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Are You Working Too Much?

Here's how to keep
your dream job
from becoming a
nightmare.



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Are You Working Too Much?

Here's how to keep your dream job from becoming a nightmare.



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Introduction

The Gift of Work

By Janine Petry



It's getting really late, and I still can't think of something to write for the introduction to this download. But no matter; I'll just sit here till it's done. Like I did last night. And the night before. You see, I'm fully committed to my work, no matter when the kids, husband, or sun rises.

After all, it's a dream job. And I love it. Why wouldn't I do my best, work my hardest, and prove my ability? And just because my husband claims I see more of the computer than I do of him, well, he's just exaggerating. At least...I *think* he is. Come to think of it, I'm not always sure where the line is between healthy work and overwork. It's something I have to constantly be on the lookout for.



Are You Working Too Much?

The Gift of Work

Can you relate? Do you wonder where the line is between work and the rest of your life? Have you ever watched a "dream job" turn into a nightmare? Do you struggle to find relief from your work life responsibilities? Well, you're not alone. Many people, myself included, can relate.

You know, I remember a pastor pointing out that work existed *before* the fall. It's not a punishment for sin. In fact, it's something God himself does. In John 5:17, Jesus says this: "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." And we were to join God in purposeful activity from the very beginning. Genesis 2:15 tells us: "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." Strange as it may seem, work is a fruitful gift that yields meaning, value, and purpose.

But I have the uncanny ability to turn my work into a false god by "bending over backward" for it, and revolving my life around the gift rather than the Giver. When I let work control my every minute, and I start sacrificing precious things to it—like family, relationships, and rest—then I know I'm in trouble. That's when I start feeling like work is a punishment I have to deal with, instead of a gift I can enjoy.





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Fortunately, there are practical ways that driven individuals like you and me can get a better handle on our work lives and protect what we care about most from the pitfalls of overworking. And this collection of articles will encourage you to take those steps toward freedom. As you read through these articles, you'll learn to create healthy boundaries that will enable you to experience work as the gift it was meant to be.

Blessings,

Janine Petry

Contributing Editor, KYRIA downloads,
Christianity Today International



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Leader's Guide

How to use “Are You Working Too Much?” for a group study.



“Are You Working Too Much?” can be used for individual or group study, but if you intend to lead a group study on this, some simple suggestions follow.

1. Make enough copies for everyone in the group to have her own guide.
2. Depending on the time you have dedicated to the study, you might consider distributing the guides before your group meets so everyone has a chance to read the material. Some articles are quite long and could take a while to get through.
3. Alternately, you might consider reading the articles together as a group—out loud—and plan on meeting multiple times.
4. Make sure your group agrees to complete confidentiality. This is essential to getting women to open up.
5. When working through the “Thought Provokers,” be willing to make yourself vulnerable. It’s important for women to know that others share their experiences. Make honesty and openness a priority in your group.
6. End the session in prayer.

Married to the Job

What to do when work
becomes "mistress."

By Camerin Courtney



I'm having an affair with Jean-Luc. No, not some beret-wearing, cheese-loving French guy (I wish!). No, I'm talking about Jean-Luc, my laptop computer.

I realize this as I'm sitting here writing this column on said paramour while a perfectly fabulous day waits just feet outside the coffee shop window beside me. I also realized this when Jean-Luc and I walked through the door and the barista behind the counter started preparing my drink before I even had a chance to utter my high maintenance half-caf, skim, no-whip hazelnut baccio. Obviously our presence here is nothing new.



Are You Working Too Much?

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The people at the quaint little bistro tables around me are chatting happily, as normal people do on weekend days. A woman just entered with a library book to read. Then there's me, working away. Again. Still.

I can argue that I have a column to write and other freelance projects to complete, that writing is in some ways "home" to me. But when I'm really honest, I admit I've been spending way too much time with Jean-Luc of late. And way too much time at work. I'm usually there until 6:30 p.m., and closing time's 4:30 p.m. I'm becoming a bit of a workaholic.

This is nothing new in our overworked, prove-your-worth-by-how-busy-you-are culture. But when I recently recognized the relationship between my singleness and my workaholicism, I knew something needed to change.

I walked out of work around 7 p.m. and realized the only other two cars in the parking lot belonged to fellow single people. Telling, no?

Sure, we have more flexibility to stay late and get things done. And yes, I sometimes get my second wind about ten minutes before quitting time. But, again, when I'm honest, I also admit that sometimes I don't go home as early as I should not because there's so much work to do, but because no one's waiting there for me.

At work I have community and roles to fill; someone notices when I complete a task (or don't!). In contrast, at home I have solitude and purely self-motivation for projects that must be completed. No one notices when I pay the bills or clean my bathroom. My pet parakeet doesn't even chirp his appreciation.





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And sometimes, needed downtime in the evenings simply seems lonely. Since I live alone, there's no built-in community when I go home. Company can be hard to come by as everyone else is just as crazy-busy. And in reality, sometimes I don't even want much interaction, just someone else's presence. Even just a friend sitting across the room while we each read our respective novels, or a romantic interest whose lap I can rest my feet in while we silently watch TV together.

Regardless of how much interaction we want with others, or how we want to enjoy or fill our time off, it takes something I often forget: intentionality. Ironically, I was reminded of this recently when I was reeling from a breakup. I was brokenhearted and having a hard time being alone, so I called up just about everyone I know to schedule lunches, dinners, evening coffee runs. Though we were talking through tough emotions part of the time, part of me simply enjoyed the constant community. I had a different sense of peace and connectedness that week.

This wasn't necessarily a new concept, just a wake-up call that I'd gotten lazy of late and had allowed work to become a key part of my community. My mistress, if you will. (Is there a male version of mistress? Perhaps "pool boy"?)

I know I'm not alone in this singleness workaholism struggle. Just the other day, a single friend told me he realized he'd been working too much of late and was trying to strike a new, healthier balance between work and play. And when I went in search of stats about singles and workaholism, I stumbled on this quote from author Richard Gosse: "Workaholism is a frequent problem among single people. Work enables you to escape the fear, loneliness, and boredom that often plague singles." Ouch!





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When I look at my work patterns of late, I realize this is exactly what I've been doing—escaping some evening loneliness and boredom by staying at work later and later. Sure, the pattern started when our staff experienced a recent crunch time. But, I have to admit, it's partly continued out of laziness and escapism. And sure, there are much worse things to fill our downtime with than too much work. But I wonder if sometimes God wants to meet us in those silent moments we're often quick to fill with work, or any other number of distractions. Or maybe that awkward evening time is just the motivation we need to seek out a new ministry pursuit, friendship, or extended prayer time.

The funny thing is, I fell into this overwork pattern so subtly, and since no one sees and holds me accountable for my daily comings and goings, I didn't even realize what I was doing. That is, until it recently dawned on me that I'm now on a first-name basis with our company's nighttime janitor.

