

Getting Back To God's Design for the Godly Home

And...the writing is not the only area that changes. *A writer MUST stay abreast of the writing business.* To be a writer is to be IN BUSINESS. Even the sporadic writer must have keen business sense or they will never make it—either someone will take advantage of them or they will never be taken seriously in the business (aka—get jobs!). The writer of our day must learn marketing, publishing, selling, editing. No one can do these things for you. In fact, many writers fail because they wait for someone else to fund their work (publish their work) or promote their work. No one else can promote YOU like YOU can! No one else is going to take that time to take care of you—well, unless you paid them a lot of money to do so on a constant basis! You can do this yourself. Even if you had a “publisher” that you were working for, they are going to want YOU to do this in your sphere. One of the “selling” factors of a writer is whether that writer will “sell” books for the publisher. They want to know that the writer has bookings to promote the books, a market for selling their books, and the ability to get the books that are published into the hands of the buyers. In short, they want to invest money that is a “sure-thing” when they print books. **YOU CAN DO THIS YOURSELF!** Learn the business! Commit to do it! Stay abreast of all of the changes. Your blessings will be immeasurable!

Finally, learn the technology! Technology constantly changes. A writer who wants to succeed needs to be in the mode of learning “the next thing” on a continual basis. It really pays off to learn web design and computer skills. Today there is so much opportunity available for the professional writer just because of desktop publishing. Each DAY I am amazed at the things that you can do to take your writing to the next level. The biggest hindrance is getting comfortable in what you do. A writer that wants to do all that God has called them to do, needs to be constantly learning the new things that are out there within their reach! ☺

So...Want to Be a Writer???

These are just a few of the disciplines of writers, but some that really make a difference. Want to write? Develop those disciplines of a writer! You will find success!



The Godly Keeper of The Home...



"The Lord will guide you always; He will satisfy your needs
in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame.
You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose
waters never fail."
Isaiah 58:11

Quick Tips For the Perpetually Late, Disorganized, Stressed Out Mom!

By Cindy Rushton



Does this SPEAK to you? Nothing is more frustrating than great intentions but failure with the time management, organization, and gentle spirit thing! So, what can REALLY help? Need a bit of hope? Practical ideas? Well, beloved, here are a few tips that have made a world of difference for me:

- ♥ **Be sure to slow down and have a quiet time EACH DAY!** Take time for God to fill YOUR cup each day. Let Him give you HIS peace, order, and best of all, schedule! Take time to hear HIS plans for your day. Throughout the day, listen to His gentle direction. Be sure that you are willing to let go of the things that God wants to prune away. Without this, all else is only a band-aid!
- ♥ **Invest in a Planner!** I am the world's worst at trying to do it all while trying desperately to remember those incredible details that are doomed to slip my brain! I decided to take a long, honest look at the things that were creating chaos. Most often, the biggest culprit was overcommitment or an underestimate of time involved with commitments. Writing down ALL commitments, along with an honest look at the time commitment involved (even going and coming OR planning the details around that commitment!), has made an indescribable impact on my life! Not to mention, another breeder of chaos in my life was constantly looking for information that needed to be in a dependable place like phone numbers, ordering information, etc. Keeping ONE binder with my information included eliminates the chaos, but it does even more! It gives my brain a rest!
- ♥ **Evaluate to find the BEST that God has designed for YOU to do!** Sure, there are many "little things" that must be done to manage our homes, but if you are really struggling with balance, discipline yourself to write down everything that you are doing for a little while. Pray over the importance of each and every thing. Time is so very precious. God gives us everything that we need to do all that He has designed for us to do, but He will not anoint those things that will choke out His best for our lives. So, really pray through...think through...weigh out everything. Listen

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to God for HIS goals for you. Prune those things that are not in line with His goals for you. *Get rid of any time wasters. Prioritize every activity, every day! Combine activities that can be done together to make the most of time. Delegate those things that others can do to help you be a good steward of your time. Then, make the most of your time doing the very best things that God has designed for you to do!*

- ♥ **Write IT down!** *Yep! Give your brain a break! This may seem to compound your problem, but trust me this will help more than you know! It is NOT another thing to do! Rather, once things are written down, the work is done FOR you! For example, keeping a calendar of events in your planner will help to alleviate conflicts in your schedule. Blocking off plenty of time for each entry will help you to give yourself enough margin left over for LIFE! I may live less than five miles from downtown, but if there is an appointment there, I KNOW to give myself 30 minutes to get there! Also, I cannot tell you how much my lists from years ago are beginning to really help me! I have lists for school lessons, shopping, traveling, producing the magazines, speaking, etc. I may have to add to my generic list, but I cannot tell you how many times my lists have helped me to be sure that NOTHING was left out or forgotten. Plus, now the planning process is simplified. I just pull out my list, go over the list, add anything that is missing, and get busy! Several of my lists are typed into my computer, ready to print. Talk about EASY planning! Find ways that you can simplify what you are doing—writing it down will probably be one of your first steps too!*
- ♥ **Keep your STUFF ready to use!** *Whether your planner or your purse or even your Bible/journal for church, get things together and in their special spot, ready to go. I have a tote that includes all of the things that I need for Church. I keep it together, ready to go. Our school books stay in a milk crate (one for each child), ready to use at the table or to grab for our trips with the business. Everything that we need is ready at all times. My planner stays at my chair, ready to grab to leave the house. So on. Decide on what you need for planning, church, homeschooling, or your business. Get everything together. Find its very best spot for it to be easy to use, but not in the way or forgotten. You will be surprised at how much stress this will alleviate!*
- ♥ **Put limits on your day!** *For years, I battled the different aspects of my day that tend to become monsters! Funny thing, I have never seen my family life ever become one of those monsters. My sweetheart and my children are so much more patient than my nasty kitchen! Memories will always wait for schoolwork to be completed. Laughter will always let the business monster rant and rage! The best (but most difficult) lesson of my life to date was that if I wanted the legacy that God*

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had planned for me, then I had to diligently guard the different aspects of life. I had to consciously purpose to make memories and build relationships with those I love much, much more than a clean house or thriving business or successful homeschool. A whole day can zoom by just on the internet with the business...or working through our lessons...or even re-organizing a closet. Plus, those things wear me down till I am completely zapped! Oh, and then, I am not the nicest person on earth! (ouch—confessions hurt!) While these things are precious and wonderful in their boundaries, I have to CONSTANTLY place limits to insure that we have a balanced life that makes the most of each day AND builds a legacy.

