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Crazy Busy? Overwhelmed? Six Good Reads to Help You Rethink Your Calendar

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Crazy Busy? Overwhelmed? Six Good Reads to Help You Rethink Your Calendar

Abstract

"Reading a book can be a restful way to recharge - while also helping you to rethink and reshape your daily walk."

Posting about recommended books from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

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Comments

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Leah Zuidema

It's that time of the year: the time for family gatherings, work parties, school concerts, church celebrations, and all the preparation that goes along with each event. For many people, it's also the season when our calendars demand a reckoning. As our obligations snowball and we plow through the season, we realize that we're overcommitted and overextended. Again.

If you find yourself wishing for the holidays to be “over” because you are overwhelmed by all of the places to go and things to do, now may be a good time to start rethinking your calendar. What commitments (throughout the year) might be worth reconsidering? Should you revise your ideas about time and what is worthwhile? What does it mean to rest well? How can you be a good steward of the time God gives to you, while also [giving the gift of rest](#) to others?

Reading a book can be a restful way to recharge – while also helping you to rethink and reshape your daily walk. For that reason, you may want to read (or listen to) one of the books below. These are a few titles that rose to the top of my list while I was preparing to teach a discipleship course on what it means to be “good busy.” These books influenced my habits and attitudes related to time, and I hope you'll find at least one that interests and helps you, too.

[Crazy Busy: A \(Mercifully\) Short Book about a \(Really\) Big Problem](#) : Pastor Kevin De Young gets right to the heart of the issue with a biblical look at the problems that lure us into “crazy busy” living. After I read a chapter or two with my students, several of them bought the book because they wanted to keep reading. (Need I say how remarkable a book must be for cash-strapped, chronically busy students to buy and read it on their own?!) De Young pointedly calls out the sins at the root of our time troubles; I found the chapters on pride and aversion to suffering especially compelling. Yet this book is full of truth and grace: the author constantly points us to Jesus as the great healer, closing with a hope-filled final chapter on the heart-work that needs to occur in order to change our lives.

[Spiritual Rhythm: Being With Jesus Every Season of Your Soul](#): Mark Buchanan's honesty and thoughtfulness about soul seasons makes it worthwhile to keep this book on hand to reread or consult again as life changes. Spiritual seasons don't have to match up with the calendar: circumstances can make life feel like a bleak midwinter even during the sunny days of summer, and vice versa. Buchanan uses the metaphor of tending a garden to call our attention to how God is at work in us in every spiritual season, and to prompt us to think about how we can best focus during each of these stretches of time.

[Good Busy: Productivity, Procrastination, and the Endless Pursuit of Balance](#): Julia Scatliff O'Grady's short collection of 10 different perspectives on time is a departure from the typical time-management advice book. Instead of offering a system to adopt, the author presents 10 brief portraits of individuals who have unique ways of thinking about time. My students were especially interested in the first chapter, “Buffer: Keep a Margin,” because of the way that allowing extra time between appointments can allow for unharried conversations and relationship building. The author's perspective is not necessarily Christian, but I appreciated the chapter “Geological: Take the Long View,” which helped me to reflect on God's eternal care and long-term plans.

Overwhelmed: How to Work, Love, and Play When No One Has the Time : If you enjoy books that explore current sociological questions, you might like this one by Brigid Schulte. The opening section presents the problem of “time confetti” – the feeling that we are being pulled in all directions, constantly multi-tasking or worrying about things other than what we are currently doing. Schulte, a staff writer for the *Washington Post*, then takes a journalistic approach to investigate how and why such problems have emerged in contemporary work, home life, and leisure. In each section (work, love, play), she profiles “bright spots” that illustrate how people have creatively rethought their habits and attitudes in order to also change their relationships and sense of time.

How We Got to Now: Six Innovations that Made the Modern World : Those who enjoy history and science will find Steven Johnson’s book well worth the time. I like to listen to audio books while I’m in motion (running, doing housework, or walking the dog), so that’s how I experienced this one, but it is also available in print with illustrations and as a 6-part PBS television series. In the chapter on time, Johnson takes readers on a tour that includes pendulum clocks, railroad timetables, and time zones. The author reminds us that human interactions with time are shaped differently across places and cultures in history – with far-reaching consequences that we rarely stop to consider.

Mudhouse Sabbath: An Invitation to a Life of Spiritual Discipline : Though it was published in 2003, this little book by Lauren Winner is one that still feels fresh. In the introduction, Winner shares that when she converted from Judaism to Christianity, she missed “the rhythms and routines that drew the sacred down into the everyday.” She offers 11 short chapters on spiritual discipline, while emphasizing that observing spiritual discipline “does not make us Christians.” Instead, “the practicing teaches us what it means to live as Christians.” Her chapters on sabbath, mourning, and fasting are especially apt for helping us to think about [time, rest, and properly ordered activity](#).

I hope this list helps you to find a refreshing read. I’ve got a few more books on this topic on my shelf, and I’m about to start reading another – either [Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting](#) (by Marva Dawn) or [Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now](#) (by Walter Brueggemann). I’ve heard good things about each of them. If you have additional titles to recommend, please share in the comments. Happy reading!