But here I am working again—and on a beautiful weekend day. A family just drove up on their bicycles and have wandered in for some gelato. A mother and daughter just walked by on a leisurely stroll.

That does it! I'm packing up Jean-Luc, retrieving from my car one of the novels I've been reading lately, and heading to the park down the street. And later, I think I'll call a friend and see if she wants to go for a walk.

Jean-Luc might get a little miffed that I'm standing him up for non-electronic friends. But I think he always knew I'd eventually pull the plug on our relationship.

This first appeared in the August 25, 2004

ChristianSinglesToday.com newsletter.





Are You Working Too Much?

Married to the Job

Reflect

- *How would you define a "workaholic"? In what way do you identify with your definition?*
- *In what ways does our culture reinforce workaholism? How does our culture place value on work and business?*
- *What do you believe your work "gives" to you that you feel you don't get elsewhere (for example: approval, community, quiet, solitude)? How might it be harmful for you to look to your work for these things, instead of elsewhere?*



Life in the Fast Lane

How to keep from running yourself ragged.

By T. Suzanne Eller



It probably comes as no surprise that more than 40 percent of women who work outside the home are mothers of children under age 18. And 83 percent of new mothers return to work within six months after giving birth to a child!

This balancing act can take its toll. A recent study by the American Heart Association concluded that women are more likely than men to suffer from chest pain during psychological stress. The physical effects of stress for women can include high blood pressure, susceptibility to disease and infections, and depression.

I know—from firsthand experience.



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A few years ago, I was a whirl of competence. I attended night school to earn a degree in English, had a two-hour commute to my full-time job as a marketing coordinator for an engineering firm, and was a Sunday school teacher. I cooked, prayed, exercised, cleaned, and ran kids to soccer practice and games. At night I studied, both for my Sunday school class and college courses.

My twin daughter and son were 13, and my oldest daughter, 14. Once they'd entered kindergarten, I'd entered the workforce—and had been juggling the responsibilities of motherhood and career ever since. As time went on, my life became even more complex.

I moved up the ladder at work. My husband and I started a ministry to college-age singles. As I advanced in my job, I felt the pull to finish my education. Because my children were so close in age, their activities often overlapped. I'd run one child to soccer practice on the east side of town, then speed to the west side to watch another play soccer.

Even after a brush with a serious illness, I didn't slow down. While I knew stress could affect my health, I simply didn't have enough hours in the day to complete the tasks before me. *This is just my life, I told myself.*

Fatigue was so familiar, I thought it was normal. If I sat down, I succumbed to my weariness, so I learned not to stop. I'd drop my shoes at the door and keep going. Important matters, such as a phone call from a college student asking for advice or a shoulder to cry on, became bothersome. I wanted to care, but I simply didn't have the time.





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Then one day, as I rushed through the mall, I caught a glimpse of myself in a mirror. It literally stopped me in my tracks. *Who is that woman with those dark shadows under her eyes?* I wondered. Suddenly, I was hit full-force by the fatigue that had seeped into my very bones. As I stared into the eyes of this weary stranger, I knew my life had to change.

Today, the woman who greets me in the mirror each morning is free from shadows and lines. Sure, I still have my same mussed-up brown hair and crooked smile, but the fatigue I wore like a second skin is gone.

To get there, I had to make some hard choices. We had a major family powwow to talk about what could be changed, discarded, or postponed in our lives. Together, we listed our priorities: God, family, health, ministry, work. We then measured the true level of priority by taking an honest look at each category. It was a painful time of realization. I'd sandwiched God into my commute, praying as I traveled the busy highway. And while I studied the Bible every day, it was to teach it, not to spend time with God. Family was second, and health, dead last.

After much prayer and planning, I gave up my job and commute. It wasn't an easy decision, and it was a six-month process. Most families simply don't have the resources to kiss a job good-bye—and we were no exception. We trimmed our finances to the lowest dollar, sold our car, and bought an older model. We aggressively paid off a credit card. I scouted our city for leads on work I could do from home, made contacts with the school system, and contracted to create a monthly newsletter for an elementary school. I still wanted to use the skills I'd developed in my career, but in a different context.





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My first month home, I didn't know how to relax. I was a drill sergeant who almost drove my family crazy. My poor kids were used to snacking and watching cartoons after school; I was used to deadlines and commutes. *They* became my new deadlines as I ushered them through chores, making them clean their rooms, feeding the dog and cat, and helping me with dinner preparation the minute they walked through the door. It wasn't that they didn't want to help—they simply wanted a break.

I hadn't realized how difficult it would be for me to walk away from so much of what I used to do. I worried about the promotions I'd never get. I wondered about fulfillment. I missed my paycheck.

I'm glad to say I eventually chilled out. I had to—or my family was going to send me back. I realized I not only needed to pace myself, but to find an outlet for the energy I once poured into my work. So I began an early-morning exercise program, and soon discovered there's nothing like running five miles to sap the drill sergeant right out of you!

I also readjusted my definition of success. I hadn't realized how much I'd defined myself by the words and rewards that came with a career. Now I asked myself, *What is lasting? Where does God want me? Where will I make the most significant impact?*

After a few months, I willingly absconded more duties, such as my Sunday school class. I prayed the new teacher would love my class the way I had for 15 years, and soon realized the class would go on and even prosper without me. For the first time, I was a student in a Sunday school class—and I loved it!





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It got easier as I learned to weigh every decision. Because I was home, I received many offers. Did I want to be in the upcoming drama at our church? Did I want to lead a Bible study? What about serving on a local committee for community projects? I prayed over them all, but narrowed my involvements only to those areas with which God impressed me, understanding that family time and time with him were priority. I now was able to pour myself into the teens and college students who crossed my path.

I also postponed college, letting my shiny new library card become my gateway to education.

It didn't take long for wonderful things to start happening. I found out I could grow cucumbers. I gave myself permission to nap. And I began to laugh.

One night our family was in the living room, and my son cracked a corny joke. I got so tickled, I laughed till I cried. My children, who thought the joke was so bad it couldn't possibly be funny, laughed as they watched their mom hold her sides and wipe away her tears. They soon began to share funny tidbits and jokes with me regularly, waiting for that joke that would cause me to erupt in laughter. Even at 17 and 18 years old, they still do it today.

When my children were young, we used to take long walks along the creek by our house, or lie on the floor and wrestle and play. Somehow I'd lost much of that intimacy. One day I reached over to stroke my son's head and realized it felt unfamiliar—to both of us. That night, my oldest daughter sat on the couch beside me, complaining that her feet hurt from standing at her job. I took her foot and began to massage it. As I kneaded her foot, she told me about her day, and we laughed about things that had happened to her. Suddenly a





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heavy object plopped in my lap. As I looked at the size-10 foot resting there, my son said, "I'm next."