Restoring Balance To Completely Overloaded Lives!

By Cindy Rushton



Ever had an "unbalanced tire?" Recently, I had a tire that was driving me crazy! It made the ride horribly rough. I was wore-out just from trying to drive to town because it kept pulling me off the road—obviously in the wrong direction! Just a simple trip to town was completely stressful. My hands were blistered from trying to hold on to the steering wheel the whole way to town and back! I was certain that my car was about to blow up...that something was permanently wrong! Imagine my relief to find that my problem was from one tire that was out of balance! Easy to fix. The smooth ride only took a few moments to restore.

Ever had an "unbalanced life?" Well, the similarities are unbelievable! Talk about a rough ride! Talk about a pull in the wrong direction! Talk about stress! Sure it is easy to fix—but, oh so hard to do!

We are overloaded! Every area of our lives suffers from overload: commitments... possessions... work... information...relationships!

We are a culture that can be characterized as overloaded! We are busy. Hurried. Overworked. Stressed. Rushed. We exceed our limits. We take on WAY TOO MUCH! As my pastor says, "We write checks that our body and mind cannot cash!" Our productivity suffers. Our bodies suffer! Our vital relationships suffer. We no longer can hear God as He whispers direction, encouragement, and wisdom along our path. We miss the best! We wonder why we end our days empty and without meaning or accomplishment.

We forget what is most important—or at minimum, put it off for another day. The important seldom screams for attention, but the urgent, often insignificant, constantly screams for MORE and more! We get so busy and distracted doing the urgent and demanding in life that we lose the opportunity to impact the important, that in which we are given to leave a legacy!

So, how on earth do we get out of this rat race? How are we to restore balance? If we could restore balance, how could we maintain balance? How could we make life really count for something? Here are some things that the Lord has been teaching me this year as He has pulled me back from so many GOOD things to restore balance and keep me on the path to leaving a legacy!

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SLOW DOWN!

Does that one hurt or what? We are so fast paced! We live on the "fast track!" Think of the rat race we live in: one-hour print...ten-minute oil changes...instant cameras...instant potatoes...instant MICROWAVE meals! Our homes have dishwashers, slow-cookers (don't be fooled by the name—turn them on as you run out the door for work and have a healthy meal ready to serve at the end of the day!), microwaves, and computers! Oh, and the computer thing! Yep, I am on my computer now (at our local coffee shop—yep, priorities are nice at times!) enjoying the benefits of my blessed computer complete with its battery, cd-writer, and all of the other MUSTS that I am so spoiled with! BUT! For heavens' sake...think of how spoiled we REALLY are! The computer age has taken over sweet little country stores! We have the Internet (which has faced the demand to have MORE instant connections—remember all of those ads this summer?), E-mail (to instantly communicate!), E-books (to instantly receive our products so we don't have to wait for the dreaded postal service to deliver!!), E-zines, Auto-responders (didn't REALLY think those were REAL people there all hours of the day and night??!!), Auto-processing of orders/credit cards, and don't forget Instant Messenger—for those who find Email to be too slow! We have "Drive-Thrus" for EVERYTHING—food, cleaners, pharmacies, oil changes, and even (PLEASE GASP WITH ME!) funeral homes! Well...that is where I drew the line! Drive-thru funeral homes! Where are we as a culture? On the fast track!

What do we do? Why not Sllllloooooowwwww DDDDoooooowwwnnnnn??? I am not advocating that we STOP using technology. Rather, we should use those tools to make life easier and to make the most of our time. HOWEVER, where it really matters—relationships, home, family, homeschooling, our witness, life...where it REALLY matters, we must slow down! Restoring balance and eliminating overload is simply not possible without slowing down!

Ephesians 5: 15-16 says, ***"Look carefully then how you walk! Live purposefully and worthily and accurately, not as the unwise and witless, but as the wise (sensible, intelligent people), Making the very most of the time [buying up each opportunity], because the days are evil."*** What does this look like? Well, let's go back to Genesis 33 for a look at the life of Jacob after he completely surrendered his entire life to the Lord. ***"My lord knoweth that the children are tender, and the flocks and herds with young are with me: and if men should overdrive them one day, all the flock will die. Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant: and I WILL LEAD ON SOFTLY, according as the cattle that goeth before me and the children BE ABLE TO ENDURE, until I come unto my lord at Seir."*** Want to slow down, but how? Where do we begin? What can really make a significant difference? Try these:

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- ♥ **Decide what is MOST important!** Think over life for a little while! What is it that only YOU can do in this life? Why did God create YOU? What is your life purpose? What is it that God created YOU to do? What can go? Just as our house cannot be cleaned without getting rid of the clutter—otherwise all we are doing is shuffling the clutter around—likewise, we must take an occasional inventory to de-clutter our life! I find this to be a battle JUST as many of you probably do and trust me, this is a life principle that I really stick to! Long ago, God impressed upon my heart that if I were going to be able to truly fulfill my calling that He had for my life, I would HAVE to only do the things that *ONLY I* could do—if it were something that anyone else on earth could do, it would have to go! Still, I will go through periods of my life and begin to get overloaded again only to find when I evaluate the value of all that I do, there are things that sneak into my schedule that vie for my focus and energy! Usually that requires that I take out those really tough pruning shears again to cut back—either by delegating the tasks to someone else so I can be more productive at what ONLY I can do—or even more difficult, get rid of what is overloading me! I know that this is hard, but it is SO key! Take a deep look now at what you are doing. Is it really eternal? Is it the “main thing?” Is it essential? Can anyone else do it? Is it hindering you from the very best? Decide what is most important. You won't be sorry!

- ♥ **Examine Your Lifestyle!** Take a little while to jot down a journal of what makes up your day? Your week? Your month? Your year? REALLY BE HONEST! Do those things count? What are the days filled with: things that are really important...or lots of fires to put out? Take a bit longer to write out what you would REALLY like to be accomplishing. What do you think that a “perfect day,” if it were possible, would look like? How can you change your day to really slow it down so your life really counts?

