

Series: G-R-O-W-I-**N**-G in Christ
Message Title: **NO**—Developing Margins
Date: Sunday, May 28, 2017
Scripture: Luke 10:29-42 | Ephesians 5:15-16
Speaker: David H. McKinley
Location: Warren Baptist Church, Augusta, GA

Introduction

For many people, these are days of extreme busyness, stress and activity: Masters® Week, finishing school, walking through graduation, visiting with family, planning for vacation, etc. All this and more can create tensions with your time and energy.

I hear conversations filled these words: busy, pressed, stressed, exhausted, overwhelmed, anxious, over-scheduled, isolated, frustrated, dissatisfied. Dare I ask for a show of hands?

“Busy” has become the visible badge for validation of self-worth in our day. The busier we are, the more important we are? The funny thing is that our answer to this is “more”—more time, money, energy, sleep, help, pain relief, etc.

“The conditions of modern-day living devour margin. If you are homeless, we send you to a

shelter. If you are penniless, we offer you food stamps. If you are breathless, we connect you to oxygen. But if you are marginless, we give you one more thing to do!" —Dr. Richard A. Swenson

In a world when we think we need *more*, we desperately need to discover *margins*.

"What is margin? Margin is the space left over between our load and our limits. It is the amount allowed beyond what is needed. It is something held in reserve for contingencies and unanticipated situations. It is the gap between rest and exhaustion, the space between breathing freely and suffocating... Margin is the opposite of overload."

—Dr. Richard A. Swenson

If your bills total \$1,500 a month and you make \$2,000 a month, you have the potential of a \$500 financial margin. But if are spending \$2,500 per month, you go deeper into debt. Right? The same is true for mental, moral, emotional, spiritual margins, etc.

Most of us have very little margin of error in the major portions of our lives. Marginless

living is highly depletive & destructive.

“Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to His teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to Him and said, ‘Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.’ But the Lord answered her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her’” (Luke 10:38-42 ESV).

Notice the tension, presumption and question. Martha asked the wrong question: “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?” (Luke 10:40b ESV).

Martha assumed the worst about Jesus and her sister. But the real problem was not with them; it was with Martha! Her stress, preoccupation and distraction caused her to lash out at Jesus and Mary.

Is it amazing what attitudes of self-absorption and distracted living do to our relationships.

“Our relationships are being starved to death by velocity. No one has the time to listen, let alone love.” —Dr. Richard Swenson

What was the answer to the question? Did Jesus care? Why did He go to house? The issue in this moment was not what needed to be done, but what needed to be undone!

Martha needed to redirect her energies and reestablish her margins.



Distractions That Reduce Our Time and Increase Our Stress

“And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to His teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to Him and said, ‘Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me’” (Luke 10:39-40 ESV).

Distraction is one of the biggest causes of injury, irresponsibility and lack of intimacy. Mary was with Jesus—listening; Martha was near Jesus—seething, complaining, stressing.

“Your greatest danger is letting the urgent things crowd out the important... an insidious tendency to neglect important tasks that do not have to be done today—or even this week.” —Charles E. Hummel, *Tyranny of the Urgent*

The urgent is the distraction of the important. Our greatest distraction? Cell phones! They fuel a life without margins. No mental margin—work. No emotional margin from crisis. No relational margin—others. No moral margin. No spiritual margin—for God!

What needs to be left undone in your life? Rather than me offer distracting suggestions, what’s distracting you? What causes your lack of availability to God and others?

Note the parable before our text—Luke 10:29-37. As we read this passage, we might assume the worst in the art of neighboring. But maybe their heart was in the right

place (desire), but their calendar was not (distracted). They could have been so busy, they could not stop!

“When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest” (Leviticus 19:9 ESV)

Love your neighbor + leave margins!

“If Satan cannot make us really bad, he’ll work to make us really busy.”

Pew Research: One-in-ten religious “nones” say they were raised with a religious affiliation, but are now classified as “inactive” religiously. These people may hold certain religious beliefs, but they are not currently taking part in religious practices... and most of them simply say they don’t go to church or engage in other religious rituals, while others say they are too busy for religion.

Sadly, we keep moving ahead, often believing lies about ourselves, our lives and our futures:

1. Things will settle down someday
2. More will be enough
3. Everybody lives like this

There is only one way to bring change and increase margin. Make some critical, difficult but necessary decisions.

Decisions That Reduce Your Stress and Increase Your Margins

“Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:42 ESV).

Mary chose the important over the urgent. She realized how precious, valuable and needed it was to spend time with Jesus.

“There are far more activities and opportunities in the world than we have the time to invest in, and although many of them may be good, or even very good, the fact is that most are trivial and few are vital.”

—Greg McKeown, *Essentialism*

Like Martha—with good intentions and even good efforts—we end up saying yes to all the wrong things in life.

“Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, **making the best use of the time**, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:15-16 ESV).

The King James Version says, “redeeming the time”. (Gk. Ex-agora) “to purchase out”. This is a marketplace term—just as Christ redeemed us from sin (Galatians 3:13; 4:5—paying price to buy out of bad).

“*kairos*” = *time*, but not just time in seconds and minutes, but a point in time, the right time. This is similar to harvest time when you either seize the moment or you waste the opportunity—a point in time, the right time, but taking this opportunity in the face of hostile territory and conflicting values—“days of evil”.

This means living for something that matters in days when life, opportunity and so much more are being squandered and wasted. We can’t just “go with the flow” of culture, but we must “choose wisely”. Mary chose best!

In the big picture, what I am saying is this: a simple “No” is the secret to your “Best Yes”.

If you fail to say “No”:

- Other people’s priorities will take precedent over yours
- Mere acquaintances—people you barely know—will crowd out time with your family and friends
- You will not have needed time for rest and recovery
- You will be stressed and frustrated
- You will not be able to say “Yes” to the really important things.

—Michael Hyatt

“No” creates margins in your life. It allows you to intentionally redirect energy and attention to the people, purposes and things that matter most.

I’m not going to tell you these are easy or convenient decisions, but every decision in life leads to a destination.

“Your calendar is more than merely the organizer for what needs to get done; it’s the primary tool for helping you become who you want to become.” —Bill Hybels

In 2015, I spoke at Men's Forum on the subject, *Simply Fi*. In 1883, Col. Charles McCawley, 8th Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corp—adopted and designated the Latin phrase, *Semper Fidelis*. What does it mean? Always Faithful (even to death). Many of us fail in duty, devotion and faithfulness because we have allowed “busyness to feed something unhealthy and to fuel something unholy in each of our lives.”

If you are living with congestion and need some clarity, the following are questions to provoke action:

- What needs to be left undone in my life?
- Do I confuse motion with progress?
- Am I planning activities without margins?
- Do I schedule work tasks only, or do I schedule “life time” also?
- Who do I want to become?
- Can you identify your greatest goal or role with a single word?

How many of you have heard the name, John Grisham? What one words identifies his life? Author/Writer.

My wife went to high school with John Grisham (glad he never spotted her!). He went to law school, became a lawyer and hated it. He was hired, billed by the hour, etc. But inwardly, he was not a lawyer; he was something else.

He began writing one word in the morning hours on his calendar—"Write". He made the commitment to go to the office one hour early and write one page per day. The rest is history—one of America's greatest writers. "Write!"

For Mary, the word was "listen". She wanted to follow Christ, not just serve Christ. "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10a ESV).

You? Follow? Forsake? Invest? Serve? Give? Go? Come?

"Margin" is not a spiritual necessity, but availability to God. Without margins, you will fail to grow and mature in your faith and faithfulness to God.