



# **Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives**

*Richard A. Swenson*

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Are you worn out? This book offers healthy living in four areas we all struggle with-emotional energy, physical energy, time, and finances-and will prepare you to live a balanced life.

## Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives Details

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Author : Richard A. Swenson

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# **From Reader Review Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives for online ebook**

## **Jodi says**

Richard Swenson makes a good point stating that as Americans we are so busy we no longer have time to rest and relax. He calls extreme busyness "overload" and relaxation, "margin." As a doctor he said he would write a prescription for his super-stressed patients that looks like this:

Symptom: Pain

Diagnosis: Overload

Prescription: Margin

Prognosis: Health.

Hmmmm.....that's a lot to think about!

He points out that even though our lives are easier today than they were just 100 years ago, we are much more stressed due to owning too much "stuff," pushing ourselves so hard, living beyond our means financially, overloaded by technology and media, and sleeping less so that we can keep up appearances. He touches on depression and how more people are depressed today than in the past. He does offer a solution for it as service to others - good advice!

I loved the comment too about Americans needing to eat more nutritionally adequate food. He mentions food from "God's way" or "factory's way." His advice is to eat the most direct food from "the Father's hand." Good advice for all generations.

Finally, I loved his comment on the Prosperity Ladder on p. 159. "Most of us look 'up the ladder' and notice that the wealthy have more than we do. This of course, strikes a near fatal blow at one's contentment. If instead, we reversed our gaze and looked down the ladder, our gratitude would thrive and opportunities for sharing would abound." Good advice for trying to be content with what we have and helping others. I need to remember this!

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## **Ashley Antkowiak says**

This was the perfect book to start off this year. I chose "rest" as my word of the year before reading Margin, and I had no idea how perfectly it would apply. I really enjoyed Dr. Swenson's voice and found the book to be both relatable and practical. Rather than simply pointing out a problem (in this case, the destructive nature of progress), he provides many proposed solutions and practical insights (relationship, rest, love). I could definitely see myself reading this yearly as encouragement and accountability to make sure that I'm making margin a priority in my life.

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## **Hdollenger says**

I read this for a class I'm taking. It wasn't anything I haven't figured out myself as a mom keeping up with 5

kids. I've learned to say no to things, and we limit the kids' activities so that we aren't running ragged every night of the week. My husband and I are very protective of our family time margin and don't commit to things we don't think we'll do well. I've realized after 8 years as a homeschooler to leave margin in my school plans, to carve out time away from my children, to make room for exercise and time with friends. The book had some good insights that I imagine might be helpful for someone who hasn't intuitively figured out how to get off the hamster wheel, but it was really more of an affirmation of some of the things we're already doing and some tips to take it further.

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## **Bethany says**

I liked the fact that this book was written by a medical professional. A doctor. Someone who could give credence to how lack of margin contributes physiologically to our bad health.

That said,

\* I felt the book was far more negative than positive. You expect books to set the stage, to define the problem before proffering a solution. This waited til late in the game (more than 1/3 of the way through) to even begin, and for much of the book it remained negative. It wasn't until the 80% mark (I read on Kindle) that the book felt positive.

I never commit any of my writing until I've used wordle.net as an editing agent. It illuminates which words I use. I kept thinking throughout the book that if I put the entire body of text into wordle, it would illuminate the fact that negative words are used far more often.

Really that, for me, damaged the benefit of the book, which should serve to restore (per the title) rather than burden me by understanding the problem more.

\* There is a short appendix in the back. I would've loved to see that earlier on. Or at least seen it referenced. I feel like it helps build his case in a visually appealing way.

\* The author used a couple personal stories from his time as a physician. I wish he had used more.

I saw in the end he has another book on margin. I'm curious how it differs.

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## **Phong Co says**

This started out very promisingly, explaining why we are suffering and stressful because our lives are too hectic, because we have too many commitments and keep trying to pile on more. We need to add margin, little spaces where our minds and bodies can rest. So far so great.

But then, little by little, God enters the picture. You need margin because it's God's plan. Jesus didn't have a calendar, so neither should you. Richard Swenson is obviously a devout Christian, and I have great respect for that, but as a non-Christian it became very uncomfortable to be told that I was not on the right path.

There are some good ideas here, I just wish they weren't so heavily wrapped in religious doctrine.