- ♥ **Examine Your Motives!** Motives will fool us in a heartbeat! Scripture is so very true as it warns us to beware of our heart. We simply cannot trust our hearts. They will lead us astray every time! What really motivates us? What drives us? If we can determine this, we can evaluate activities and obligations much more effectively! So, what drives you? Ambition? Your life call? The desire to be in control? Don't trust others to do things? Passion? Guilt? Ego? Insecurity (Can't say “no?” Afraid that you have no value unless you are “seen” busy?) Constantly trying to please others? Revenge? Money? Oh, I could go on and on...motives are so very deceptive and there are so many. What is your motive? What drives you to do all you

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do?

Busyness does not mean that we are accomplishing. Nor does busyness guarantee fulfillment. Often, busyness is the very thing that keeps us from the very things that will bring us satisfaction, fulfillment, and contentment. Busyness, given the chance, will keep us from fulfilling our life purpose!

It is all up to us! We can choose which way to go! Enjoy the journey or wait to enjoy the brief delight of the destination? A wasted, bitter, defeated life or a life full of purpose and meaning? Burn out or real accomplishment? Deep, passionate relationships or very real regrets?

Why not slow down? Relax? Enjoy the whole journey—the process getting there AND the destination! Build deep relationships! Stick to those priorities! Simplify life so you reach for the very best! Seize each moment!

Redeem The Time!

Time! Friend or foe? Have enough time in your day? Or are you a truly kindred spirit, asking God for just a few good 80-hour days and the energy to use them to the fullest? Ha! I have a good feeling that if your prayer is for that one, that you will also find that God will whisper sweetly in your ear to say that the problem is not that we do not have enough time...or that we are using time to the fullest...or even that we waste time. Rather, He would say that we need to make it our ambition to redeem the time—each and every moment we are given!

A few months back, my pastor taught a series of messages entitled *From Burnout to Balance*. In his series, he challenged us to look at time as a great big "bank account." He said that this account is one that we are guaranteed to have daily deposits made on our behalf by God each and every day. We each get our fair share. No one gets more. No one gets less.

Think of this awesome gift! Each and every day we are given a gift that can impact all of eternity—or be squandered away into oblivion. Each day we are given this gift without any regard to our stewardship from the day before! TWENTY-FOUR HOURS! ONE-THOUSAND, FOUR HUNDRED, FORTY MINUTES! EIGHTY-SIX THOUSAND, FOUR HUNDRED SECONDS! Deposited in our "account" each and every day!

And...with this gift, we are free to use it in any way we choose. We can waste it or use it wisely. We can make a difference---or misuse it! But! One thing is guaranteed each day with all that is deposited on our behalf—it must be used up before the end of the day...it cannot be carried into tomorrow!

We all have 24 hours put into our spending account each and every day. What we do with that time is in our hands! Will we be faithful? Will we use it wisely? Will we make it count for eternity? Will we use our gift to the fullest? Will we use our gift

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for what really counts?

If we want to live a life of balance, we must guard this precious gift! We must measure our time as one of our greatest resources we have to invest in this life! This requires that we go back to our precious Giver and seek HIM for how we can most faithfully invest each moment! We must let Him be the Lord of our schedule, our to-do's, our calendar. We must commit our way---ALL OF OUR WAY—to Him from our work to our studies that we pursue to our commitments to our books that we read to the activities that we participate.

We must be careful to set a guard on our time to be sure that we do not flippantly do without thinking or take on too much that we forfeit the best! We need to purpose to really do those things that are "NEEDFUL" (remember Luke 10: 38-42?) and not just the "stuff" that we think MUST be done! We need to constantly evaluate our choices and weigh them to see if they are truly those things that help us to reach our life call.

Time...what do you think? Redeem this precious gift so our lives can be balanced? You bet!

Sell Out COMPLETELY To God's Will!

Does this scare you to death? Are you seeing visions of little grass huts...no electricity...bugs...complete with the stench of underarm odor?

Oh, beloved! My first image of total surrender to God admittedly envisioned life on a continent that was far, far away from all of the comforts of home. Still have no idea if there is a continent that could be as disgusting as my visions were. Sure, I trusted God for eternity, but never thought of heaven in the same way that I thought of my life on earth totally surrendered to Him!

Now, as we move into our 11th year as a ministry (and Harold finishes up his 1st year FULL-TIME with us!), I HAVE to tell you that God has a very, very good plan for us! He does not call us, equip us, and then send us to an assignment that forfeits our trust and confidence in Him! In fact, one thing that I am thrilled to say is that although there IS work in our calling, there is delight and fulfillment that cannot be found in anything else under the sun! Seeing His provision is unbelievable. Watching His anointing fall is indescribable! Plus! No grass huts so far!

Give your ALL to God! Sell out! Don't hold anything in reserve! Abandon ALL for the call!

Scared? Just give Him a try! Take a look at Jeremiah 29 in *The Message Bible*. God says to us, "I know what I'm doing, I have it all planned out—plans to take care of you, not abandon you, plans to give you the future you hope for. When you call on me, when you come and pray to me, I'll listen. When you come looking for me, you'll find me. Yes, when you get serious about finding me and

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want it more than anything else, I'll make sure you won't be disappointed." Oh, beloved, not only will you never, ever be disappointed, but you will find that His GOOD plan will be truly good--satisfactory for you, satisfying, fulfilling, completely sufficient!

Wonder JUST WHAT could YOU do? Too young? Too old? Too poor? Not qualified—or so you think? Well, beloved! Know that God has called each and everyone of us to function in His Body. We are the mouthpieces here on earth for Him. We are the feet for Him. We are the hands here in our community for Him! He has called and equipped each and every one of us to be a part of His Body here on earth! We each have talents, spiritual gifts, natural bents and interests, and experiences that can minister to those that are growing in the Body AND those that need to join the Body of Christ! God needs ALL of us working and functioning properly if His Kingdom—His way of doing things—will come to earth! He needs for us to be that light that shines in the darkness to bring others to Him. Just go into a dark, dark room... Light one candle... See what a difference YOU can make right where you are!

