

BREAKING BUSY



ALLI WORTHINGTON

FOREWORD BY CHRISTINE CAINE

ZONDERVAN

Breaking Busy

Copyright © 2016 by Alli Worthington

Requests for information should be addressed to:

Zondervan, 3900 Sparks Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Worthington, Alli.

Breaking busy : how to find peace and purpose in a world of crazy /
Alli Worthington.

pages cm

ISBN 978-0-310-34222-9 (pbk.) — ISBN 978-0-310-34224-3 (ebook) —

ISBN 978-0-310-06705-4 (mobile app)

1. Christian life. 2. Christian women—Religious life. I. Title.

BV45O1.3.W68 2016

248.4—dc23

2015026533

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.Zondervan.com. The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.®

Scripture quotations marked KJ21 are taken from the 21st Century King James Version. Copyright © 1994 by Deuel Enterprises, Inc. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations marked NASB are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*®. Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. (www.Lockman.org)

Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation. © 1996, 2004, 2007, 2013 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Any Internet addresses (websites, blogs, etc.) and telephone numbers in this book are offered as a resource. They are not intended in any way to be or imply an endorsement by Zondervan, nor does Zondervan vouch for the content of these sites and numbers for the life of this book.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Published in association with literary agent Jenni Burke of D.C. Jacobson & Associates LLC, an Author Management Company www.dcjacobson.com

Cover design: Lori Danelle Wilson

Cover photos: Shutterstock®

Interior design: Kait Lamphere

First printing December 2015 / Printed in the United States of America

CONTENTS

Foreword by Christine Caine. 13

1. CAPACITY

Finding Your Sweet Spot in a World of Crazy Busy. . 17

2. RELATIONSHIPS

*Finding Your Connection in a World
of Acquaintances* 41

3. CALLING

Finding Your Purpose in a World of Striving 59

4. EDITING

Finding God's Best in a World of Options 79

5. THOUGHTS

Finding Your Peace in a World of Worry. 101

6. TRADITIONS

Finding Your Groove in a World of Expectations . . 119

7. TIME

Finding Your Rhythm in a World of Overwhelm . . 139

8. DECISIONS

Finding Your Confidence in a World of Choices . . . 155

9. COMMUNICATION

Finding Your Voice in a World of Noise 173

10. WORTH

Finding Your Value in a World of Never

Good Enough..... 195

Epilogue 207

Acknowledgments..... 211

TRADITIONS

Finding Your Groove in a World of Expectations

I love the Christmas season. Not just the day itself, but the whole entire Christmas season. As soon as I can get away with it, my car is filled with Christmas music, the smell of peppermint mochas, and piles of random hats and gloves. But it was not so long ago that I did not love the Christmas season. Oh, I still loved Christmas music, peppermint mochas, and decorating our trees. I just didn't love everything else that came with the season: the shopping, the parties, the baking, the cards, the concerts, the obligations that seemed endless. "Tis the season to be jolly," my foot!

One particularly notable December a few years back, after making my Christmas to-do list filled with class parties and cookie swaps and party-dress shopping and family photos and Christmas cards, I snapped. I couldn't take one more second of the rat race Christmas had become. I couldn't bring myself to tell the people in my life that I wasn't playing the game of Christmas Crazy anymore, so instead, I told the masses, via the Internet. I wrote an article called "Why I Won't Be Getting You a Christmas Present" for my online column for Disney.

In my article, I wrote about growing up in a family and community where the women often worked hard to be all things to all people, especially during the holidays. From baking to gift wrapping to perfect hair to coordinated outfits ... no detail was too small to ignore and hardly a moment went by when these women weren't working trying to make sure everything was perfect for everyone. As an adult I understand what a massive task that was. And while I will always appreciate their effort, I am most definitely not following in their footsteps. I learned that when you try to be all things to all people, what you really end up doing is cheating yourself out of happiness and peace. I wanted to give myself and every other mother on the planet permission to take a different approach to the holidays if they so desired.