I began to wrap my arms around my husband and keep them there, leaving behind the quick courtesy hugs I once gave at the door. We walked in the evenings together and talked about our children, our hopes and dreams, and the events of our day. The intimacy that only comes with spending time together began to develop.

I'll never forget the day I realized I was *rested*. It was the first morning I woke up without a to-do list going through my mind. My heart was calm, I didn't feel fatigued, and I could enjoy the little things that were only background noise before.

Recently I walked to the mailbox and, on impulse, sat by the pond near our home. That innate tug immediately began as I thought of the dirty dishes sitting in the sink, a pile of bills on the counter, and a manuscript that needed editing.

I consciously ignored it. Soon the birds accepted my presence. One began to sing and another answered. I heard the most intriguing call and strained to see the bird that could produce such a sound. A light breeze swept across my skin, and the sun tingled on my flesh. I closed my eyes and listened to the light rhythm of the water as it lapped against my feet. I breathed a prayer. Some would say I was killing time. I prefer to believe I was *fulfilling* time, experiencing the beauties of God's creation, sensing the peace of solitude, finding a rest that has nothing to do with sleep.

When I was through, I walked back to my responsibilities. They hadn't left—but my 20 minutes of peace gave me the energy to tackle them with a song in my heart.





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I still fight my tendency to do it all. The temptation doesn't happen as often as it once did, but occasionally I find myself walking back into the busy trap. Recently I was invited to attend a ministry service. I went for an afternoon, and my heart immediately went out to the women involved. I was asked to go again. I instinctively started to say yes when I felt a small check inside me. I had to stop and think of the places God had led me these past few years, allowing me the opportunity to help others through my writing and work with teens. Though this was a good cause, I was already where God wanted me.

My house still isn't perfect. I still struggle with time issues. I have to manage my writing, cleaning, cooking, speaking, and family, but now I'm juggling only five or six balls instead of 20.

Simplify. Simplify. Simplify. If I keep saying it to myself, then one day it just might be second nature. Until then, I'll consciously decide that I'm going to get out of the fast lane and enjoy my life.

Are YOU Too Busy?

Take this assessment to find out.

1. Do you fold socks (or perform any household task) after midnight?
2. Do you skip meals to fulfill responsibilities?
3. Are you ever late because of overlapping responsibilities?
4. Do you travel over the speed limit even when you're not in a hurry?
5. Do you feel torn between family and responsibilities?





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- 6.** Do you fall asleep as soon as you sit down?
- 7.** Do you drink coffee/caffeine to stay awake?
- 8.** Do you get sick easily?
- 9.** Do you fight irritability?
- 10.** Do you have difficulty sleeping?
- 11.** Do you dream or lie awake worrying about work or things you need to do the next day?
- 12.** Do you feel guilty if you do "nothing"?

While all women face busy seasons, it's important to be aware of the physical, spiritual, and emotional burdens that accompany a lifestyle that's stretched too thin. If you answered yes to four or more, you're dealing with symptoms of a stressful lifestyle. If you answered yes to six or more, it's time to evaluate family and spiritual priorities. If you answered yes to eight or more, take back control of your life!

T. Suzanne Eller is a freelance writer and speaker who lives in Oklahoma.

This article first appeared in the July/August 2000 issue of TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN.





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Reflect

- *How does stress for your work and everyday life affect your health? Is fatigue familiar to you, like it was to the author before she made some changes?*
- *If you sense the need for change, what things are you prayerfully considering to give up? Is work among them? Why or why not?*
- *Which of the questions on the "Are YOU Too Busy" assessment can you relate to the most? How can you begin to change those problem areas?*



The Gift of Rest

How to embrace the blessings of the Sabbath.

By Lynne M. Baab



When I first started observing the Sabbath 25 years ago, it wasn't by choice. My husband and I lived in Tel Aviv, Israel, at the time, and everything in our neighborhood—stores, movie theaters, and restaurants—closed from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday. Even the buses stopped running for 24 hours. Since we didn't own a car, this greatly affected our lives.



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At first we struggled to find activities for Friday evenings and Saturdays. But after a few months, we began to enjoy a day with few entertainment options. We read, we walked, we talked. My husband sometimes went bird watching in the field near our apartment. I wrote long letters. We napped. Sometimes we prayed together leisurely. We simply slowed down. We rested in God's love and experienced his grace.

Our Sabbaths in Israel became God's gift to us individually, and enriched our life as a couple. Through Sabbath-keeping, we experienced the truth that God's love for us isn't based on what we *do*. We yearned to keep growing in our ability to receive that unconditional love once we returned to the U.S.

Back in the States, our family decided to continue observing the Sabbath on Sundays. Our first son had been born in Israel, and our second son was born soon after we returned home. As a young family, we read to our children, took long walks, and went to the zoo and the park after church.

As the years passed and our children grew up, our Sabbaths changed. But two things stayed constant: a slower pace and no work.

Slow Down

Never did a culture need the Sabbath as ours does today. It pressures us to be productive 24/7. Everything we do has to look good and accomplish something. Nothing encourages us to stop. But the word "Sabbath" literally means stop, pause, cease, desist.





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One young woman recently told me, "I'd like our family to observe the Sabbath. I've been reading books about it, talking with my husband and kids, and we're going to start soon."

"Great," I replied. "Tell me about what you plan to do and not do on your Sabbath."

"I love the idea of starting on Saturday at sunset with a festive meal," she explained. "I'd like to have special food, blessings for the children, prayers, and candles, like Jewish people do. Maybe we could sing some songs. Then the next day, after we go to church, I hope we can read some Bible stories and do some crafts to help the kids center the day around God."

"What do you plan to *stop* doing on the Sabbath?" I asked.

She looked at me blankly. Slowing down hadn't figured into her Sabbath observance. She was focused solely on adding new activities.

As women, we can easily bring our culture's values into our attempts to observe a Sabbath. We so easily forget the core meaning of the Sabbath—stopping and resting—that we end up turning our observance of it into one more thing to achieve.

We certainly want to experience God's presence on the Sabbath, but we need to experiment with unforced ways to do it. "Simple" is a great word to describe the ideal activities for the Sabbath. As soon as we're working too hard to achieve anything on the Sabbath, we've violated the central idea of the day.





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One Jewish tradition bans intercessory prayer on the Sabbath because it's viewed as too much work. In that tradition, appropriate Sabbath prayers are prayers of thankfulness. On the Sabbath, I spend time focusing on the beauty of the world God made and the good gifts he's given me in the previous week. I try to rest in thankfulness. While I don't try to be "hyper-spiritual" all day long, I've discovered a little thought discipline goes a long way towards giving me a day that's restful and rejuvenating.

