

Margins - Making Room for what Matters Most

Intro Video: Take it to the Limit

Big Announcement this week. No, it wasn't from the Whitehouse or the NFL or about who was going to stand, kneel or stay in the locker room during the National Anthem. It wasn't a big announcement made on twitter, Instagram or Facebook.

Talk about Chip & Joanna Gaines and their big announcement.

Picture.

- Season 5 will be their last one for "Fixer Upper".
- *Fixer Upper* is a television phenomenon. The home-renovation show premiered to 1.3 million viewers on May 23, 2013. It has attracted as many as twenty-five million viewers.
- Chip and Joanna Gaines were a little-known contractor and decorator flipping houses in Waco before their show made them overnight celebrities. They now employ more than four hundred people and own and operate Magnolia Market. They have their own line of paint colors, wallpaper designs, and furniture.
- They assure us that nothing is wrong—"Our family is healthy and our marriage has honestly never been stronger." As they explain, "This is just us recognizing that we need to catch our breath for a moment. Our plan is to take this time to shore up and strengthen the spots that are weak, rest the places that are tired and give lots of love and attention to both our family and our businesses."

Life is better with margin.

We are starting a mini - series today and I want to start by asking if all of you would participate, be real honest; how many of you would say that you occasionally or often feel pretty stressed? Would you raise your hands high if that's you?

How many of you would say, "You know, bills are constantly coming in and the economy is kind of tight and things aren't the way they used to be." How many

of you would say that you occasionally or even often feel some financial tension or stress? A lot of people do.

I'm curious as to how many of you would say, "I really wish that I had either more time for myself, because I don't do much for myself"; or "I wish I had more time to spend with the people that I love." How many would say, "That would be me".

Hands going up all over the place on all of these questions because we live in a culture that pushes us to the limits (Take it to the limit one more time!). Buy more, do more, accomplish more, conquer more, produce more; more, more, more, more, more, more. I would argue that a lot of us are living at an unbiblical and unsustainable pace. It's insane what normal is today.

If you look around today you will see 7 to 8 year old kids that on top of homework, on top of school, will be out 4 or 5 nights a week doing their sports activities, cheerleading, gymnastics, not to mention what they do on the weekends and we call that normal. For many of us, the schedules of trying to keep up with our children end up imposing on us and we are stressed, which leads to them being stressed.

If someone said, "Are you really enjoying your life?" Most of us would say, "No, and I don't have time to talk about it, gotta go!" Virtually everybody I know has very little margin for error in the major portions of life. Most people have no margin for the most important things in life. Some of you may be saying, "What is margin exactly?"

In his book "Margin, Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial and Time Reserves to Overloaded lives, Richard Swenson, M.D. describes margin like this:

Margin: The space between our load and our limits.

It is the amount allowed beyond that which is needed. Margin is the amount available beyond what is necessary. It is something that we hold in reserve for unexpected or unanticipated situations.

Christ - follower, or seeker we ALL have limits. You may have greater bandwidth or capacity than me or others in a certain area but we all have limits relationally, financially and with our time. No matter who you are you can only "red line" for so long.

It's so important to have margin because it plays out so often in our everyday lives.

Examples of Margin:

Margin would be showing up maybe 5 or 10 minutes early to a meeting so you are not stressed all of the time. Or maybe not having to drive 20 miles an hour over the speed limit to get there on time.

Margin financially would be having money leftover at the end of the month. Now, some of you are going to say, "What is that?" I will explain it slowly, so you will know what it is. It is having money leftover at the end of the month after you pay bills. It's a very life-changing thing.

Margin is having distance between you and temptation. Rather than being morally on the edge all of the time, is having preset buffers in your life to keep you from stumbling into life-destructive behavior.

Margin could be having emotional capacity to deal with problems. When our kids come up and drop something on us we don't just unleash on them because we're overwhelmed; Or actually answering the call from a friend who we know is going through a rough time and is going to talk our ear off. It's having the emotional capacity to deal with unexpected struggles.

Margin could be having two or three nights a week, where you don't have anything at all on your schedule.

Margin could be having extra time or extra money to invest and give to people and ministries that you love.

Margin is being able to pray w/o being so distracted by everything else we have going on in our crazy, busy lives.

Margin could be simply having time to think, to reflect, to meditate, to dream because our minds aren't constantly thinking of "what's next".

Margin could be having the ability to concentrate on what God wants to whisper to you on Sunday mornings instead of being so overwhelmed that you use this time to make your grocery list, plan your kids pick up or think through the upcoming presentation at work.

Margin could be having significant time with God, not just a quick "Here's the fork, here's the meat, good God, let's eat"! But having significant time to soak up His Word & enjoy God's presence.

