

Driven to Distraction? The Devil Delights!

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One hundred years ago, women did not have all the labor-saving devices we have today. They had to wash clothes by hand in water they carried then boiled on the stove or in the copper. Dishes were done by hand, clothes were stitched by hand. Everything took so much longer. There were no refrigerators or freezers, so bottling and canning and drying of foods was essential. Yesterday's women worked very hard, and were busy.

Today we have so many things they did not have, things designed to save us time. We have washing machines and dryers, dishwashers and electric stoves, vacuum cleaners and hot water cylinders, bread makers and yogurt machines, computers and printers, sewing machines and knitting machines, electric knives and can openers, fridges and freezers, ready made clothes and disposable diapers....the list goes on and on. All these things are designed to save us time and labour. So then, why are today's women busier than ever?

Everywhere I hear the cry "There's not enough time!" We lament that we are too busy, have too much to do, are snowed under, up to our eyeballs, driven to distraction! So what is the problem?

Is it the fault of the society in which we live? Society seems to expect that women should have careers, dress in the latest fashions, work out at the gym, drive the latest 4 wheel drive, chat with friends over coffee, manage their money, be involved at the school their children attend, take their offspring to all the activities, sports and other events designed for their entertainment and extension, maintain a picture-perfect home, keep their husbands in line (or do without one), be a whiz with a computer, and involved in the community. Hmmm - that's a lot to cope with! But many of us have rejected most of these expectations, and chosen a different, "simpler" lifestyle.

Perhaps it's the "get-back-to-basics" crowd that are to blame? We are told that Christian wives should be stay-at-home Moms. But it doesn't end there - we're given all sorts of ideas and expectations of things we could or should

do while we're staying at home. We're told to be frugal, sew our own clothes, bake our own bread, make everything from scratch. Don't waste anything, don't throw anything away. Our homes must be cosy and stylish, but of course it won't cost much to achieve this, as we will sew and crochet, knit, embroider, quilt, paint and wallpaper, and use all manner of talents to create this wonderful haven out of whatever materials are to hand. Our beautifully mannered children will never fight and love to learn; they sit happily around the table diligently applying themselves to their studies, generously sharing the pencils, erasers and other supplies, while helping each other with difficult problems. You, meanwhile, are in the kitchen creating delicious dishes with wonderful aromas, popping back into the dining room from time to time to beam upon your happy brood and answer the more difficult questions about calculus and Latin sentence structure with ease and patience. Of course, you will also have a lovely garden full of fresh flowers and vegetables, time to help out at church and teach a Sunday School class, as well as be involved in the local homeschool co-op, and your children's many extra activities. Your husband comes home each day to find you fresh and happy, with your hair, make-up and smile in place, wearing a pretty dress, his favorite refreshment to hand, and a hot meal almost ready. Naturally, the house is tidy and clean, and fresh flowers adorn the table. You also fit in carefully managing the household budget, creating and managing a home business that turns a tidy profit, regular dates with your husband, writing weekly letters to elderly relatives, hosting a Bible study, and reading aloud to your children for 3 hours a day. You go on nature walks, visit art museums and scrapbook all your memories.

Is there anything wrong with any of these ideas? No, of course not, taken individually. But, trying to do them ALL, or a large number of them, are too much for any person!! The picture that is painted in the last paragraph simply isn't realistic, and in fact is pretty pointless. It's pointless to aim for the impossible - you waste so much time and energy reaching for that which you cannot attain! The end result is not perfection - it's burn-out, stress and depression!

So then, what are we to do? Give up on all our attempts to do good things? Throw in the towel - quit? NO! The answer, I believe, is to get some perspective - to get God's perspective! We need to take a whole new look at the things in our lives, and all that we are trying to achieve, and learn to see

ourselves and our to-do list from a whole new point of view!

Let me answer my own question of who is to blame for our lack of time. I believe that a number of things contribute to this situation. First, the expectations that are placed on us by others do play a part. Secondly, the devil loves to see us driven to do too much, because then we are ineffective. When we are trying to do so much that we are stretched thin all the time, we cannot be effective as Christians, as wives, as mothers. Satan is more than happy to encourage us to pile more and more upon ourselves. Those whispers of guilt because you haven't done this or that, those suggestions that you take on yet one more thing, the seductiveness of the image you have in your mind of "perfection" - all these might come from the devil, who delights in seeing us driven to distraction. Thirdly, we always have choices! But we often make the choice to say 'yes' when we should say 'no'! We are our own worst enemies. We allow our human desires for perfection, for recognition, to be "successful" as homemakers, to cloud our thinking and cause us to expect more from ourselves than we can possibly give.

God does not want us overloaded! He is the creator of time. He gives the same 24 hours to every person. Do you really think that he would assign everyone with more work than they could possibly do in that time? He tells us to rest at night, and to take a day off each week. The Bible tells us to spend time worshipping God and praying, and to fellowship with other believers. Does that sound like we're supposed to work every moment of every day? Of course, we're also told to work at whatever we have to do with all our hearts, as though working for the Lord. But I don't believe that means we work like slave labour, with a harsh task master standing over us with a whip! Jesus said his burden was easy and his yoke was light! Sounds to me like most of us have taken on much more work, and a much heavier burden, than God ever intended.

My friend, if you are overloaded, overburdened, overwhelmed, then I urge you to take all your burdens to God, and lay them down. Ask him to show you what he really wants for you to do. Pick back up only those things that God hands to you, and leave the rest right there at his feet. One way to do this, is to write down every single thing you normally do, plan to do, or have waiting to do. Then pray over the list, and pull back for a time from all but the most basic, and wait for God to show you which are his appointed tasks

for you in this season of your life, and which are not. You will feel so much lighter and more free walking around under the yoke Jesus' created for you than staggering under the one of your own design! Let go of your impossible expectations for yourself!

In my next article, "Are you Sarah's daughter?" we'll take a look at some of the examples in the Bible of people in different seasons of their lives.

Love
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