I wrote:

To start, I've got five kids. Right there that's no less than 25 teachers, a dozen coaches, countless parties, Sunday school instructors, etc. If I added up all of the people affiliated with my kids that I'm "supposed" to bake cookies for or give gifts to, I'd never have time to breathe, let alone enjoy myself.

Even if I didn't have any children, this season is full of obligations ... parties, gift and cookie exchanges, Secret Santa this or that, party invitations around every corner, etc. It's all too much.

I went on to say exactly how we had simplified our holidays into a time of year that was truly meaningful to our family and a time we truly enjoyed.

So the next time you sigh with exasperation and stress because you haven't even ordered your holiday cards yet let alone sent them ... remember this. *You don't have to be all*

things to all people. Just be the best you to the people who matter the most.¹⁷

When the article was published, I sheepishly shared it on Facebook and Twitter, secretly worried that my friends who have the hospitality gene would think I was being harsh, or worse, making fun of them (which I wasn't!). A few friends and followers thought just that and wrote,

“But I love baking, and sewing gifts and doing Elf on the Shelf.”

Or

“Throwing Christmas parties and giving gifts is my love language.”

To those friends, I said, “God bless you. You make up for people like me, and please invite me to your party ... I'll bring some store-bought cookies and pie.”

Kathie Lee and Hoda Interview Scrooge

But two days after my article posted, I received a note at midnight from a friend at the *Today Show*. We had met years ago when she spoke at BlissDom. She had seen my article on Facebook and said she wanted to discuss how moms feel overwhelmed during the holidays. I needed to fly up to New York City *the next day* and be on the show the following morning.

My first thought was, *I was nervous about an article on the Internet. Now I am going on live television to tell five million people that I'm Scrooge!*

My second thought was, *What the heck! Yes!* That night, my biggest concern was, “How do I share my message in a way that will help women be gentle to themselves and stop the madness around the holidays?”

Who am I kidding? I wish I could say that was my biggest concern, but it wasn't. I was primarily worried about my roots — the ones growing on top of my head! I was overdue to get them done and, of course, I wouldn't have time before leaving for New York.

I Googled, "How to cover your roots," and discovered there were several products available so I could do the job at home. I stopped by my local beauty store on the way to the airport the next morning and said, "I need some stuff to cover my roots. A makeup stick or spray or something ... I read about it on the Internet."

"Yes, honey. Over here," the nice sales lady said as she guided me to the correct aisle.

I found three different products. One looked just like a foundation stick, one like a mascara, and one was a spray. I asked her which would be best.

"Well, honey, why are you in such a hurry?" she asked with-out the least bit of judgment in her voice.

"Um, I'm going to be on a video," I said, then realized I sounded crazy. But the damage was already done.

"A video?" she said in an overly loud voice. "A video? Honey, what kind of video you gonna be on?"

I wish I could accurately portray with words just how deeply Southern this woman was, and I'm from the South, so that's saying something. She was a picture straight out of *Steel Magnolias*, big hair and charm all rolled up in a sweet Southern drawl that made every statement seem so much more interesting than it really was.

"Well, not really a video," I said. "I'm going to be on the *Today Show* in the morning and I'm worried about my roots. I'm on the way to the airport. I need help."

That sweet lady looked at me as if I had lost my mind.

I expected her to say in her loud Southern voice, “The *Today Show*? The *Todayyyyyy Show*?” But she didn’t utter a word. We just stood there in awkward silence as she stared at me, her mouth slightly open, her hands on her hips and a look of genuine concern on her face. I wasn’t sure if she was concerned that I was a lunatic or if my root problems were too big for such a quick-fix treatment.

Finally, she said, “Well, honey, I gotta tell you. If you haven’t ever used any of these, I don’t want you to now. Your roots ain’t too bad, but you may end up looking way worse if you try to cover it yourself. Just get yourself on that plane and stop worrying about your roots. You’re gonna be just fine, sugar.”

So that’s what I did.

Nashville to New York. Airport to hotel. Boom. I was ready.

Have you ever worried when you were falling asleep that you would sleep late and miss something important in the morning? (As we have already determined, I’m not good with early mornings.)