Take the Day Off

In the Ten Commandments, the Israelites are commanded to keep the Sabbath day holy, or separate, from the other weekdays. The marker of that holiness is the absence of work. But the Old Testament doesn't give many specifics about what constitutes work. One of the few clear commands forbids lighting a fire (Exodus 35:3). This mandate assured that daughters, wives, and female servants wouldn't be expected to cook. All the food had to be cooked before the Sabbath began, and the dishes washed afterwards. The Sabbath granted rest to everyone, even the women who labored the other six days of the week.

In our time, what's the equivalent of "lighting a fire"? What are those actions that send us into work mode?

When we first returned to the U.S. years ago, I was a part-time student and stay-at-home mom. For me, work consisted of studying, housework, and shopping. For my husband, work involved anything from his paid job as well as house repairs and lawn mowing. We simply didn't do any of those tasks on Sundays.





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Today, turning on my computer, balancing the checkbook, weeding my garden, and cooking put me into work mode. I know some people find gardening and cooking relaxing; those women have a different list of work activities to avoid on the Sabbath.

One woman who works at a desk job finds her best Sabbath activities involve vigorous exercise outdoors. For many people, being outside on the Sabbath—walking, riding bikes, flying kites, sitting on a park bench—helps them feel closer to God. Sabbath time outside can be a time of reflection and prayer alone, a time of relaxed conversation with a friend, or an exuberant playtime with family members or friends.

Many women also benefit from some silent time on their Sabbath day. One single woman who works in a people-intensive job spends her Sabbath afternoon entirely alone. Then she often meets up with friends at the end of the day for a special meal.

One mom with young children prepares a "Sabbath box" of special activities for her children. During one hour on Sunday afternoon, her children know they're expected to play alone, enjoying the delights in the Sabbath box while their parents get some silent time.

Some of the "work" from which we need a rest is mental. A woman I know tries to avoid worry on the Sabbath. She considers herself a worrier and feels overwhelmed at the thought of trying not to worry every day. One day a week, however, feels manageable. A day free—or at least mostly free—from worry has been a great gift to her.





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Similarly, as a person who's disliked my body for as long as I can remember, I attempt to keep my Sabbaths free from obsessing about the way I look. On the Sabbath, I don't try on clothes, and I don't read novels with slim, beautiful heroines. When I find myself thinking negative thoughts about myself, I try to set them aside for the day.

My husband and I have received many gifts from our commitment to honor the Sabbath: a day to spend with our children—and each other—without needing to get something done. A day free of multitasking. A day free of striving for perfection and productivity. A day to rest in God's goodness. Over the years, these gifts have continued to bless us and grant us glorious freedom in Christ.

Lynne M. Baab is an author who lives in Washington. Her most recent book is Sabbath Keeping: Finding Freedom in the Rhythms of Rest (InterVarsity).

This article first appeared in the September/October 2005 issue of TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN.

Reflect

- *In what ways would you benefit from observing a Sabbath?*
- *What obstacles do you face in taking a Sabbath? How can you overcome these?*
- *What actions send you into work mode? How can you rest from these?*



Too Tired to Pray

If you're in need of energy, try a deeper conversation with God.

By Ben Patterson



One of the most remarkable plants in nature is the *Ibervillea sonorae*. It can exist for seemingly indefinite periods without soil or even water. As Annie Dillard tells the story, one was kept in a display case at the New York Botanical Garden for seven years without soil or water. For seven springs, it sent out little anticipatory shoots looking for water. Finding none, it simply dried up again, hoping for better luck next year.

Now that's what I call perseverance: hanging on, keeping on when it's not easy.



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But perseverance has its limits, even for the *Ibervillea sonorae*. In its eighth year of no water, the rather sadistic scientists at the New York Botanical Gardens had a dead plant on their hands.

Most of us know what it's like to find ourselves past our seventh season, bereft of water, thirsty, and waiting for the eighth spring. No more energy and barely enough hope to send out one more pathetic little shoot. And it happens to us more like seven or eight times a year. Would that we could last like that tough little desert plant.

Sometimes it's simple fatigue that finally takes its toll. Too much work, a lingering illness, or poor diet come singly or in combination, and we find ourselves desperately in need of a good night's sleep, a day off, a walk in the park, or an antibiotic. That's all there is to it. Simple fatigue, simple treatment, and we snap back like a rubber band.

Deeper Meaning

But there may be a deeper meaning to our thirst and fatigue. John Sanford paints a picture of this in his description of an old well that stood outside the front door of a family farmhouse in New Hampshire. The water from the well was remarkably pure and cold. No matter how hot the summer or how severe the drought, the well was always a source of refreshment and joy. The faithful old well was a big part of his memories of summer vacations at the farmhouse.

The years passed, and eventually the farmhouse was modernized. Wiring brought electric lights, and indoor plumbing brought hot and cold running water. The old well was no longer needed, so it was sealed for use in possible future emergencies.





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But one day, years later, Sanford had a hankering for the cold, pure water of his youth. So he unsealed the well and lowered a bucket for a nostalgic taste of the delightful refreshment he remembered. He was shocked to discover that the well that once had survived the severest droughts was bone dry! Perplexed, he began to ask questions of the locals who knew about these kinds of things. He learned that wells of that sort were fed by hundreds of tiny underground rivulets which seep a steady flow of water. As long as the water is drawn out of the well, new water will flow in through the rivulets, keeping them open for more to flow. But when the water stops flowing, the rivulets clog with mud and close up. The well dried up not because it was used too much, but because it wasn't used enough!

Sanford observed that our souls are like that well. If we do not draw on the living water that Jesus promised would well up in us like a spring (John 7:38), our hearts close and dry up, and we find ourselves in our "eighth season." The consequence for not drinking deeply of God is to eventually lose the ability to drink at all. Prayerlessness is its own punishment, both its disease and its cause.

Acedia

So like people dying of thirst in the desert, we stagger exhausted and aimless through our days of work. This weariness comes close to what medieval theologians called the deadly sin of sloth or acedia. Simple fatigue says, "I know I should be doing this, but I just can't seem to generate the energy."

Acedia says, "Why? What difference does it make?"





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"Acedia is all of Friday consumed in getting out the Sunday bulletin," says Richard John Neuhaus in *Freedom for Ministry*. "Acedia is three hours dawdled away on *Time* magazine, which is then guiltily chalked up to 'study.' Acedia is evenings without number obliterated by television, evenings neither of entertainment nor of education, but of narcotized defense against time and duty. Above all, acedia is apathy, the refusal to engage the pathos of other lives and of God's life with them."

A physician friend gave me an article from the *Journal of Internal Medicine* that dealt with the psychological state conducive to illness called the "giving up, given up complex." It is found in people who lose the reasons for living—who are saying of their existence, "Why? What difference does it make?"