Margin is the difference between rest and exhaustion. It is the space between breathing freely or suffocating.

And what I've seen play out in so many lives is that we push the limits so often, we take it to the limit so often that we constantly live on the edge of having no margin and falling into the margin - less abyss.

Margin - less lives lead to unmanageable lives.

Because we're always trying to go, go, go and do this, do that, work harder, make more money, produce more, squeeze it all in we begin to unravel. Some of you probably can relate to that.

Margin - less lives lead to unmanageable lives but *margin filled lives* lead to fulfilling lives.

I'm convinced that life is better with margin. So today we're going to look together at a story about two different women, sisters actually who had the same opportunity; one decided she didn't have margin and the other created margin and experienced something that could never ever be taken away from her. Let's pick it up in Luke 10, starting in verse 38 and here is what Scripture says:

Scripture: Luke 10: 38 - 40a "As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made."

So let's review the players in this: We've got Mary and Martha, the sisters and Jesus, the Son of God. Mary created a moment. She could of had things to do, she might have had laundry at her place that was undone, she might have had grocery shopping that she needed to do, she might have had tidying up, but she just said; for the moment I am not going to do that, I am going to embrace this moment and enjoy Jesus.

But Martha, on the other hand, was like many of us, she was distracted, she was flipping out. Interesting to me is that she was not distracted by something

that was bad or evil. She wasn't distracted by some sinfulness. She was actually distracted by what we might say, some good things. In fact in reality, many of us would be distracted by the same thing. She is thinking, okay, Jesus is in the house, rumor is He is the Son of God, better get out my good company plates, better make sure the vanilla scented candle is lit, got to make sure the hand towel matches the shower towel, because God forbid I make a bad call like that with Jesus in the house. We have got to make sure everything is just right and she was distracted with *good things* from the **best things**.

Here's what I believe to be true: If Satan, our spiritual enemy, cannot make us really, really bad, he will try to make us really, really busy. Some of us, we become so busy at doing lesser things (even good things), that we miss out on the most important things and we are distracted from the very best.

Lindsey's call to me on a Friday afternoon. (250 teens accepted Christ & 491 baptized)

And it's so easy to get consumed and obsessed with accomplishing the urgent, and what we think is important, and we are missing the most important things in life. Life is just blowing right by us.

Here are Mary and Martha and Jesus is at their home. This is funny.

Verse 40, in the middle of the verse, Martha comes running to Jesus and she asked; "Jesus, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

So here's a question to think about: What happens when we go, go, go and we live a margin - less life? What happens to us when our margin decreases?

When your MARGIN decreases:

Stress increases.

When your running late and your margin decreases, what happens? Your stress increases. Some of you, on your way to church today, you were running late. It wasn't your fault it was someone else in your family's fault that didn't get ready. So, your margin decreased, your stress increased and you are sitting there saying ungodly things, or at the least thinking them on the way to church! "You should have, you.....zip it! Bless God, we are going to go in and worship today! Oh, praise the Lord brother, good morning, hallelujah, great day

to be in church, love you Jesus! They made me miss the first song!" Okay? No elbows! Some of you are throwing elbows! Your elbows are illegal in church, no elbows at all!

Same is true financially. If your financial margin decreases, what happens if you're married? You start fighting. "Oh, you spent what on shoes? "You really needed more shoes? More stuff from Bass Pro Shops? Really? How many times a week can you eat at Chickfila? No margin. Something breaks, you've got two problems; one is that something is broken, two is, how are we going to pay for it? Stress, your financial margin decreases, your stress increases.

Focus decreases.

We can get so focused on the area where we have no margin that we neglect the other areas, often times the most important areas in our lives.

Men, "Well I've got to work more, make more, conquer more, achieve more, because that is what will show love to, to who? What our wives and kids want is time with us, engaged with them, connected with them, laughing and having fun.

I realize there are seasons where we have to really buckle down and work hard; we have to put in more time to make it happen, but when it becomes a lifestyle our focus decreases on the all too important areas.

Relationships suffer.

Those of you that are busy, you are frustrated, you are challenged. Your mind rarely disengages from the things that you think are important. You can be with people you love, but you are not with them. You are present, but you are not all present. Your mind is still running. It seems you're disengaged. You can go on vacation, but you are never really there; you are always still connected to work, something is still going on.

Kids notice we're always distracted. Always on the phone or the computer.

Your relationships suffer, not just with friends, family, spouse, kids and co-workers, but also with God. I can't tell you how many times I run into people and before I even say anything I hear, "Hey, sorry I haven't been to church in a long time. "I'm just so busy."

"How is it going with you and God?" "Oh, man, we used to be close, I used to be in His Word and I would pray, and it used to be so good; but I just got too busy!" Busy, busy, busy. Too busy for people and too busy for God. And we get stuck thinking that is normal. And ultimately our relationships suffer and relationships are the greatest gift that God has ever given us.