I had two wake-up calls, my phone programmed, and I had even paid my oldest son \$3 to call me at 5 a.m. I had received a call from the show the night before telling me to bring my wardrobe options with me, and they’d help me choose which to wear. Um, yeah, that would have been great information to have *before* I left Tennessee. Simple dresser that I am, I wore all black from head to toe. I brought only one outfit with me. Gulp.

So, with all the confidence I could muster, I put on my dress, did my hair, applied my makeup, and headed off for Rockefeller Center and my debut on the *Today Show*. Apparently, most guests walk over to the studio and get their hair and makeup done there. But I decided to apply my own and then let the makeup artist show me what I needed to change. (How else would I know what I was doing wrong if I didn’t show her, right?)

In the makeup chair, I learned that my eyebrows needed pencil (who knew?) and that my makeup needed contouring (how did I make it thirty-seven years without contouring skills?). The hairdresser offered to straighten my hair. I politely declined, but I did ask her if my roots were okay. She chuckled and said she didn't notice them.

Isn't it funny how much time we waste focused on a perceived weakness or flaw in ourselves that no one else even notices?

Behind the scenes, Kathie Lee and Hoda are the nicest, funniest ladies ever, and the *Today Show* team is professional and lovely. I did my best to act like I knew what I was doing and that I was on TV all the time. I pretended to be unimpressed in the green room with the celebrities all around me. This was just normal life.

"Don't faint, snort-laugh, throw up, or freeze," I told myself. "And no wide-eyed thing."

You think I'm joking, but in my early days of being interviewed on local TV morning shows, I apparently made this wild wide-eyed look whenever I was nervous. I made it often enough that when I called a friend who is in the business, her one coaching tip was, "Don't do the wide-eyed thing."

Once I was on the show with Kathie Lee and Hoda, I chatted about how I grew up watching the women in my family laboriously produce giant holiday celebrations and never actually enjoy themselves. I didn't want to continue that legacy. I shared that I want holidays I can enjoy and discussed how our family developed new traditions that fit us in this season of life.

The whole segment was just a few minutes, and when it was over, you've never seen a happier girl. But I began to worry about what would happen when NBC posted the video. I'd probably be raked over the coals in the comment section.

Instead, when I was safely home in Nashville, I started

receiving emails, notes, and messages saying how much people enjoyed hearing me say, “You don’t have to be all things to all people.” It’s as if we all need someone to say that out loud.

Sometimes our lives are full of busyness because traditions make us believe that is how it *has* to be done. You know, when you’ve *always* done something a certain way, it’s hard to break free from that — at least without feeling guilty that you aren’t doing it anymore. But just because we live in a world of seemingly endless expectations doesn’t mean we have to live up to them.

● ● ● ● ● ●
**JUST BECAUSE WE LIVE IN
A WORLD OF SEEMINGLY
ENDLESS EXPECTATIONS
DOESN’T MEAN WE HAVE
TO LIVE UP TO THEM.**

The Importance of Traditions

Now, I’m not bashing all traditions. I’m just saying not all traditions are healthy for everyone. Family traditions, when done well, for example, give families a greater sense of security and make everyone happier.

Traditions of our faith are also vitally important. Long before the written Word of God was given to man, the children of God passed down events of biblical history and tenets of their faith by celebrating those events in the same manner year after year. They passed on those traditions to their children and their grandchildren and their great-grandchildren. And we do the same thing today. Some of our traditions are based on Scripture and are vital to our lives as Christians: meeting together regularly (Hebrews 10:25), celebrating the Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:17–34), and praying and reading the Bible (Deuteronomy 6:4–8), for example.

But there are many traditions and activities of the faith that are both cultural and optional. Depending on your church

culture and interests, you may attend potlucks and teach Sunday school, or you may work in a food pantry or take part in a local prison ministry. Every church has its own traditions and ministries. The trouble comes when you think you need to do it all (or do a certain thing everyone else does) just to prove your commitment to Christ, when Jesus himself isn't calling you to do that thing "everyone else does."