Have no idea what His plan is for you? Take a look at Romans 12: 1-2. He promises in verse two that YOU can know His good, perfect, and acceptable will for you! Yes, YOU can know that plan! How? Going back through this passage, we see how:

- ♥ **Become a living sacrifice—EVERYDAY!** Completely yielded. Completely dedicated. Completely committed to Him and His Way! Giving Him our ALL! *All* that we are: our plans...gifts...bents...talents... ambitions... ideas... methods... techniques... fears... delights...concerns... *all* presented to God as a living sacrifice EVERY SINGLE DAY! If we truly desire to *know* the good, acceptable, perfect will of God for *ourselves* or *our children*, we must first obediently present ourselves as a complete, living sacrifice. There may be things in our lives (things that are very precious and difficult to get rid of) that must be burnt up as a sacrifice for us to be prepared to receive God's very best OR we may find that what we bring to sacrifice before the Lord is acceptable in His sight and can return home with us (like Abraham as he willingly prepared to sacrifice his beloved Isaac). However, the key is not in what God does with our sacrifice, it is in our heart coming before Him daily, presenting ourselves and all that we have before His throne!

- ♥ **Don't not conform to the world; but conform to Christ!!** Yep! We either conform to the world or to Christ! We cannot live for one without forsaking the other! Want to know God's plan? Let go of the world's standards, the world's ways, the world's requirements, the world's traditions, and the world's bondage. Let go of the lies of the world! We must stop serving the world at the expense of becoming ALL that God wants for us to become! If we want to live

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an abundant life—a balanced life—the world's way will never work! Only God's way brings balance, freedom, and true, abundant LIFE that we are really searching for! As we grow in relationship with Christ, daily become LIKE HIM, we find security and LIFE! We find peace! We find hope! We find the direction that we have been looking for all along the way! We find freedom to become ALL that God designed for us to become! Talk about LIFE! We move beyond balance to abundant life!

- ♥ **Be transformed by the daily renewal of your mind!** The last key to getting to know God's plan! However, this one is SO VITAL! If we truly want to live a balanced, abundant life, we must sell out to God's will. BUT, however much we want to sell out, unless we truly let Him change our life, we will just spin our wheels in the same ruts, never becoming all that God wants for us to become! How is our mind transformed? Life changed? This life transformation begins as we sit at the feet of Jesus. As we daily immerse ourselves in His Word, we will begin to be transformed. Then, we will soon have different priorities... different beliefs... different ambitions... and soon, we will be able to prove what is good, acceptable, and perfectly in the will of God. If we never experience this transformation, we will always find ourselves burdened under a yoke of bondage. We will always find ourselves looking in all the wrong places for direction, approval, meaning, purpose, and rest! We will constantly battle overload. We will find life bumpy and pulling us into life's "ditches!"

God has a precious plan EVEN for you! Surrender ALL to Him! Let Him have it all! Let Him do His work in you! Don't rush! Don't drag around! Don't run from it! Live EACH day letting Him have your ALL in complete abandonment! Balance will come—but, beloved there is so much more that will rush into your life! Purpose, meaning, abundant life! Go for it!

Build Margin—Breathing Room—Into Your Life!

Ever been at rock bottom? We see many of our favorite Bible characters that we get to know during good times, but I think my favorites are those that we get to see when they are rock bottom, with NO breathing room, at the point that my mother would have said, "I've HAD IT!" Ever just "HAD-IT?"

Imagine for yourself the grief and utter pain that Job was experiencing as he cried out in Job 3:26, "**I have NO peace, NO rest, NO quiet!**"

Drop into the conversation with Paul as he declared that he got to his "breaking point" in 2 Corinthians 1: 8-9, "**For we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about the affliction and oppressing distress which befell us in the province of**

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Asia, how we were so utterly and unbearably weighed down and crushed that we despaired even of life itself. Indeed, we felt within ourselves that we had received the very sentence of death, but that was to keep us from trusting in and depending on ourselves instead of on God Who raises the dead."

Finally, journey back to 1 Samuel as we are first introduced to Hannah at the point of utter desperation—you probably know a bit about her story. Barren. Broken. Taunted (by her husband's other WIFE!! Who had NO problem bearing children!). Empty. Crushed in soul. Oh, let's join her at the point that she had "HAD IT!"... "Crushed in soul, Hannah prayed to God and cried and cried—inconsolably. Then, she made a vow: Oh, God-of-the-Angel-Armies, If you'll take a good, hard look at my pain, if you'll quit neglecting me and go into action for me by giving me a son, I'll give him completely, unreservedly to you. I'll set him apart for a life of holy discipline..." As she was praying, she sunk even lower as she was completely misunderstood by the priest, who thought she was DRUNK! We hear more of her heart in her reply to him... "Oh no, sir—please! I'm a woman hard used. I haven't been drinking. Not a drop of wine or beer. The only thing I've been pouring out is my heart, pouring it out to God. Don't for a minute think I'm a bad woman. It's because I'm so desperately unhappy and in such pain that I've stayed here so long!"

Relate? I know that these precious vessels were crying out in the midst of trials and life events that were too much. However, I don't think that we find ourselves at the point of desperation without first pushing limits for quite some time! We haven't got margin to deal with the daily-ness of life—much less those life struggles, crisis situations, losses, and persecutions that inevitably knock most of us off our "rocker" into despair!