Hyperactivity

Curiously, spiritual fatigue can produce what appears to be the opposite of sloth or acedia: hyperactivity. But in reality, it is just another dimension of the same thirst and sense of "why" that saps us of our ability to do the "what" of ministry. "Hyperactivity and sloth are twin sins," says Neuhaus, and rightly so. The only real difference is the anxious, frenetic shape hyperactivity takes. Too tired to pray, or too busy to pray: both are flip sides of the same coin. Either we stagger through our days exhausted and aimless like people dying of thirst in the desert; or like children lost in the woods, the more lost we feel, the faster we run.





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"Driven" is the word that describes the schedules of so many of us who are no longer motivated to do the real work of ministry. Hyperactivity is to authentic motivation as junk food is to a nourishing diet. It gives us the feeling of satisfaction while starving us to death. In the New Testament it is the Ephesian syndrome described in Revelation 2:1-7.

The first love is gone, and now all that is left is the form and the trappings. When we forget "why," we become obsessed with "how." Where once there was creativity and the tenderness born of deep love, there is now only the sex manual.

I crashed emotionally when I was 26 years old. I had dried up inside, and I was lost and running. Let's see if I can remember all I was doing: I was a full-time student, head resident in the men's dorm at a local Christian college—that was full-time, too—and I was working part-time as the area director for Young Life in a nearby city. I was also on retainer as a speaker for a Christian conference center. In addition, my personal life was a contradiction to much of what I was preaching.

I came back to my room at the dorm one evening so tired I went straight to bed at eleven o'clock. That's early for a student living in a resident hall. Immediately, I fell asleep and had a terrible nightmare. In the dream, I was backed into a corner by pale, ghoulish creatures who were plucking and tearing at my flesh, taking large chunks with each lunge. I awoke with a jerk and laid there for a while doing what I always do when I have a nightmare: I tried to talk myself back to reality. But I couldn't, because the dream was reality. I finally had to get up, get dressed, and walk around the dorm for a while just to get over the terror I felt. Only then could I go back to bed and go to sleep.





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When I awoke the next morning, I felt like I had a hangover. (At that time in my life, I knew what a hangover felt like.) But I hadn't drunk anything the night before. To clear my head, I decided to walk over to the college track and go for a run. But when I got there, the gate was locked. I had climbed over the eight-foot fence many times, but this time it was just too much for me. If you would have seen me there that day, you would have seen a young man bawling like a baby. The thought of one more thing to do was overwhelming.

When I stopped crying, I managed to climb over the fence and run for a while. My head a bit clearer, I admitted to myself that I was in big trouble as I walked back to my room.

The well was dry. I hadn't taken a drink of God in only he knew how long. I quit almost everything I was doing, got some help, made some fundamental changes in my outlook, and got on the road to health. One could say that for the next season of my life, I took a pick and shovel and dug down deep to where the water had once flowed. It took a lot of sweat and work and coming to terms with no small amount of regrets, deep pain, and frustration. That's the way it usually is with repentance. But I thank God that I came to the point sooner rather than later; at 26, instead of 46. The stakes can only get higher as we get older and acquire more responsibilities.

Has the well gotten dry since? Never as bad as then. But it still does sometimes, and the way it usually shows itself is with hyperactivity. I know it's happening again when I go off to a quiet place for a day of prayer—and sleep all day, instead of pray. I'm so tired. It's a sign that it's been too long since I truly drank living water. With prayer, it can be





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like the so-called quality time I used to promise my spouse or children. It's a way I excuse myself from doing what I most need, but often least want, to do. As with my loved ones, so with prayer: there is no quality without quantity. No day of prayer can atone for weeks without prayer.

Remember Why

Acedia and hyperactivity are forms of forgetfulness, of losing touch with the "why" and the "who" of our work and calling, of being cut off from the Vine, whose branches we are, and then keeping busy enough or noisy enough or narcotized enough not to have to face up to the fundamental disjointedness of our lives.

There is only one antidote to forgetfulness, and that is remembrance. In Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, the pilgrims were leaving the Delectable Mountains after the shepherds warned them to beware of traversing the Enchanted Ground. The overwhelming desire there would be to fall asleep, never again to awake. And it was just as the shepherds told them it would be: the drowsiness there became nearly unbearable.

Hopeful pleaded for a nap, just one little rest. But Christian made him talk. He asked him the question, "By what means were you led to go on this pilgrimage?" In other words, he asked, "Why are you on this journey? Why are you doing this?" By telling the story, and thus remembering why he was on the pilgrimage, Hopeful kept talking and kept walking.

It is remembrance that keeps us awake; it is significant that the supreme act of Christian worship, the Lord's Supper, draws us into fellowship with Christ by calling us to remember his mercy and love for us. It is a love feast spread out upon a redeemed and quickened memory. To





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pray is also to remember. It is to look into the face of the One who came to our side and saved us when we were lost and then called us into his service. It is to nourish the tender first love that Christ so passionately wants us to remember (Rev. 2:5). To pray is to connect again with the love that compelled us to declare the Good News to the world. To pray is to remember why we do what we do.

The trouble is, the more we need to remember why, the less we feel like remembering why. The more we need to pray, the less we want to. Not to pray is to lose the desire to pray, for prayerlessness is its own punishment. But pray we must. We cannot sit and wait for the desire to pray to suddenly come upon us like the tongues of fire at Pentecost. *Just do it.* The choices we make when we are not motivated are the most critical of our Christian walk. C. S. Lewis touched on this when he had the devil Screwtape advise his nephew Wormwood that God sometimes overwhelms us with a sense of his presence early in our Christian experience, but that he never allows that to happen for too long. His goal is to get us to stand on our own two legs, "to carry out from the will alone duties which have lost all relish." Screwtape observes that during such "tough periods, much more than during the peak periods," we are growing into the creature God wants us to be.

I cannot stress this too strongly: *Just do it.* You remember by remembering. You learn to pray like you learned to swim—not by talking about it but by getting in the water and splashing around. You relearn prayer the same way. Prayer is a discipline before it is a joy, and remains a discipline even after it becomes a joy. A friend, a champion wrestler, keeps a poster on the wall of his basement where he works out with weights. It shows a man straining to lift a weight, sweat fairly bursting from a grimacing face, veins bulging





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on his neck. The caption reads: "There are two kinds of pain: the pain of discipline, and the pain of regret."

How like life—and the life of prayer. To be alive is to hurt. The choice is not whether to hurt, but how. That you can choose. You can choose the discomfort of the discipline of praying when you don't feel like it, or the desolation and terminal fatigue of life without prayer.