I'm not pushing for minor changes, because you are bright people. If minor changes would have made a difference, you would have done that a long time ago. I am going to talk about radical, life-altering decisions, because I am convinced with all my heart that many of us are living life with little or no margin and it is completely contrary to what God had planned.

Martha comes to Jesus and says "Jesus, tell her to help me, I'm right, I'm right! This is the way that it should be!" Jesus says no, no your production mindset, to making sure everything is perfect, to your busyness - you just missed the moment.

Luke 10, verse 41-42; "'Martha, Martha,' the Lord answered, 'you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.'"

Here's what I hope we can understand and that is that the choice is ours and nobody else's to make. We can choose to buy into what the world is feeding us and stealing from us as we follow along in its wake OR we can re-evaluate and choose to intentionally make room for what matters most and will never be taken away from us.

And maybe right now you're struggling with this. You're torn. I understand that. This isn't easy stuff to talk about and process through.

Why is that so many people, some of us here today are living margin - less lives. Why is it that many of us realize that margin allows us to breathe more freely and to live more fulfilling lives but we don't make any changes to get margin?

Why is it that so many people plan on slowing down one day, but they rarely ever do? Why is it that very few people take the house that they cannot afford and sell it and downsize, and create some financial margin? Why is it that we say money doesn't make us happy, and yet so many of us fight and claw to get

even more? Why is it that we don't radically cut back on our schedules to spend time with the children that will be out of our house in a blink of the eye?

Why is that the case for so many people? Maybe for you? Could it be that FEAR is driving us? Could it be deep down, that we don't fully trust God. That we don't have enough faith to really believe that God is in control, that He will handle the details of life and that His way of doing life is better. Are we afraid that if we are not going and going and going, we are going to miss out on something out there?

Why don't you...

"I'm afraid that if I do that I will or it will..."

Missing an opportunity.

Gotta work harder, gotta make more money, gotta have the nicer car/house, gotta have this, gotta be at the meeting because if I don't, I am going to miss out on an opportunity.

Disappointing others.

If I say "no" they will be disappointed in me. Try to live up to some unattainable standard that we think others have of us or, deep down that we might have of ourselves.

Being left out.

Everybody else is out there having fun and I'm not invited. I'm stuck in this rut all by myself.

Falling behind.

The neighbors have all the toys, all the new cars, the new pool, the new boat. I have to keep up with them. What we often don't see behind the scenes is that those people we are trying to keep up with our eye level deep in debt. They are drowning.

Not mattering.

We all have a desire to leave a mark & to make a difference. We all want to leave a legacy of impacting others, of positively influencing the life of someone

else. So sometimes we equate busyness, buying stuff, doing things with how much do I matter?

If that's you today, or maybe someone you know the most important question becomes "what can you do about it"? Is there a way to change course? Is there hope?

Adjust our starting point.

Instead of trying to take stuff away and fit God in, if you want margin the first significant step is to start with God and fit everything else around Him.

If we are going to have margin, if we are going to find time to breathe and not suffocate in our lives; if we are going to be able let go of our fear of:

- Not mattering
- Falling behind
- Disappointing others

Adjust our starting point not our fitting in point.

Scripture: Matthew 6: 31 - 34 (NLT)

"So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' ³² These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. ³³ Seek the Kingdom of God *above all else*, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

That is where we are going to start this week, it's very simple. Your assignment is five minutes a day, where you don't produce anything. You don't think anything, you just be in God's presence, just listen. What it's gonna do is for five minutes is it's going to break the idolatry, where you think you are on the throne of your life and you are going to leave the laundry undone, the kids knocking, and your emails unchecked, your phone has voicemail - call them back and your facebook will survive without you looking at it for five minutes. You are just going to be, for five minutes, you are just going to be. It's a first and significant step into creating a lot more of margin.

Video: Breathe by Jonny Diaz

Bridge Group Questions

1. What stood out to you in this week's message?
2. Margin: The space between our load and limits. In what area's do you have margin? In what area's do you struggle with margin?
3. What are things that can happen when our margin decreases?
4. Steve said "Life is better with margin"? Do you agree or disagree? Why? How are you different with margin in your life?
5. What things does our world or culture value? What things does God value?
6. Why do you think we struggle so much with margin in our culture? What fears are under your struggle to create margin?
7. Read Matthew 6:31 - 33. Why is it so challenging to live out what Jesus commands in this verse? How do we practically "Seek God's Kingdom above all else"?
8. Where do you need margin in your life? How will adjusting your starting point and starting your day with Jesus help you begin to create it?
9. What obstacles will you have to overcome to make starting with Jesus a daily habit?