Think about it...if you are the average person in our society today, you live on fast-food, crazy hours, no sleep. You are chronically rushed (or late), overworked, exhausted, overloaded! What is the solution? Build MARGIN! Build some BREATHING ROOM! Simplify life so there is room for change...space for disruptions. How? Here are some suggestions that I am trying to implement in my own life:

- ♥ **Accept HUMAN Limitations!** Can you sense how HARD that is for ME to type? Oh, here it where it gets harder, it is not MY idea, it is the Word of God too: **"I have seen that EVERYTHING HUMAN has its limits and end no matter how extensive, noble, and excellent."** (Psalm 119: 96a) OUCH! If there is a battle for balance (and YOU KNOW there is!), this is one of the biggies! We ALL have limits! But, where we need more margin is that we don't say "NO" when we face limitations! As I shared above, we "write checks our body and mind cannot cash!" The world says, "You can have it ALL!" "You can do it all!" Even the church gives the illusion that "I

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can do ALL THINGS through Jesus Christ." However, the Bible is very clear that we can ONLY DO those things that are HIS THINGS—HIS WILL! WE have limits! We have space limits. We have body limits. We have emotional limits. Jesus does not give us a blank check to do ALL THINGS. Much less, Jesus WILL NOT empower us to do ALL THINGS. He only empowers us to do those things that HE CALLS us to do. He never gives us anything that is beyond our abilities and resources to do. One clear way to judge what we are called to do from those things that we are not called to do is to look at our limitations: our red lights, shut downs, overloads, crashes. We need to look at those warning signs: pain, fatigue, stress, irritability, frustrations. Our human limitations are God's boundaries in our lives that help us to know that we are overextended and writing checks our bodies and minds cannot cash. Respecting human limitations will restore balance to even the most overloaded life!

- ♥ **Expect Interruptions!** Proverbs 22:3 says, "**A prudent man sees trouble coming and ducks—a simpleton walks in blindly and is clobbered!**" If there is one thing in life that is FOR SURE, we can be sure that life seldom goes as planned. Life cannot be predicted. Just think about it...what truly messes up your schedule? Traffic? Car trouble? Delays? Crisis situations? Special needs along the way? We must plan for interruptions or our lives will constantly be out of balance, our schedules will never work, and much of life will be squandered! Expect interruptions and plan room for them into every day!
- ♥ **Put SPACE Into Your Schedule!** Ever had your PDA/Planner/Calendar/Briefcase complain about an overstuffed schedule? Actually my planner looks so much more "professional" when it is PACKED OUT! Only I don't handle it so well! For the last few years, I have really evaluated what I was doing that was causing me to get off my schedule and not get around to all of my to-do's. Now, granted, some days it is ME or my darling little ones! But, overall, 95% of my schedule woes are also the culprit behind life getting just way too busy—OVER-SCHEDULING! Schedules, like daily life, only work when there is SPACE in each day! Just like we see with the life of Christ (see Matthew 5-10), our life is filled with distractions, interruptions, crisis situations. We can battle against these OR we can add margin (space) into our lives that gives us room to use these as THE MAIN THING—opportunities for ministry, opportunities for the very best lessons, teachable moments, hands-on discipleship! Not only are we able to step up to the call as it beckons us, but we are less likely to spin out of balance

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constantly!

- ♥ **Prune Life To Yield MORE Fruit!** Several years ago, one of my dearest friends bought her DREAM land. Every time that I go to visit her, our family laughs because just driving up her driveway I begin to see a view that rivals that of the gorgeous view on *The Sound of Music*, thus tempting me to begin to sing—" *The HILLS ARE ALIVE...with the sound of music...*" The land is gorgeous. But it is more than that. It is also productive! However, at first it wasn't. Rhea bought the land, complete with an orchard. Sound ready to go? Well, not exactly! Needing a bit of help with her fruit trees, she called in a professional. To her shock, she looked outside to find her precious orchard looking like a bunch of sticks in the dirt. Pruning began to have a whole new meaning! What looked like devastation actually was the key to those best fruit ever! Bigger fruit! Sweeter fruit! MORE fruit! I remember the year that Rhea was getting her first fruits after the pruning. It was a year that I needed that practical example of pruning just so I would have the nerve to let God loose with His pruning shears! I can't say it was easy! It was probably one of the most challenging times in my entire life. I had lived my life pretty much just without much thought. However, God was wanting for me to yield up EVERYTHING so He could prune back all that was diseased...all that was broken...all that was zapping my strength...all that was causing double-vision...all that was keeping me from bearing the fruit He had planned from the foundation of the earth. 1 Corinthians 6: 12a says, "**Everything is permissible (allowable and lawful) for me; but not all things are helpful (good for me to do, expedient and profitable when considered with other things).**" There are many GOOD things that God would not have a problem if I were to do them. However, those good things can keep me from producing all of the fruit that I can bear. It becomes a *choice* thing for me. I can choose whether I will allow Him total control of my entire life—even the schedule... commitments... my going... my doing. I am the ONE who can sit down, yield to the shears, and stay ready to bear more and more fruit. Likewise, I can also resist. But...I don't really like that alternative!

At the end? At your limit constantly? "HAD IT?" Take a good look look at life! Check for margin! Not enough? Build margin! Create space! Watch what happens!

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DE-STRESS!

Yep! Gulp! De-stress! This one got you out of whack before too? You are not alone, beloved!

Want to know the #1 complaint in our culture? What about among homeschool moms? The booger behind despair? The reason that most quit? The reason that many never begin? You have got it! The stress! The chaos! The mess! The lack of organization or ability to "keep it together." Want to battle for balance? This little devil will give you quite a challenge!

Yep! If there is a need among the body of Christ, this JUST might be it! But, how? Here are some quick tips for restoring balance when it all gets bumpy from the stresses of life...

- ♥ **Find Your Stressors!** What throws YOU for a loop? What takes you into a "nose-dive?" What "stalls" your flight? What are your biggest stressors? What causes YOUR stress? Identify the REAL culprit—HINT: it is NOT your husband (!!) or your children (!!) or God (!!). Look at your life honestly! What REALLY stresses you out? Holding onto your stress? Carrying a burden you do not have to carry? Anxiousness? Discontent? Strife? Expectations? Willfulness instead of willingness and total surrender and total abandonment? Find YOUR stressors! Know what REALLY "punches" your buttons!
- ♥ **PLAN!** Plan ahead! Well in advance! One saying that always pops into my head when I think of the word plan is, "If we fail to plan, we really plan to fail!" Nothing brings MORE stress than living life without direction, without a plan, always under "crisis" management, making decisions on a moment-by-moment basis. If this is stressing you out, try to plan ahead! Plan out your goals. Plan out your schedule. EVEN the mundane things—plan out those daily routines, even going so far as to write them out! How does this help? Well, decisions are made, saving those precious brain-cells for other uses! Trust me this works WONDERS! So, plan! Plan well! Don't wait until the last minute! Plan...then, you can settle in to go a slow pace!
- ♥ **Write it DOWN!** Give your brain a rest! Talk about stressing out—our brains will stress out if we are keeping all of our to-do's...plans...goals...heartbeats...EVERYTHING on our brain! Write it down! Not only will it help to keep things from slipping between the cracks, but it will also help us to evaluate where we have come from and where we have to go. Plus, the best yet! We will have a sense of accomplishment when we look back!