If anyone knew about the burden of tradition, it was Jesus. He knew all about the religious burdens the Pharisees had placed on the people, and he publicly rebuked the Pharisees for doing so. In Matthew 15:1–20, Jesus pretty much puts the smackdown on the religious rulers for being more concerned about tradition

than they were about worshipping God and having a relationship with him.



**TRADITIONS DONE FOR THE
WRONG REASONS SHACKLE
US TO UNREALISTIC EXPECTA-
TIONS AND A WHOLE LOT OF
UNNECESSARY BUSYWORK.**

Hear me say this: Tradition is not a bad thing. But like any good thing, done with the wrong motivation (namely guilt and

the pride of keeping up with the Joneses), traditions can shackle us to unrealistic expectations and a whole lot of unnecessary busywork. If we think we have to do everything and be all things to all people, before we know it, we will be stuck on a hamster wheel, going nowhere fast.

I Blame Pinterest

Traditions and rituals (and I'm not just talking about Christmas ones) are best when they add to our lives, not become a source of extra work, busyness, and headaches.

After many missteps and mistakes in finding my groove in a

world of expectations, I have learned to chill out about things. I have kids in all ages and stages of preadult lives, so when it comes to raising children, I've learned to take life at the pace it comes.

In other words, I'm chill.

That is ...

Until ...

I get on Pinterest.

And then I am overcome with the need to create, recycle, upcycle, do, glue, paint, design, decorate, make and bake, all for the sake of "making memories" with my children. And when I'm done with all of that, I'm supposed to dream, surprise, inspire, delight, protect, teach, nurture, discipline, and feed them!

I tell you, I thought I had it all together until I got on Pinterest. As it turns out, I am a slug for a mom. I don't know how to cook organic food from scratch. I'll never have buns or abs of steel. I can't braid my hair in a fishtail-bun-upswept-messy-updo. Can't paint the map from *The Hobbit* on my fingernails. Will never decorate with mason jars. And I don't know how to make a single thing from an old wooden pallet.

Is it too crazy to announce that Pinterest has ruined birthday parties forever and ever? It has. Before Pinterest, you could have a flat birthday cake with candles and maybe even some characters on top. Now birthday cakes have to be tiered with lava flowing from them or Elsa and Anna shooting icicles or they won't be Instagrammable. Yeah, I said it. (But, for the record, I do Instagram our sheet cakes. Fight the power, ladies.)

In fact, have you noticed how the whole birthday party game has been upped in the last few years? We used to invite kids over and go to a fast-food play land or meet at a park to celebrate a kid's birthday. Not anymore. Now we have ponies, themed occasions, and Cirque de Soleil. Okay, maybe not Cirque, yet. But you know it's coming!

Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying big elaborate parties are a bad thing, if that is what you love to do. I enjoy going to parties where they've rented a petting zoo, made the Roman Colosseum out of marshmallows, and have massive goodie bags with toys and candy. I support anyone who wants to throw an epic party. What keeps me from finding my own groove is when I start believing that I also need to throw an epic party or I won't measure up.

Birthday parties in our family are low-key. I explain to the kids that we have a birthday budget and that budget can be spent on a party or gifts. So far we have one boy out of five who some years wants a party instead of gifts. I know, I know, I've been lucky. And if a party had to happen at our house, you better believe there's no Cirque budget, and any expectation or hopes of big goodie bags will be dashed quickly.

Wouldn't it be great if we could say freely, "You do your thing. Make that life-sized Olaf out of marshmallows and hire princesses to come over. That's awesome. But I'm cool not to do those things."

After my visit to the *Today Show* and the conversations I've had with hundreds of women since, I think we really *are* cool with not doing those things. Meaning, we are okay not to live out and continue (or pick up) traditions that don't mean anything to us. But we are still afraid to find our own groove and live in it

● ● ● ● ●
**I SAY, "BAKE YOUR CAKE,
BUY YOUR CAKE, DON'T
HAVE A CAKE AT ALL!"**

because we are worried someone might judge us and find us lacking.