Remember Who

There's only one thing better than remembering why you're serving Christ; it's remembering who he is. It is he who says to the weary and worn out, to the too-poped-to-pray, "Come to me,... and I will give you rest ... and you will find rest for your souls" (Matt. 11:28-29). He knows how hard it is to do the work of the kingdom. He understands our exhaustion. He sympathizes with us even in our prayerlessness. Just to be with him is enough. There is no other one, no other place to go. "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

Luke has a marvelous line in his account of Peter and John's appearance before the Sanhedrin. He says the rulers, elders, and teachers of the law who sat in that august chamber were astonished at the courage of these unschooled and ordinary men. The greatest thing we have to offer our people is not our education. It is not our good ideas. It isn't even our gifts and abilities. It is the fruit of the time we have spent with the Savior, the utterly unique and unparalleled thing that happens to us when we are simply in his presence.

The word *career* gives itself away. It comes from the Old French *carrière*, meaning a road or a highway. The picture is of a course on which one sets out, roadmap in hand, goal





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in sight, stops marked along the way for food, lodging, and fuel. Looking back, we can speak of one's career as the road one took in life. But more often we speak of it looking forward, as the path one chooses and plans to travel professionally, an itinerary charted and scheduled. The destination is primary. The roads are well marked. The rest is up to the traveler.

Organ of Faith

A call, on the other hand, has no maps, no itinerary to follow, because a call depends on hearing a Voice. The organ of faith is the ear, not the eye; we walk by faith, not by sight. First and last, a call is something one listens for. Everything depends on the relationship of the listener to the One who calls.

It's like the tale of a father and a son on a journey to a distant city. There were no maps. The trip would be long and hard, fraught with danger. Only the wisdom and experience of the father would get them safely to their destination. Along the way, the boy grew curious about his surroundings. What was on the other side of the forest? What would he see if he stood on that distant ridge? Could he run over there and look? His father said yes.

But the boy was a little nervous. "What if I wander too far from you, Father? What if I get lost?"

The father said, "Every few minutes I will call your name and wait for your answer. Listen for my voice, my son. When you can no longer hear me, you will know you've gone too far."

Everything depends on the relationship of the listener to the One who calls. God called Abraham to go to a land that "I will show you" (Gen. 12:1). Why didn't God just tell Abraham where he wanted him to go, give him what he needed to get there, and be done with it, then and there? Why this "I will





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show you" business? It's so frustrating! But God knows us too well. He knows that if we had the plan and the place, we'd try to get there without him. And we need God far more than we need the plan and the place. Though severe, it's a mercy when he lets us grow weary and dry up inside. For then we come back to him. Just ask Abraham.

*Adapted from **The Pastor's Soul Volume 7: Deepening Your Conversation With God**, a LEADERSHIP Book, 1998.*

Reflect

- *Which do you struggle with more: acedia or hyperactivity? In what ways is this reflected in how you handle work? According to the author, how can you deal with these struggles?*
- *The author writes, "Acedia and hyperactivity are forms of forgetfulness, of losing touch with the 'why' and the 'who' of our work and calling, of being cut off from the Vine, whose branches we are, and then keeping busy enough or noisy enough or narcotized enough not to have to face up to the fundamental disjointedness of our lives." How have you seen this to be true in your life? Be specific.*
- *How does your work reflect your call? When was the last time you heard God's voice, reinforcing the direction you are going in? How can you begin listening for his voice?*



No Place Like Home



Why a powerful Washington, D.C., woman gave up the limelight and moved home to Texas.

By Corrie Cutrer

As George W. Bush's communications director during his tenure as the governor of Texas and then as counselor to the President when he went to Washington, Karen Hughes became an expert at tackling complicated issues.

But on a recent Sunday morning at her church in Austin, Texas, Karen—who some newspapers described as "the most powerful woman ever to serve in the White House"—found herself stumped. And the question came from a two-year-old.

"Where is Jesus?" the little girl asked Karen, who now teaches Sunday school to toddlers as part of the new life she's shaped for herself since leaving her high-profile job in Washington, D.C., two years ago.



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"She wanted to see him," Karen says with a laugh, "because she'd heard he was at church."

Despite her focused, "always on message" persona, Karen says she loves working with children. Yet for the first 18 months of President Bush's administration, she barely had time to attend church, much less teach a Sunday school class. Karen, 47, helped the President write major speeches, shaped and communicated his policy initiatives, co-authored his autobiography, and traveled with him to meet with international leaders.

But even though working in Washington, D.C., was the dream of a lifetime, Karen soon found herself torn between her job's never-ending demands and her desire to live a balanced life. She wanted to teach Sunday school, join a women's Bible study, and most importantly, spend time with her family—husband, Jerry; grown stepdaughter, Leigh; granddaughter, Lauren; and her now 17-year-old son, Robert. It was Robert's misery as a teenager in D.C. that led Karen to step away from her prestigious position and move her family back to Texas.

TCW spoke with Karen about her experiences at the White House, her decision to leave Washington, D.C., and the role her faith has played in her positions as political advisor and mother.

Did your faith play a role in your decision to leave Washington?

It was hard for me to discern whether it was right for me to leave because I'd prayed about the decision to go to Washington in the first place and felt I did the right thing. But my professional life in Washington didn't leave time for much else. So I asked myself, *Where is my utmost responsibility?* Around that time, my pastor in Washington





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was speaking about finding freedom from the traps of worry, including worry about your job. His messages helped me decide that a life in which I don't have time to fulfill my responsibilities as a mom or grow as a Christian isn't a life God intends for me.

How have things been with your son, Robert, since you moved home?

He immediately blended back into high school life here. He's done very well in school. He's playing baseball. He's got a great group of friends. Also, I've had a lot more time to spend with him. I was able to teach him how to drive. In Washington, I felt I was losing my connection with him. And it's so important for parents to maintain that connection, particularly as our children become teenagers.

Any advice for other working moms wanting to strike a healthy balance between home and job?

Flexibility is key. In Washington, I had a job that demanded my presence from early in the morning to late at night. In previous jobs, even though I worked long hours, I had more flexibility. For example, I'd write a speech after Robert had gone to bed. But the Washington job didn't allow for that kind of flexibility.

I learned that sometimes there are jobs you just can't do during a specific season in life. For me, working at the White House at that point in my son's life was something I couldn't do. I don't think that means you have to choose either family or a career. You just have to be willing to examine the big picture at different points in your career.





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What's life been like for you since you left the White House?

I still talk to my former colleagues and the President. I've traveled to Washington once or twice each month, and I look over major speeches and periodically participate in different things. I also do speaking engagements, which is now how I earn my living. But when I travel, my rule is to have the minimum time away from home as possible.

I've also visited Afghanistan twice. As I worked on the President's speeches and on our communications strategy in the aftermath of September 11th, I realized Afghanistan had seen the worst of what the terror network intends: the kind of control, tyranny, and intimidation these radical fundamentalists believe in. I've developed a passion for the women and girls of that country, and have been involved with my church and community in Austin to raise funds for a school we're building in the northern part of Afghanistan, where people from several tribes want to educate their children but have no facility.