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- ♥ **Watch that attitude!** There are going to be some life-stresses that quite honestly cannot be changed! However, we need not walk in a life of defeat and stress! Instead, when we recognize life-stresses that cannot change, that is the time to sit right down at the feet of Jesus! Ask Him to show the purpose. At minimum, KNOW that victory is guaranteed! There is no temptation or trial that is original with any of us! Nor is there anything that we are allowed to walk in that is not first filtered through the loving hands of God. He always guarantees VICTORY! So, watch that attitude! When things cannot change, change what can—that perspective...that attitude!!
- ♥ **Delegate!** What is it that makes it so hard for moms to get help? Our children LOVE to be Mommy's helpers! We really steal their blessings when we do not delegate to them. Even toddlers can help fold a load of laundry! Don't try to do it all by yourself! Delegate and you will find some of the stress dissipating!
- ♥ **Get enough rest!** Oh! This one is soooo tough for me! But, let's honestly look at what happens in our families when we get tired: don't get enough sleep>get cranky>don't enjoy life>not too great to be around> others get cranky> irritates you more>get more tired... Why not simply get that rest?? Sleep AND that rest in body, spirit, and soul!
- ♥ **Self-control!** Hummmm... Such a challenge! However, we will find ourselves constantly stressed out until we learn to say "NO" to those activities, commitments, all that stuff! Bit-by-bit, they wear us down. Saying, "NO" eliminates the whole threat of stress from the onset!
- ♥ **Keep it simple!** Don't overload! We already KNOW we cannot do everything, but we have to remember this when choices are there to be made! Always look at anything new, whether an activity or a possession, judging its importance by what you are willing to swap for it. This works for everything—shoes, books, activities, commitments. Keep it simple! You can't do or have everything, so go for the very best!
- ♥ **Give yourself a break!** Don't pick yourself to death NOR let others pick you to death either! It is so easy to focus on the negative, get overwhelmed by the weaknesses and inadequacies, and get frustrated about how far you have to go! Then, PEOPLE sure do not help! Let another person loose in your life with the license to critique you or your situation and you will be ready for the nut-farm! Give yourself a break! See this thing as a process—you

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will not arrive until it is all over but the shoutin' so relax, enjoy life, and give yourself a break!

- ♥ **Find ways to fill your cup!** We are each wired so very different. Certain things stress some of us that do not bother others. Likewise, certain things just fill our cup! STOP! Step back! Shift into low gear -or reverse! Do what it takes to DE-STRESS! Rest! Relax! Rejuvenate! Renew! Refill! Whatever it takes, find those things that fill YOU back up! Oh! The benefits go beyond de-stressing and restoring balance—you finally have living water to pour forth into the lives of others!
- ♥ **Make the most of EVERY minute!** Cherish this time! Make sweet memories! Take time for the most important—the best things! Your husband! Your children! Your family life! Don't let life just slip by! Look at life and decide what you would do if this were your last year...last month...last week...last day? Would you go to the park to enjoy watching them play? Would you cuddle up and read a great book? Would you take off to the beach? Why not make those things YOUR thing? Oh, and probably find that education can be EASY along the way too!

De-stress! Crawl up into the great big comfy arms of our loving Heavenly Father! Let Him hold you during the most turbulent or trivial stresses of life! Let Him restore your spirit! What you are doing is vital! Your enemy wants you stressed out, overloaded, out of balance! He is defeated! When he snarls, throws forth his darts, and lies to you, just snuggle up closer to your Lord! Give Him the struggles! Give Him expectations! Give Him every single burden! You won't be sorry!

Get Back To the Main Thing! Relationships!

Remember Matthew 22: 37-40? Jesus was asked, "What IS the most important thing? The bottom line? The main thing?" I love Jesus' ability to summarize ALL of life in ONE response! He summed up the main thing in three commands: to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and body...to love others as ourselves...and obviously, to love ourselves! Do you see this? The MAIN THING...the BOTTOM LINE..THE most important thing was relationships! However, when we get overloaded, the very first thing that we skimp on is relationships!

Want to restore balance and get rid of all of that overload? Take a deep look at the MAIN THING! Anytime things are out of balance, take a look to see how relationships are doing? Are they being "put off" until the pressures go away? Are they quiet while the rest of the "stuff" screams, demands, and pulls you to pieces?

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Ask God to constantly keep you attuned to relationships in which you are charged with ministry. Ask God to show you ways that you can love and minister to Him. Ask Him to quicken you all along the way with ideas and precious opportunities for ministering to those you are called to minister to—your husband, your children, your parents, your siblings, those that come within your sphere of influence. Cry out to Him to help you guard your time so moments do not slip away leaving a hole in this vital area of life!

So...What Do You Think???

Ready to get out of this rat race? Ready to restore balance? Make life really count? Sit at the feet of Jesus! Snuggle up close! Listen for each beat of His heart! Let Him pull you back from that "stuff." Let Him show you how to let go of those GOOD things and grab onto the very best! Give Him a chance to restore balance and set us on the path to leaving a legacy!



Need more help? Check out our audio by this title! Also! Check out our NEW resources that can help you to restore balance to YOUR life!

Just Too Busy!

By Cindy Rushton

Excerpted from *Time for Tea Magazine*



"Through skillful and godly wisdom is a house (a life, a home, a family) built, and by understanding it is established [on a sound and good foundation], and by knowledge shall its chambers [of every area] be filled with all precious and pleasant riches." Proverbs 24: 3-4

Isn't this our heart? We want to BUILD a godly home...but, oh, uh, we are just SO busy! How do we slow down in a very busy world? How do we save more time so we can truly build into our family? Here are some ideas that I pray will help you in this VERY busy season!

Too Much In A Day...