I say, "Bake your cake, buy your cake, don't have a cake at all!" We are all adults and none of us have the time to care or judge how anyone else is doing it. That's the world I want to live in. (But if you do have cake, please invite me over. I love cake.)

Great Expectations

When I asked my friends what expectations they felt they had to live up to, the answers were both telling and hilarious:

- “I must plan awesome family vacations that we will talk about for generations to come.”
- “I have to have lovely, professional family photos taken every year.”
- “I can only feed my baby organic, locally sourced food or I’m not being a good mother.”
- “Even though I have a family of three, I have to drive a car that seats at least seven people just in case I need to haul a sports team somewhere or drive for a school or church trip.”
- “I must dress like a model every day. Those ‘outfit of the day’ #OOTD photos all over Pinterest and Instagram are crazy. Who can keep up?”

I get exhausted just looking at the list. The thing about any of these “must-do’s” is they are all fine things if you’re doing them because you love them and are called to do them. But if not, you’re in danger of living someone else’s life, instead of experiencing the uniquely wonderful, beautifully crafted life Jesus planned for *you*.

Why Traditions Need to Be Flexible

Depending on our stage of life, the traditions we continue, start, change, or stop will vary. I have a friend whose mother-in-law decorates every single room of her house for Christmas. Literally every single room in the house. But her mother-in-law is retired, has no children living at home, loves decorating, and

loves having people over for the holidays. Not only that, her husband's family has family Christmas traditions that include four different "must-do" events each year, a certain way they wrap their gifts, and even specific foods they have on Christmas Eve.

My friend, on the other hand, has four small children, a full-time job, and almost no time to herself, much less time to carry on all of the traditions of her husband's family. Overwhelmed with the guilt of not being able to manage it all, she talked with her

mother-in-law. Much to her

surprise, her mother-in-law

said, "When I was your age

with my four small children

and a full-time job, do you

think I did all these things? No way. I did well to buy presents, get them wrapped, and even *have* a tree, much less decorate my whole house. But I have time now, so I do the things I enjoy."

You have to allow yourself to do the things you enjoy, to carry on the traditions that are meaningful to you, and be okay to know that your children, family, and friends might not carry on all of the traditions that are meaningful to you.

Sisters from Two Thousand Years Ago

When I think of living according to expectations and tradition, I cannot help but think about Jesus' friends Mary and Martha. When I think of Mary and Martha, for some reason I think of Jan and Marcia Brady from the classic TV show *The Brady Bunch*.

Marcia was the bubbly Brady, the popular one. She was everyone's friend, kind, generous in every way. Then there was Jan. Jan was a great girl. Helpful, always concerned about pleasing those around her. Always making sure everyone was okay. Always

doing what was expected of her. But man, was she tired of living in Marcia's shadow. It was always all about Marcia. Marcia, Marcia, Marcia.

In my mind, here's how the story of the biblical sisters unfolded. Jesus and his disciples came into town. Mary, the bubbly sister, everyone's friend, the relationship builder, wanted nothing more than to hang out with Jesus. She wanted to spend time with him, hear about his travels, listen to his teaching. Oh, she could have listened to him teach forever.

And Martha? Martha had her to-do list made before Jesus ever got there. Between the time that word had reached them of his impending arrival and the time he arrived, Martha had planned an incredible banquet for Jesus and his disciples. She Instagrammed the table, pinned the best recipes, and even Snapchatted a few of her closest friends about all the hard work she was putting into the dinner for Jesus. And you know she hashtagged it all with #Blessed #DinnerWithJesus.

Once Jesus arrived, Martha was in the kitchen — all pleased with herself and how well things were going — when she heard Mary's laughter wafting from the living room. What in the world was Mary doing out there with the men? Didn't she know there was work to be done? That chicken wasn't going to fry itself! So Martha walked out into the room where Jesus was teaching, and when she saw Mary sitting at his feet, she blew up!

According to Luke 10:40–42, she said, “Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!”

