alone five.

On most days, my responsibilities, requirements, and ambitions add up to much more than I can handle. It has since I was a teenager, and only seems to be getting worse. When someone asks me how I'm doing, my response almost always includes the word "busy." I can think of several moments in just the past couple of months when I've muttered to myself, "What am I doing? How did I get myself into this mess? When will I ever get my life under control? How long can I keep this up? Why can't I manage my time? Why did I say yes to this? How did I get so busy?" I've bemoaned my poor planning and poor decision making. I've complained about my schedule. I've put in slipshod work because there wasn't time for any other

kind. I've missed too many quiet times and been too impatient with my kids. I've taken my wife for granted and fed important relationships with leftovers. I've been too busy to pursue God with my whole heart, soul, mind, and strength.

In other words, I've likely been just like you.

An Idea Whose Time Was Overdue

"So, Kevin, what's your next book project?" my friends would ask.

"I'm doing a book on busyness."

"Really?! But your schedule is a mess. This is one of your biggest problems."

"I know. That's why I'm writing the book."

Some books are written because the author knows something people need to know. Others because the author has seen something people should see. I'm writing this book to figure out things I don't know and to work on change I have not yet seen. More than any other book I've worked on, this one is for me.

Which also means the book will have more about me than usual. I don't know any other way to write on a topic that has been such a personal struggle except to make this book very personal. There is nothing remarkable about my experiences such that they need to be shared. It just so happens they are the experiences I know best. So you're going to get a candid look at some of my faults, some of my struggles, and some of the insights—commonsense and biblical—that have helped me make sense of my heart issues.

I have two hesitations in writing a book like this, and both stem from pride. On the one hand, I'm going to put aside the urge to constantly qualify my struggles with reassurances that things aren't quite so bad as they sound. In one sense, that's true. I have a happy marriage and love being a dad. I'm not burnt out. I'm not fifty pounds overweight. I sleep at night. I have friends. There are people in my life to keep me accountable. This book is not a cry for help.

Except that it is. I want to grow in this area. I don't want to keep up this same pace for the rest of my life. Frankly, I probably can't. My life may not be spinning out of control, but it's probably spinning too fast and a bit wobbly.

My second hesitation is just the opposite. I worry that you'll think I'm parading my busyness as a badge of honor. If you don't think I'm messed up for having these issues in the first place, you might think I'm proud for talking about them at all. "Must be nice to speak at conferences, Rev Kev. Must be pretty sweet to have people asking you to write books. Nice name drop, Pastor—wish those guys were knocking down my door. Thanks for sharing all your *terrible* burdens with us."

I understand the sentiment. When some people talk about busyness it sounds like the lantern-jawed zillionaire quarterback complaining about all the photo shoots he has lined up. I really hope I don't sound like That Guy—the one who expects sympathy every time he tells his sob story about how much worse the Milan airport is compared to Prague. As far as I can discern my heart, I'm not proud to be busy and I'm not proud of the things that make me busy. To be sure, pride is connected in other ways, but not in the sharing of the struggles themselves.

Besides, when it comes down to it, we are all busy in the same sorts of ways. Whether you are a pastor, a parent, or a pediatrician, you likely struggle with the crushing weight of work, family, exercise, bills, church, school, friends, and a barrage of requests, demands, and desires. No doubt, some people are quantitatively less busy than others and some much more so, but that doesn't change the shared experience: most everyone I know feels frazzled and overwhelmed most of the time.

That's what the people in my church are like. That's what my friends around the country are like. That's what I am like. And that's why I'm writing this book.

Worlds Apart?

I read an anecdote once about a woman from another culture who came to the United States and began to introduce herself as "Busy." It was, after all, the first thing she heard when meeting any American. *Hello, I'm Busy*—she figured it was part of our traditional greeting, so she told everyone she met that that's who she was.

It's what most of us are, and what more of us are becoming. No matter where we live or what our background. Granted, there are important differences in how people understand time. I'm well aware that this book assumes a modernized, industrialized cultural context. I know it assumes a Western view of time, and that an African book on busyness might include different prescriptions and contain many insights I've missed. To that end, I trust you will distinguish in these pages between practical application (which may differ across cultures) and biblical principles and diagnoses (which

do not). Efficiency and punctuality, for example, can demonstrate respect for others, but they are not absolute virtues. Just ask the man on the Jericho Road.

But we all live somewhere and must swim in the water around us. I can't help but deal with the realities of life as I experience them in the United States. While it may limit the effectiveness of this book in some contexts, it seemed best *not* to take off my Western lenses, both because I probably couldn't and because the world, for better or worse, will only grow more globalized, urbanized, and busy in the years ahead. Many other cultures are not as obsessed with minutes and seconds as we are, but for most of us, that's the world we inhabit. For the rest, it's the world that's coming.

Paint by Numbers

I hope you'll find this book highly practical and accessibly theological. That's the book I set out to write because that's the book I'd want to read. In these pages, I don't plumb the depths of union with Christ, eschatological foreshadowing, and the interpretive history of the fourth commandment. That's not the kind of book you're reading. At the same time, I'm not interested merely in giving time management techniques or tips on how to set your e-mail filter. I want to understand what's going on in the world and in my heart to make me feel the way I do. And I also want to understand how to change—even just a little. Both tasks require theology. And both are begging for practicality.

The outline of this book is straightforward. If you want a poem or a chalk drawing about busyness, you won't find it

here. But if you prefer a clear outline with lists, I'm your man. My outline is as simple as three numbers: 3, 7, and 1: three dangers to avoid (chapter 2), seven diagnoses to consider (chapters 3–9), and one thing you must do (chapter 10). I don't promise total transformation. I offer no money-back guarantees. My goal is more modest. I hope you'll find a few ways to tackle your schedule, several suggestions for reclaiming your sanity, and a lot of encouragement to remember your soul.

All of which is to say, I hope you find in reading this book exactly what I'm looking for in writing it.

I'M TOO BUSY



We've all heard it. We've all said it. All too often, busyness gets the best of us.

Just one look at our jam-packed schedules tells us that we know how hard it can be to strike a well-reasoned balance between doing nothing and doing it all.

That's why award-winning author Kevin DeYoung addresses the busyness problem head on in his newest book, *Crazy Busy* — and not with the typical arsenal of time-management tips, but with the biblical tools we need to get to the source of the issue and pull the problem out by the roots.

Highly practical and *super* short, *Crazy Busy* puts an end to “busyness as usual.”



KEVIN DEYOUNG is an award-winning author, popular blogger and conference speaker, and senior pastor at University Reformed Church in East Lansing, Michigan. He and his wife, Trisha, have five children who keep them very busy.

“Everything DeYoung writes is helpful for life and ministry.”

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best-selling author*

“Clear and to the point, with a good dose of humor, *Crazy Busy* gave me practical ways to fight busyness.”

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