Yep! This is one of my greatest struggles. I am one of those people who hopelessly plan too much into a life! I want to DO IT ALL! And, the sad thing is that I try to! J This past summer one of my personal studies has been (don't laugh!), "How to Manage My Time." Why? Well, because I want to eliminate any possible hindrance so I can do MORE!! Hehe! I know motives may not necessarily be great here. Actually, they may signal a blaring warning that tells you that this is one area that I *personally* struggle in NOW. True, but I have to share some of what I am finding (and applying) in my study. Who knows? It may help you to tame your schedule so you can busy doing the things that God has called you to do too!

For one thing, it really helps to sit down and really look at your day. What DOES get done in a typical day? I have found that I do get a lot done in a day. I will never be accused of being idle. In fact, I am writing this article while my husband runs errands (see the next section of this article about that!). I really do seize every moment I can. But, at the end of most days, I still have the same complaint, "I need MORE hours in my day!"

We are only allotted 24 hours a day. One prayer request that we can be sure WON'T be answered is the request for 85 hours in a day! Why? Because it would still not be enough for people like me! So, how do we make more hours in our day?

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Make that list of what IS being done in a day. Make another list of what you would REALLY like to see included that you are not getting around to. See if what you are doing and if what you would like to do fits into what God has placed on your heart as your priorities. Make sure that they help you to reach toward the "mark." For me, when we began homeschooling I struggled for a while with distractions and hindrances that are so common in a busy home. After, well, a whole year (I am very slow on some things!) the Lord showed me the value in looking over my typical day to see how I could fit in the things that were most important and those little things that are always going to pop up. I found that there were categories that most everything could fit into: Quiet Times, Chores, Table Time, Family Time, Productive Free Time, Ministry/Business, and Family Read Alouds. Actually this is the basic order for every day. It is possible at home. It is possible on the road. It is possible when we have company. It is possible when things go a bit hay-wire! These are the priorities for the day, but there are still things even with ME that never seem to get done unless they are part of the schedule for the day.

For example, this past summer, my doctor prescribed that I go to the Wellness Center for exercise daily. I had wanted more time to actually get around to exercising. But, it just seemed that if I had another 55 hours in my day that then I could have time to devote to exercise!

Making a List, Checking it Twice (or FIFTEEN TIMES!!)...

I made my list. Then, it was easier to see the holes in my life that were not being filled. Sure, I was accomplishing a lot with my children, our ministry, and even my marriage relationship. But, there were still glaring holes beaming out at me and plaguing me with guilt and condemnation! Yes, I wanted to exercise. I have stacks of wonderful audio tapes that I would love to hear. I want more time to sit back and relax, even if it is occasionally! I wanted more time to make memories with the children. Of course, I also wanted to be more productive. Those are the things that seem to give me the "feeling" that I am not accomplishing as much in my day as I really wanted. Of course, I was accomplishing the "work" in each day. On many days that was ALL that was accomplished. No wonder there was a feeling of frustration! We are geared to do more than just work day-in-day-out. So, what to do?

Look At Your Typical Day...

First, I had to take an honest look at all those things that were included in a typical day. Many were right down the line with the vision God has placed in my heart. Yet, there were still things that God had placed on my heart that were not ever making it into my days. Plus, there were other things that were very questionable. I had to look at every single thing in my day to see if there were things that could be combined so I

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could accomplish more tasks at one time, that delegated to others so I could have more time for things that only I could do, or eliminated because they were really not that essential to what we were about. This has helped tremendously!

Combine Tasks...

It may help you too. See if there can be things that can be combined. For me, exercise and listening to those teaching tapes gets two things done. Neither fit into my schedule before because I felt that exercise was just frivolous (looking at this body OBVIOUSLY shows I was not right!). Listening to my teaching tapes seemed to always not fit in—I had to concentrate when I write or answer email, my family did not really appreciate hearing my tapes, and there was really no time other than that! However, fitting them together is the perfect answer! That 30 minutes a day is life-giving. It makes the other 23 hours and 30 minutes a whole lot better! Another thing that I decided to continue doing, but expand was my morning breakfast with my husband. For the last two years, Harold and I have been getting up earlier than the children to go to breakfast, have a devotion, and pow-wow. We kept this time in our day, but also added planning for our ministry and business (We are making a transition to bring him home from working for the State, but it takes much planning and forethought to be sure we are completely ready for the change.) this helps to actually work in yet another thing that seemed to never have a special time in the schedule. There were many other adjustments and changes. Not too easy, but definitely helpful! Things like cooking in the crockpot overnight so we are at home while it is cooking, but not having to stand over a stove during the day...going through the mail as we walk back from the mailbox and dumping the junk-mail into the trash before we walk in the house (our can is right outside the door!) rather than do a big clean-out during the year... Doing more things at one time really helps to use the time to the fullest!

Delegate! OUCH!

Delegate! Yep! That is another toughie for me! The first time I ever delegated stands out in my mind as a turning point for me. My children were 7 and 4 at the time. We were living in our camper in Selma, AL while Harold was in the State Trooper Academy there. Living in the camper was probably one of my most life-changing experiences because I learned how much of my life at that time was "fluff" and wasted. Living in the camper forced me to only have my most essential belongings with me. (still have not unpacked many of the boxes we had stored away—now 10 years ago!!!) We made more memories than ever. Each day we had plenty of time for me to just mother, keep my home, homeschool, and even play games at the end of the day! Life was simple. Homemaking was easy. I made easy meals. Cleanup of the whole camper was usually 5-10 minutes or at most 25 minutes (big change from my 10-12 hour cleaning days before!) The hardest part was the small space and taking laundry

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OUT to the laundrymat every few days. The good part was that in Selma the laundrymat was AT THE POOL! The children could play and I could enjoy watching over them while I read, did laundry AND tanned! (had the best tan and read more than 6 months than ever in my life!) However, in the midst of this EASIER life there were STILL struggles!

How could it be? Well, I could clean up, but while I was cleaning my children were idle—arguing (yep, these PERFECT children were acting like other children!), messing up the other side of the room (EEK!), and dirtying up their clothes (EVERY DAY!).