And the Lord answered, “Martha, Martha, Martha [*sorry, couldn't resist*], you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed — or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”

Martha behaved out of expectations and tradition instead of

spending that precious time in the company of those she loved. I daresay she might even have allowed a little bit of pride to enter into her efforts. She wasn't just making a meal for a guest. She was cooking for *Jesus*, and it was going to be the best dinner anyone had ever cooked for him — ever.

When we become overwhelmed with all the things we think we have to do, and when we allow our pride to enter into the mix, it's easy to feel frazzled and even resentful, just like Martha did that day. That's why Jesus told her that Mary had chosen the only needed thing. Mary had chosen peace and time with those she loved.

Tweaking Traditions

Like Martha, you may find yourself caught in the trap of expectations and traditions, and you may need some help to escape the shackles. So here are a few pointers to tweak those traditions so they fit you, your family, your current stage of life — and your faith in Jesus.

1. Follow Jesus first

There's probably no greater "tradition" to buck than that of social norms. Challenging those norms can exact a heavy toll as we work to please God before culture.

The past three years I have worked from my home office while Mark has worked inside the home, being full-time dad (and a million other roles) to our sons. This is a decision we made together, based on the season of our life and the direction we heard from God. But it was not an easy decision. It goes against old-fashioned social norms and requires us to explain our choices often to family, friends, business colleagues, and even strangers. It's exhausting.

It has a financial cost too. Mark could easily make a great income that would give us the ability to have more conveniences and luxuries. But he is doing what God called him to do. No amount of money is worth more than our obedience to God.

We don't have a road map or a guidebook for this. It's confusing. Some days we both think it would be way easier for me to work part time at home with the kids and give up my speaking and travel schedule and Mark to work full time outside the home. Those roles are more familiar to us. But since our roles have reversed, I've had to learn to hand over the reins of running the household and to let go of the mommy guilt I sometimes feel. And who knows (only God knows) what our future holds? Down the road, the Lord might call us to reverse our roles again.

Every tradition that we keep or discard, whether related to Christmas, birthdays, weddings, or even those related to social norms, needs to start with Jesus first. What is he calling us to do? How can we show our love for him first? Then we ask ourselves, "How can I best show my love to others (including myself)?" (Remember, the two greatest commandments recorded in Matthew 22:36–40, tell us to love God above all, and love your neighbor as yourself.) In our case, following Jesus and loving our boys and ourselves led to a nontraditional answer, one we live out in faith every single day.

2. Drop (or don't pick up) the traditions you don't enjoy

When my oldest was a toddler and I was pregnant with our second son, Jack, we moved to Memphis. It was the first move away from all my friends and family, and I was focused on finding new friends.

After finding a new church and joining a Bible study, I noticed

the ladies also met together each week and took a sewing class. They made smocked rompers for their kids to wear. My toddler wore regular boy clothes, but I quickly planned on joining the class, learning to sew, and making that boy some rompers. This was the tradition in the suburbs of Memphis. Here's the kicker, though: I hate sewing. I can barely sew on a button. If something needs hemming, I might as well throw it away. I have actually stapled the hem in a pair of pants. But I was ready to take that class just to fit in.

The Sunday after I signed up for the sewing class was Easter. On the drive home from the Easter egg hunt, my husband said, "Babe, please don't put Justin in those one-piece outfits with embroidered baby ducks."

Mark is from Pittsburgh and not used to the traditions of the South — still, after living here for almost twenty years. I started laughing and admitted I was planning on taking a sewing class to start making those exact rompers.

Mark said, "But, babe, you hate sewing. Why would you do that?"

"To make friends," I admitted sheepishly.

"But you are friends with them already. You are in Bible study together. Why do you have to start sewing girly outfits to stay friends with them?"

This was my wake-up call. I had put the expectation on myself that to be accepted and keep my new set of friends, I needed to change who I was.

Taking a class to learn to do something I detested was not beneficial to anyone. So I left that tradition to my new friends, and no sewing machines, baby-duck-embroidered rompers, or feelings were hurt in the making of this story.