Did you ever feel as though your faith and your job were at odds?

Frequently. At the White House, you feel like you have to work all the time. So every time you do something else—whether it's going to church or deciding it's important to spend an evening with your family—you're always making a choice that takes away from your work.

But I think my faith in Christ gave me the strength and peace I needed to step away from my job. If my life had been about gaining power or position, I wouldn't have been able to leave it once I achieved it. But my worth isn't based on a title or a career; we're all equal in God's eyes, and we're uniquely created and loved by him.





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While in D.C., did you face a challenging situation in which you had to rely heavily on your faith?

It was very hard to go to the White House on September 11, 2001. I was at home in D.C. that morning, and I knew I had to get to work. But from all the reports I saw on television, Washington was under siege. It was one of those moments when I had to trust God would be with me. That didn't mean God was necessarily going to protect me from terrorists or from death, but it meant relying on his promise that he wouldn't put anything before me I couldn't handle with his help.

I think faith was also a great comfort and strength to the nation during that time. I helped organize the prayer service at the National Cathedral in the days following September 11th, and I think it helped calm, inspire, and remind our country that there is a God—and we can rely on him in times of fear and turmoil.

Karen Hughes is author of Ten Minutes from Normal (Viking), an autobiography about her journey to the White House and her decision to move home. Corrie Cutrer, a TCW regular contributor, lives with her family in Illinois.

This article first appeared in the November/December 2004 of TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN.





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Reflect

- *Karen commented that "a life in which I don't have time to fulfill my responsibilities as a mom or grow as a Christian isn't a life God intends for me." Explain why you would agree or disagree. Do you fulfill your responsibilities in the roles God has placed you, and are you able to grow as a Christian? Why or why not?*
- *How can you have both family and career? How can you be intentional about examining your life at different seasons to be sure you are not compromising things that you value for a job?*
- *What would it take for you to have strength and peace to step away from a job?*



Running Yourself Ragged?



Here are five good reasons to get your schedule under control.

By Jeanne Zornes

It was "errands morning," and for several hours, I raced through the tasks listed in my organizer. Finding myself near the fast-food district, I decided to splurge on a drive-through lunch. After all, I had a coupon.

Sneaking through the back of several adjacent parking lots, I pulled up to an order monitor and said coolly, "One regular roast beef on a 99-cent coupon, please."

As I dug in my organizer for that elusive coupon, I heard the monitor reply, "Ma'am, do you know where you are?"



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"Right in my car," I said, "ordering a roast beef."

"Ma'am," the voice continued, "we don't do roast beef. This is Kentucky Fried Chicken."

As I looked around, I realized I'd overshot Arby's by two businesses. I meekly waved good-bye to the chicken people as I slinked past the pickup window.

Sometimes God sends a reminder that I'm trying to go too far, too fast. My good intentions end up bungled, and I fulfill the old saying, "The hurrier I go, the behinder I get."

It took a few crimson-faced incidents such as the roast beef blunder to teach me what God really meant by Proverbs 19:2: "It is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way."

"There are days, of course, when rushing around is simply unavoidable," writes time management expert Sybil Stanton, author of *The 25-Hour Woman*. "But that," cautions Stanton, "should be the exception, not a way of life."

Try planning each day with attainable goals to cut down on senseless running. If you typically find yourself on a schedule that "keeps going and going" like a battery bunny, consider these reasons for applying some brakes to your runaway lifestyle.

For Renewal

When a friend moved his elderly mother out of her home, he offered to sell it to my husband and me. But the house came with 20 years of accumulation and neglect. After several months of cleanup, yard work, and painting, we were exhausted. Just after Christmas, a nagging pain in my back started shooting down my leg so intensely that





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even getting out of a car became unbearable. When the doctor diagnosed "sciatica" and advised bed rest, I balked. I had too much to do!

For several weeks, I limped through each morning's get-the-family-ready rush, then retreated to the couch with my heating pad. I stacked a TV tray with paperwork, but soon my arms ached from trying to write or study while lying down. Eventually I dozed off. At first I resented having to make time in my schedule to "recover," but as the pain subsided, I realized God knew how much I needed time off.

For Relationships

At night, my "motor" tends to run out of fuel. By the time I've washed the dinner dishes, I feel like the dishrag I drape over the faucet. But it's also when my family most needs my time and attention. When my son is frustrated to tears over seventh-grade pre-algebra, or my daughter worries about labeling and coloring a map of South America, or my husband can't find a slip of paper with an important phone number—guess who rallies?

Many times I'm tempted to tell my children (as my dad told me), "Get your nightie on, and don't forget your prayers." But in our house, bedtime is a "sacred" process that includes Mom reading to the kids. The habit I started with toddlers and picture books continues with twelve- and fourteen-year-olds and the classics or missionary biographies. Work has to wait as I sit in the hall between their rooms, reading as they tidy up and put on pajamas. Afterward, I kneel by each child's bed for small talk and prayers.





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The bedtime routine takes nearly an hour—an hour I could spend warming up a recliner or hitting another project—but it's the golden time of the day to build those relationships that will last a lifetime.

For Responsiveness

I have no dramatic stories of missing a flight on an airplane that later crashed. But sometimes I've come across an accident that happened minutes before—often the same amount of time as an unexpected delay in my schedule. As I pass the wreckage and pray for the victims and emergency professionals, I also thank God for sparing me from being part of the scene. The delay reminds me of Jeremiah 29:11: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'"

But I've also learned that God sometimes interrupts my hurrying so I can be part of his plans for other people. One morning the telephone rang repeatedly before I embarked on several hours of errands. When I finally made it to the bank, my first stop, I picked the drive-up line that moved the slowest. Then all the way downtown, I hit one red light after another.

"Why me?" I whined as the traffic slowed for an accident. Threading my way around the scene, I realized I knew the elderly lady just crawling out of her damaged vehicle. It was the 84-year-old widow to whom we'd become a second family. When I pulled over and ran to hug her, I noticed how much she was trembling. I helped her respond to police, then took her home in her still drivable car. When she seemed calm enough, I called a friend to take me back to my own car.





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My to-do list was still on the passenger seat, and the morning was gone with only one item checked off. But the most important though unexpected task got done.

For Reflection

"Be still, and know that I am God," says Psalm 46:10. The problem with people who always hurry is that they think "being still" is a waste of time. Yet I've found that sometimes doing absolutely nothing is a better way to exalt God than grinding out some job or ministry.

One hot, muggy Sunday afternoon, I suggested to my kids that we drive into the nearby foothills for a hike around a small lake. When my son asked his best friend, Kyle, to come along, Kyle's mother, Nicki, also joined us.