One day in particular, a Monday (Could I find a better word to give you a “picture” of this scene?) to be completely accurate, I had so much pressing in that day. I was standing at my 1 ft X 1ft X 4inch deep sink (it still felt like Mt. Everest!) full of dishes. The children were behind me just finishing their breakfast. And, they had the audacity to begin fussing over WHO could watch their movie (and WE homeschool!). The quarreling was getting ON MY NERVES—the really touchy ones! There I was...washing dishes...the laundry was there needing for me to fold it...the toilets needed cleaning...we needed to begin our lessons for the day...my husband was gone for another week at the academy, leaving me with my PERFECT little morons, I mean children, lambs, beloved little ones...and here they were ARGUING! I snapped. I admit it! I simply snapped. I told them, actually screamed at them, to stop arguing and just fold those clothes if they had that much energy. Still washing my dishes...silence permeated the room for several minutes until giggly-giggles took over. I turned around to find that almost ALL of the laundry was folded and they were LIKING IT! Tears filled my eyes. The Lord spoke to my heart. I did not have to do it all myself! MY children COULD help me!

Oh yea! And so can your children! What CAN be delegated? Anything! Everything, well, there are a few things that only YOU can do. Find them and delegate the rest! Oh, it may not immediately be the same standard that **you** do things yourself, but who looks in the dresser anyway? (only sick people, if you ask me!) Plus, think of how valuable it is for children to learn from an early age to pitch in and be a “part” of the family. So, take a look at your list of things that YOU are doing each day. Look at what can be delegated. Then, delegate to your little ones!

Eliminate!!

Finally, go back to your trusty list. What can be eliminated? This is where you may experience anxiety. But, really look at all you do in a day. Are those things really important? Can they be done in another way that can give you more time? Let me take you home with me again. I love to have healthy, homemade meals. But, reality says

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that if I want to save time, this was one of those areas that really could be simplified down so much that much of the time spent in the kitchen on a daily basis could actually be eliminated. Gasping? Well, so did I...at first!

I took an honest look at our meals. We could eliminate so much that I could gain HOURS each week. How? Well, I decided to do more bulk cooking, buy more "ready-made" meals, like Lasagna from Sam's, Baked Chicken (heat and serve) from Sam's, Pizza (yep, and my children LOVE it!), and even Heavenly Ham! Yep, Heavenly Ham (should be getting a percentage here, huh?). What may seem like an extravagance is really a great way to save precious TIME and have great meals whether using the Ham as the meat for a meal or as sandwich meat. One big ham lasts our family for several weeks. In addition to tasting great and saving me time cooking and preparing the ham, we also cut at least an hour of cooking each day for lunch for those two weeks. All I have to do is add vegetables (we have a freezer full of vegetables from the garden that just have to be de-frosted and warmed!) and bread! A typical meal can come together in 15-30 minutes! We can also use food like the Heavenly Ham for lunch. We just make sandwiches and either eat just the sandwich or have a sandwich and homemade soup, that also can be made in a big pot! Easy. Saves time for other more important things in my schedule—like enjoying the family I am feeding!!

Now, you may not feel that cooking can be eliminated in your daily schedule. Each of our families are so very different. This is where only God can help you to decide what can be combined, delegated, eliminated OR done by you each day! Hear HIM and He is guaranteed not to fail you!

Too Much Going...

Hummm...well, here we get a little personal, huh? This is an area that God RESTRICTED for me. It was just not as clear-cut as DO, COMBINE, DELEGATE, OR ELIMINATE. Instead, my "going" has to be a daily time with God. Each instance must be thrown up on that altar for God to classify for us! What about you? What are we to do? Beloved, first slow down! Watch out for too much going! Oh, it may not even be for "bad" stuff! It just keeps us from having what we really want! Think about it... Is this a hindrance for you? Let's get a little more personal. Do you go so much (even for good things) that you sometimes find that you cannot truly enjoy your home? When was the last time you had TIME to leisurely relax and enjoy your home? For me, this is a constant struggle. A daily struggle! There are so many "to-do's" that press in that I get too busy, going too many directions before I even know it!

Testing...

I have had a test for years that I periodically do to evaluate my lifestyle and

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schedule. I ask myself, "Can I spend *one entire week* at home without feeling as though I am not getting to do all I *need* to do?" (Yep, I am wiggling a bit here too!) "Is my home supplied well enough that I can stay home without having to "run" to get more things that I "need" to cook, teach my children, manage my home?" (Gasp! EEK!) "Is a quiet, peaceful homelife impossible because I am too busy going to activities?" (OUCH!) "Are all those activities truly God's will?" (Sniff, sniff!) "Would all those same activities go on just as well without ME?" (Well, uh, how would I know if I am not there?) "What CAN I eliminate to give us more time at home as a family?" (Ok...Ok!) "Does my husband feel that all I am doing is essential? God's will?" (Well, uh...)

It is amazing how much CAN GO! Just last week, Harold and I got a great big laugh when we both shared what had been on our hearts, at the same time! I had noticed that we were losing time with errands on almost a daily basis. Oh, and almost the SAME errands every single day! My reasons were simple, I wanted for to be a good steward of the money, not buying anything that could go to waste. But, as a result, our time was being wasted...gas going and coming was being wasted...I was not as prepared for each day as I could have been...and the atmosphere of our home was interrupted every day with "to-do's."

This is not the only area that gets out of control easy at our home. Our schedule is just as wild! I must manage our outside activities or very quickly we become THEIR servants!

Oh! But This is GOOD!

We travel on a weekly basis throughout the whole year. Because of this, as we decided to travel this much, we had to eliminate many GOOD things from our schedule. Naturally, I am just as much of a "clutter-bug" with our TIME as I am with books, papers, etc.! Loosening my grip on those good things is so, SO hard! Yet, there is no way to truly do exactly what God has called us to do, except to prune! Oh, yea! That hard word!

Cutting back. Slowing down. Getting back to the core. Keeping only what is bearing fruit, so all of the nutrients (energy) can go into bearing MORE fruit! Truly, the person was "right on" who said that if satan can't get us to do WRONG things, then he will keep us busy doing a lot of GOOD things which ultimately hinder us from doing God's VERY BEST. That person must have been JUST like me! What about you?

Too busy "going" to BUILD your home? Slow down. Slow down to enjoy your home. Slow down to make your home special, a fortress.