3. Find an easier way to keep the tradition

My friend Meredith is genius when it comes to customizing traditions. When I asked about how other people manage expectations and traditions, she said, “We totally skip Christmas cards and opt for New Year’s cards instead. Somehow, not dealing with them during the holiday season makes them more fun and relaxed for us.”

She still does her annual card, she just found a way to make the process easier. I love this! By customizing traditions we love, we can take them from being a chore to something we cherish.

4. Look for a win-win solution

Most things that require give-and-take end up best when we look for the win-win solution. My friend Lisa found the win-win solution to managing the expectations of her relatives and in-laws, and it kept everyone happy!

“We don’t spend Christmas Day or Eve with both sides of the family anymore. My family and my in-laws live equal distances away from my house, one side of the family north of us and one side south of us. Our first Christmas together, my husband and I tried to spend Christmas with both sides of the family, and we spent more time in the car driving than we did visiting! After that, we told our families that one side gets us for Thanksgiving and the other side gets us for Christmas. It flip-flops every year.”

It’s easy to get stuck in the trap of thinking, “This is how we have to do it.” When we change our thinking to look for the win-win, it helps us figure out how to change (or stop!) traditions that keep us too busy.

5. Give yourself permission to disappoint

When all else fails, give yourself permission to disappoint someone (including yourself). Pray about it, then let it go.

A friend of mine was planning her wedding and, in the midst of the chaos of planning, she almost had a nervous breakdown. Between all the “must-do’s” on her mom’s list and the “must-do’s” on her mother-in-law’s list, there was not much room left for what she and her fiancé wanted. In the end, she and her husband-to-be had to sit down with their families and gently let them know that while they wanted to honor each of their families’ traditions, it was their wedding, their special day, and they were going to plan it. The conversation and days that followed weren’t without some tears (it’s never fun to disappoint those we love), but the wedding was beautiful, and all the truly meaningful components were there.

Expectations — sometimes put on us by others, and sometimes ones we put on ourselves — have to be managed well to break the cycle of busy in our lives. Finding our groove in a world of expectations means not only asking ourselves tough questions but also turning to Jesus to ask him, “What’s truly

important here? What do you want me to do right now?”

When we purposefully follow Jesus instead of blindly following tradition or succumbing to our own or someone else’s expectations, we will find peace and purpose even in the midst of a world of crazy.



**WHEN WE PURPOSEFULLY
FOLLOW JESUS INSTEAD
OF BLINDLY FOLLOWING
TRADITION OR SUCCUMB-
ING TO EXPECTATIONS,
WE WILL FIND PEACE.**

Action Steps

1. What tradition do you keep that you secretly wish you could change or drop?
2. Evaluate your faith traditions. Are there activities you are doing purely out of “tradition” rather than out of a genuine calling to do those things? Pray and ask Jesus what he would have you do for him.
3. Look at an upcoming traditional event (birthday, holiday, wedding, small group meeting, dinner party, etc.) and look for some way to tweak it to better reflect your available time and energy.

PRE-ORDER NOW

Order your copy of *Breaking Busy* before January 26, 2016 and receive a free copy of *The Breaking Busy Guide* with Alli Worthington and Friends.



ALLI WORTHINGTON

1

Go to the retailer of your choice, listed below and pre-order *Breaking Busy*.

[Amazon](#)

[Family Christian](#)

[Barnes & Noble](#)

[iBooks](#)

[Books-A-Million](#)

[LifeWay](#)

[Christian Book Distributors](#)

2

Email a copy of your receipt to BreakingBusy@AlliWorthington.com

3

Once we receive your email, we'll email you back the PDF copy of *The Breaking Busy Guide*.

MEET OUR GUIDE CONTRIBUTORS



JENNI CATRON



AMY ALLEN CLARK



HAVILAH CUNNINGTON



EMILY P. FREEMAN



CHRISTA BLACK
GIFFORD



MERCY LOKULUTU



DR. MEG MEEKER



BIANCA OLTHOFF



CLAIRE DIAZ ORTIZ



TSH OXENREIDER



MANDY ROSE



DANIELLE SMITH