

## Busier than a One-Armed Paper Hanger...

“I’m busier than a one-armed paper-hanger.” That’s what my friend Bud likes to say when asked, “How are you?” Others paint a less dramatic picture, but their words convey a similar message: “I don’t have enough time”, “I wish there were more hours in the week” or simply “Life is SO busy.”



In a work-crazed society such utterances can actually be deemed admirable and worthy of emulation.

I beg to differ and am more inclined to agree with contemporary theologian Rob Bell, who said: “Being busy is a drug many people are addicted to.”

It’s the soul-opiate of choice for millions of North Americans who chase the “high” of hectic living. Like any drug, it makes us feel good, dulling the reality of a less-than-ideal world, if only for a short while. It lures us in with a promise of purpose -- after all, if I’m busy, I must be important. And if I’m important I must be of value. But eventually, what started out sounding so right and tasting so good becomes our slave-master. And we, who were designed for the purposes of God, settle for minuscule living and sell our soul for one more sip of the self-esteem boosting adrenalin rush of busyness.

Mr. Bell clarifies the problem with a story about a family stroll on the beach: His son wandered, seeking shells and soon his little fists were full of broken pieces. The young treasure seeker eventually spied the ultimate prize resting in shallow water nearby -- a starfish in perfect condition. Splashing in a short way, he then retreated just before reaching the starfish and emerged with a confused look on his face. The bizarre behavior was repeated several times before his dad asked him why he didn’t just grab the starfish. With quivering voice he whispered, “But my hands are full of pieces.”

The lad provides a poignant example of the way countless individuals approach their Earth-adventure. A flawed definition of success leads to a relentless search for more pieces to seize and hold. The pieces in themselves are not evil (most of them), but they can keep us from experiencing the best. And it’s this *best* that our souls long for.

Another dance lesson for the kids will never replace quality family time while eating together or playing a game. Watching the latest flick that flirts with spirituality can’t compare to personally opening a Bible or attending a church gathering.

Reading a romance novel just doesn't hold up to strolling with your beloved, holding hands on a moonlit night.

Is there anything wrong with a dance lesson, movie or novel? No. But beware of the human propensity to overlook the best in favor of the pieces. Repeatedly doing so leads to impoverishment of the soul and franticness in life that is nothing less than exhausting.

Evaluate carefully the number of activities we immerse ourselves in. Choose with precision focus that which we will prioritize. Lastly, enjoy the deep-seated contentment and joy that such decisions usher in.

It's a formula that works for all -- even one-armed paper-hangers.

