

# Praying Through the Busyness

By Jason Schouten | November 13th, 2023

As originally appeared on [Edvance's website](#).

For a number of reasons, interest in Christian Education has ballooned in the last couple of years. Growth has become a persistent theme in our schools. And with growth comes strategic planning and all the fun and stress of investing in new staff, envisioning building plans, feasibility studies, re-visiting models of education and leadership, managing larger communities, and all other manner of change.

Change is hard. As school leaders, undoubtedly, we feel that it is our job to get these things right and move our schools into bright and promising futures. We want to be able to articulate why change is good and validate why families are flocking to our schools. We want to be worth the price of admission. We want to be lights on the hills of our cities and towns: examples of Christ in the way we educate and disciple our students. These are good goals for any school leader.

Plans to build and expand, as well as opportunities to grow and fill our hallways and classrooms can feel extremely challenging. Leaders typically shoulder this burden. It doesn't take long for a multi-million dollar project, or the transformation of our staff teams, or the loss of school culture because of masses and masses of new students, or any of the many pressures associated with a growing school, start to make these opportunities feel like burdens. Burdens that will possibly lead to extreme busyness and eventually burnout.

But this is a time of huge blessing! More children being taught from a Christian worldview, hearing the gospel everyday, experiencing Christ's love... isn't this a win? Isn't this what we want?

I think we would all agree: this is a positive development. But that doesn't mean it's easy. It doesn't mean it's all roses for our schools, ourselves, or our leadership teams. Times of change, growth, and big plans, often lead us away from a reliance on God and a deep trust in His plans, into a time of busyness and self-reliance, which often turns into anxiety, stress, and fear.

Our schools play catch up as we try to balance growth with budget demands, all the while knowing the increased cost on our staff and community. We adjust the size and responsibilities of our Leadership teams, hoping it's enough to get us through.

In his book, *The Rest of God*, Mark Buchanan writes: "The Chinese join two characters to form a single pictograph for busyness: heart and killing." He goes on to point out that this "is stunningly incisive. The heart is the place the busy life exacts its steepest toll."

A certain level of busyness is part of a leader's life. To a degree, signing up for leadership is signing up for some busyness. However, excessive busyness, and busyness that turn our eyes away from our Saviour, are significantly problematic. We must ask ourselves: is my busyness manageable? Am I still fully reliant on God and trusting His plans?

Of course we would all say we rely on God, and likely do in the beginning. However, the further down the road we go, the greater the demands get, the more the work piles up (as the patience of our community starts to wear thin), we can quickly start to feel the pressure. We lose sight of what God is doing and run, freeze, or fight... none of which are a choice to rely on God.

So then, how do we rely on God?

Leadership is often synonymous with getting stuff done. Leaders are supposed to be problem solvers. We are supposed to eat strategic plans for breakfast. And, to a large degree, we want to keep doing that. However, there is a subtle difference between the way Christian Leaders lead and how everyone else leads. Christians are not fuelled by, or dependent on, their own abilities, strengths, and gifts. We are fuelled by the power of the Holy Spirit. We are dependent on our Father and count on Him to accomplish scary, big plans. He has been in the business of doing the impossible far longer—and far more successfully—than any of us have ever been.

Easily said. Not easily done.

As you enter a period of growth, or your next strategic plan, or a time of change, consider the following goals and questions. Your responses may begin to develop a framework that will allow for dependence on God as He uses the gifts and skills that He has blessed you with to enable you, through His Spirit, to lead your school.

**School Goal: We will be a school that is intentionally dependent on prayer.**

Questions: Who are your prayer warriors? Do you have a prayer team? Have you created an opportunity for community prayer? Have you set up regular prayer meetings? Do you share prayer requests? Is prayer a meaningful part of Board meetings (and not just a traditional way to open the meeting)?

**School Goal: We will be a school that is patient in the process, trusting God's timing and leading.**

Questions: What is your decision-making process when it comes to these major, strategic decisions? How are you and your Board patient in the process and how is that structured into your Board meetings? How do you ensure there is time for God to enter into your plans, hopes, and dreams? How do you communicate patience in the waiting with your community (especially when everyone wants the plan now! Actually, yesterday!)?

**Personal Goal: I will be a leader who relies on prayer.**

Questions: Do you have prayer partners? Do you have a mentor or colleague who is holding you accountable to prayer and patience? Do you have a professional community that you can rely on, vent to, and/or problem solve with?

**Personal Goal: I will be a leader who doesn't lead alone.**

Questions: How can I best engage my leadership team (and if you don't have a leadership team: volunteers, members of your Board, consultants, etc.) to accomplish our goals? What is my skill set and how do I use it best? Where are my blind spots and areas of need? How do I empower others to fill the gaps?

Entering a time of growth and change can be scary... or it can be a time of anticipation and excitement as we wait to see what great blessings God has in store for our schools. A healthy dependence on prayer will enable us to move from a place of self-reliance, anxiety, and fear, to a place of hope, expectation, and ultimately worship as God continues to demonstrate His faithfulness to His people.

*Jason Schouten is the Edvance High School Cohort Leader and Executive Director at St. Thomas Community Christian School.*