As we panted our way through switchbacks and rock slides and crawled over fallen trees, we moms occasionally sent the kids ahead to let our 40-plus bodies recover. I savored "being still" and watching large-leaf plants quiver in the feeble wind while treetops hissed overhead. Nicki paused at a flower-speckled meadow and mused, "How can anybody deny the Creator God when they see this?"

When we got home, the Sunday paper was still strewn around the living room. Dirty dishes cluttered the sink. The kids had added challenging stains to their jeans. My to-do list for the next day was filling up. But for once, I'd swapped my hurry-up habit with a peaceful afternoon—and come away physically and spiritually refreshed.

For Repentance

Sometimes God allows me to experience the consequences of my hurry-up personality to recognize my need for grace. We have baseboard electric heaters that leave a gray haze on the walls above them. One morning, eager to paint the





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offending wall in our bedroom, I decided to shake the can rather than pry it open and stir it. However, the last person to use the paint hadn't hammered the lid on tightly enough. "Ivory Linen" spewed all over the dark brown rug by my side of the bed. Despite frantic scrubbing, I lived with the reminders of my haste for several years until we could afford new carpet.

Another time, a neighbor wanted to borrow our lawn mower. No problem—but it needed gas, and my husband had several unmarked cans in his shed. One, I knew, contained an oil-and-gas mixture for his snow blower, but he wasn't around to tell me which. Determined not to wait, I made a quick guess and poured. The mower wouldn't start—and never would—on kerosene.

The humiliation of having to confess my misdeeds to my husband was bad enough. But I know these incidents are simply reflections of a hurry-up personality that chafes at delay and won't trust God to do all things in his good time.

I'm all for personal efficiency. My organizer helps keep me on task to do what's needed. But I'm learning I can't jot my to-do lists on lines that are too narrow. I need to allow breathing room so that my schedule's not mine, but God's. That way, when he catches me in the midst of life's busyness and asks, "Do you know where you are?" I'll have some valid answers.

Now, if I can just find that coupon for a chicken bucket ...

Jeanne Zornes is a widely published writer and speaker from Washington. Her latest book is When I Prayed for Patience... God Let Me Have It! (Shaw).





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*This article first appeared in the March/April 1997 TODAY'S
CHRISTIAN WOMAN.*

Reflect

- *Do you typically find yourself on a schedule that "keeps going and going"? How could you plan each day with attainable goals to cut down on senseless running?*
- *Which of the author's reasons for getting a grip on your schedule appeals to you the most and why? Which do you need the most: renewal, relationships, responsiveness, repentance, or reflection?*
- *How has a "hurry-up personality that chafes at delay and won't trust God to do all things in his good time" hurt you or others? How can you start to change that mentality?*



Additional Resources



When There's Not Enough of Me to Go Around by Ellen Banks Elwell and Joan Bartel Stough (InterVarsity Press, 2002; \$9.99). Here are life lessons from two women who have lived through career change, parenting crises, illness, spiritual drought, and over-commitment. Their candid insights will help you balance your whole life. Going far beyond time management techniques, this book shows you how to discover God's purpose for you and equips you to spend your time and energy on the things that really matter.

The Christ-Centered Woman: Finding Balance in a World of Extremes by Kimberly Dunnam Reisman (Upper Room, 2000; \$9.55). In this insightful guide, Kimberly Dunnam Reisman confronts the daily chaos of competing demands from a new perspective. *The Christ-Centered Woman* identifies barriers to balanced living and reveals how being centered in the Savior can help us contemplate, sort, and prioritize our callings.



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Additional Resources

We're Running Late: Teachable Moments for Working Mothers by Kass P. Dotterweich (Liguori Books, 1996; \$7.99). Kass Dotterweich identifies the hectic moments so familiar to working mothers and then suggests ways to teach or reinforce values for your children. It will strengthen your relationships with your children, along with providing inspiration and encouragement for yourself.

Balance at the Speed of Life, Bible Study Workbook by Barb Folkerts (Hensley Publishing, 2004; \$12.99). Does your life seem like a three-ring circus? Are you juggling so many responsibilities that you feel like an elephant precariously balanced on a beach ball? For many Christian women today, managing the demands of marriage, family, career, and church responsibilities can be overwhelming. It is easy to get so caught up in a hectic schedule and a daily routine that you forget what is truly important—your relationship with God and with the people he has placed in your life.

Prayer: Too Busy Not to Pray, 10th Anniversary Edition by Bill Hybels (InterVarsity Press, 1998; \$11.99). Most of us have trouble finding time to pray. Time for prayer seems an impossible luxury. As a pastor, Bill Hybels knows hundreds of people with schedules like this. Yet in his own life, he has made the hard discovery that prayer doesn't happen on the run. Hybels' accessible introduction to prayer has already helped many Christians develop a rich and regular prayer life in the midst of life's busyness. Now, in this revised and expanded 10th anniversary edition, he includes new insights from his years of ministry and his own spiritual journey.





Are You Working Too Much?

Additional Resources

Notes to a Working Woman by Luci Swindoll (Thomas Nelson, 2004; \$9.99). An accomplished businesswoman for over 30 years, Luci Swindoll offers practical approaches to help working women learn how to be the best at what they do while finding fulfillment in their occupations. In addition, Swindoll gives in-depth insight through conversations on work and life with extraordinary women such as Anne Lamott and CeCe Winans.

Living Above Worry and Stress: Women of Faith Bible Studies (Thomas Nelson, 2003; \$5.99). Take a little time to explore your Bible, and find some practical guidelines for laying aside fears, worries, and even stress. You really can discover a place for peace. Twelve weeks of Bible study search the Scripture for God's answers. Down-to-earth illustrations give you chances to relate and laugh. A trinket will remind you of each week's message, and there are dozens of thoughtful insights from Marilyn Meberg, Luci Swindoll, Barbara Johnson, Shelia Walsh, Thelma Wells, Patsy Clairmont, and Nicole Johnson. A leader's guide is included.

Working Families: Navigating the Demands and Delights of Marriage, Parenting, and Career by Joy Jordan-Lake (Random House, 2007; \$11.99). Who hasn't heard a lot about juggling, balancing, and surviving? Drawing upon her background as a college professor, writer, mom, and wife, Jordan-Lake helps couples and families navigate life together for joy and purpose. She believes you can sail through the oceans of demands with confidence because you can change the world—not in spite of your children, but because of them.





Are You Working Too Much?

Additional Resources

Wanting All the Right Things: Finding a Spiritual, Balanced, and Fulfilled Life by Shirin Taber (Relevant Books, 2006; \$10.99). Today's female professionals, wives, and mothers often find themselves influenced by conflicting, powerful ideals about who a woman is and who she should be. In *Wanting All the Right Things*, Shirin Taber weaves together biblical principles, personal experiences, and revealing research to provide solutions to the complex issues women face today.



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