

Ethical Busy-ness?

by David W. Gill

How often do our conversations begin something like this: "Hey, how's it going?"
Answer: "OK. But man am I ever busy!" Is extreme busy-ness a necessity we must simply accept, a given in contemporary life and work? Or is it an ethical issue, an important matter of right and wrong?

The Cisco Way. David Bunnell's *Making the Cisco Connection* (Wiley, 2000) describes a mostly-wonderful, widely-admired company. A few of his comments really troubled me: During the 1980s "when employees worked beyond 110 hours per week . . . they weren't just sincere, they were 'committed.'" (p. 8). Today "a normal work week is 60 hours." (p. 94). "Nearly everyone there shares [the] same interests, socioeconomic status, and education. Local communities have lost the involvement of the employees of Cisco and other similarly high-commitment companies. And many of these communities are falling apart." (p. 100).

Cop-out? Are busy-ness workaholics copping out on responsibilities to spouses? children? parents? churches? communities? Are the busy heroes of the workplace goats everywhere else? Are we giving our all to our company and career and leaving little or nothing to others?

Burn-out. And even if we come to terms with ethical egoism ("what's right is what's good for me), is busy-ness really in one's own best interests? Not just busted and betrayed relationships but burned-out and broken personalities are too often part of the mid-life portfolios of busy-ness addicts.

Getting in Rhythm. God created days with mornings and evenings. God paused to rest on the seventh day after six days of creation. Our work no longer respects or follows either nature's daily light and darkness or society's weekly habits of sabbath.

But people are made in the image and likeness of this creator God. This means we have a built-in need to express ourselves in six days or so of creative work----and we have a built-in need for a daily and a weekly rest. This is a rhythm not based on exhaustion but rather on our free choice for a rich and meaningful life for ourselves and those around us.