Are you crazy busy? Stressed out? Do you find yourself always replying with the same almost automated response when people ask how are you? “I’m busy, but good.” As much as I try to avoid it—I am. I know that feeling all too well. We tell ourselves it’s just for a season, but seasons have a tendency to flow one into the other and we find ourselves at the end of a chain of them wondering how did I let it go this far, am I going to burn out, and is there hope for change? There is much to be said for productivity, and the rightness of speaking against the lethargy and laziness of a culture that tends to occupy itself with trivial pursuits and lacks a sense of urgency. This much is true. However, there is the other end of the spectrum. The end of sore necks, knotted shoulders and the feeling that you have invisible sleeves of lead weighing you down (it shows in your posture!). Kevin DeYoung’s book, *Crazy Busy: A (Mercifully) Short Book about a (Really) Big Problem* is for you.¹ This review is perhaps for you too—to hopefully convince you that you need to hear this. How ironic would it be if you’re too busy to even read the review about a book about being too busy? As such—this will be a mercifully short one (as is the book).

Kevin DeYoung’s writing is refreshing and easy to read. Biblical, clear, to the point with just the right amount of humour thrown in to ease the tension—he’s been one of my favourite speakers and writers for good reason. Plus, he’s an incredibly productive guy! As such, DeYoung writes not as an outside observer of busyness—but an inside participant.

¹ DeYoung, Kevin. *Crazy Busy: A (Mercifully) Short Book about a (Really) Big Problem*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013. All quotes from this book will be cited with the page number in brackets.
Now, given—there is a type of godly busyness and productivity which can be for a season and even healthy—the Bible has many rebukes for slothfulness. However, if you’re reading this with baited breath—you’re perhaps not as given to that end of the spectrum. There is also a type of unbridled chain of activity that results in sinful busyness—of which most of us who struggle with it are blind to and only see it when it’s too late. This book is a much-needed voice to those who would stop to heed it. Though I know the tendency of these types is to only look for a solution when they’re already burnt out—to wait until there is that moment of utter desperation and exasperation to seek help. Please, I plead… do it now. You have the time.

DeYoung starts off with an introductory chapter summarizing some of the ways he’s struggled with busyness: “I’ve missed too many quiet times and been too impatient with my kids. I’ve taken my wife for granted and fed important relationships with leftovers. I’ve been too busy to pursue God with my whole heart, soul, mind, and strength.” (14) His writing is candidly real and heartfelt. “I’m going to put aside the urge to constantly qualify my struggles with reassurances that things aren’t quite so bad as they sound… I don’t want to keep up this same pace for the rest of my life.” (15) For me, these snippets into his busy life ringed true with mine.

He then outlines three dangers in the next chapter. We are often so busy that we don’t even notice the most important things slipping away (20). The first danger is that **busyness can ruin our joy** (26). Much of the time we can plan our lives so that we have no margin—we fill in every single slot of time with something to do so that if something were to go wrong, there’s an ensuing domino effect and following catastrophe which sends us into a panic. Secondly, **busyness can rob our hearts** (28). “For most of us, it isn’t heresy or rank apostasy that will derail our profession of faith. It’s all the worries of life.” (29) Thirdly, **busyness can cover up the rot in our souls** (30). DeYoung quotes Tim Krieder, “Busyness serves as a kind of existential reassurance, a hedge against emptiness… Obviously your life cannot possibly be silly or trivial or meaningless if you are so busy, completely booked, in demand every hour of the day.” (31) This is too true; that some people cover up the hole in their soul with just a bunch of stuff or stuff to do!

DeYoung then proceeds to offer seven diagnoses. Don’t worry—I’m not going to explain them all here—I did promise this would be mercifully brief after all! I will however
tell you their titles and let you go read the book for more—trust me it’s well worth it! DeYoung’s diagnoses are:

1. The Killer P’s—You are beset with many manifestations of pride.
2. The Terror of Total Obligation—You are trying to do what God does not expect you to do.
3. Mission Creep—You can’t serve others without setting priorities.
4. A Cruel Kindergarchy—You need to stop freaking out about your kids (among other things).
5. Deep Calls to Deep—You are letting the screen strangle your soul.
6. Rhythm and Blues—You’d better rest yourself before you wreck yourself.
7. Embracing the Burdens of Busyness—You suffer more because you don’t expect to suffer at all.

Now, before you think that these seven chapters are just seven punches to an already worn out gut, give it a fair chance. Though DeYoung does touch on some sensitive nerves for people who struggle with sinful busyness (such as how it can be a manifestation of people-pleasing) he does so gracefully and in vivid practicality. DeYoung gently reminds us of glorious gospel truths which need to be applied to busy hearts—because the heart of the matter is not that we’re busy. That’s just the symptom which points to a deeper issue that only the gospel is sharp enough to cut through to. “We all have a cross to carry. But it’s a cross that kills our sins, smashes our idols, and teaches us the folly of self-reliance. It’s a cross that says I’ll do anything to follow Jesus, not a cross that says I have to do everything for Jesus.” (51)

DeYoung along the way gives many little practical tips such as setting boundaries and priorities, scheduling blank space, alerting us to the threat of digital additions to social media, entertainment and productivity, etc. However, he also reminds us of what godly resting and productivity is and is not. “I’m not so important in God’s universe that I can’t afford to rest. But my God-given limitations are so real that I can’t afford not to.” (99) DeYoung’s prognosis is detailed without being loquacious, and sharply insightful yet tactful. Our modern times of cyberspace and technology make so much more possible than in generations past. However, “The biggest deception of our digital age may be the lie that says we can be omni-competent, omni-informed, and omni-present. We cannot be any of these
things. We must choose our absence, our inability, and our ignorance—and choose wisely. The sooner we embrace this finitude, the sooner we can be free.” (88)

Thankfully, Kevin DeYoung keeps to his word, and the book is mercifully short but yet still manages to get quite a bit done! This is quite a remarkable feat and one of the reasons why I have to recommend it so highly. God has definitely used it to bless my life immensely, and it will undoubtedly be one that I come back to again. DeYoung also mercifully does not end off with a long list of things we have to do, pitfalls to avoid, and a litany of steps to follow. He boils it down to the ONE thing we must do. Perfect for busy people! By giving just one thing, and allowing us to naturally reorient ourselves around this one point—the desired effect is a natural reorientation of priorities and lifestyle. The lead sleeves may yet fall off, and those knots finally unwind—perhaps not immediately, but there is certainly hope. It’s genius in its simplicity and undeniably Biblical. What is it? Well, you’ll just have to pick up the book to find out! You won’t regret it.

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You can purchase *Crazy Busy* at [Amazon](http://amazon.com) or [ChristianBook](http://christianbook.com).