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## Uncommon Student says

Margin, a book on having time. Ironically I have never had time to read this book. But I finally worked through it and it was worth every minute. We lead margin-less lives of hurry, deadlines, exhaustion, little sleep, spiritual dryness, working late and last minute decisions. We chalk it all up to the "price of progress" and live for weekends at the lake. Even then our cellphones chirp and ring with texts and calls. We crave rest but never stop, not until we drop from exhaustion.

As author Richard Swenson says, "margin is the space between us and our limits." Margin is our reserve, to be conserved for the last stretch of a marathon or used sparingly in the last five minutes of a test. Having margin in our emotions, physical wellbeing, time, and finances leads to a happy, healthy life. Not a perfect life, not a sinless life. But a life that has time and energy to love the Lord, serve the church, and spend time with your family.

Margin was at the very least a convicting read. I don't rest, not like I should. We bounce back and forth between the two extremes: not resting because we fear being idle or justifying laziness by claiming to be resting. True Godly rest, being still to know He is God, restores and refreshes. And I don't make time to rest.

One of the most enjoyable parts of this book was the Christian worldview. It all tied back to loving and serving God, how to best glorify him with our time and resources. Not resting to get out of work, but resting because He made us to need rest. Not managing our work time to give us more "me time", but guarding our work schedule so we can spend time with our family He gave us.

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## Mark Clements says

Swenson does a good job of identifying the problem--most of us are wound way too tightly with no real "margin" for error. His observations are fair and well-explained.

I have to admit that the proposed solutions are a mixed bag. In some ways, he's very insightful and then others go overboard. Going back to "the simple life" can't be the answer for every area where margin needs to be restored. We can and should simplify. We should reexamine the way we handle money and possessions. However, becoming anachronistic isn't the answer.

Overall, the book does make the point that we are overloaded because we've chosen to be that way. It will take conscious effort to move away from the overload we've chosen.

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## Josh says

I'd probably rate this closer to 3.5 stars if Goodreads would allow. There's some really good instruction in here regarding emotional and relational health. Swenson addresses the reality that there are several facets to being healthy and they all work together. Some Christian authors avoid talking about anything other than spiritual health.

That said, I also felt that Swenson was out of touch in some areas concerning technology and entertainment. It's probably a generational thing, but he was very biased against certain forms of modern entertainment. Entertainment that I actually find to be restorative at certain points in my life.

It's worth reading just for the last two chapters on rest and relationships. But there were other points where I was underwhelmed and in disagreement.

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### **Cindy says**

Progress has given us "more and more of everything faster and faster". Therefore our lives are overloaded and unhealthy. We need margin (breathing room) in the areas of emotional energy, physical energy, time and finances. We can work toward this by cultivating contentment, simplicity, balance and rest. Relationships should be our main priority- loving God and loving one another.

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### **Stephen says**

I thought margin is a good book. If you are wondering where the day went or why you are so stressed this is the perfect book for you.

While Ray kurzweil explains why change is happening so quickly from a technology stand point and Alvin Toffler from society. Richard looks at this exponentiation pace of change and inspects the individual lack of ability to cope with this change.

Richard gives good direction of how to gain control of your Margin, which effects your happiness, health, family, and finances.

While this book has some strong Christian overtones the essence of the book has appeal for everyone.

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### **Rebecca says**

Much-needed for today's family. Too many of us overwhelm our lives with unnecessary drains on our resources. In a fast-paced, quickly-evolving world, it's far too easy to get swept into the current of over-extension in every facet. This book is definitely worth taking time to read, absorb, and put into practice the principles and lessons - spiritually, psychologically, financially, emotionally, and physically. We all have 24 hours in a day, regardless how you spend your energy?

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### **Sarah says**

I read "Margin" because I knew I needed some in my life and was looking for practical ways to establish it - especially as someone who works primarily from home. While "Margin" would be great to give to someone who needs to slow down a bit and doesn't know it - if you're already craving a slower pace in life, with the time and space to enjoy life - this will only tell you what you already know. Still looking for more practicality and specific ideas!

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## Keren Threlfall says

Dr. Richard Swenson is a medical doctor (with a physics degree). In *Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives*, he writes about his experience as a physician in encountering the results of overloaded lives. On a more in depth perspective, he writes about his own coming to terms with the need for more margin in his life.

What Is Margin?

"Margin is the space between our load and our limits. It is the amount allowed beyond that which is needed. It is something held in reserve for contingencies or unanticipated situations. Margin is the gap between rest and exhaustion, the space between breathing freely and suffocating."

In many ways, the lack of margin is like being in debt. If you've ever read (or, listened to) Dave Ramsey, just take the same concepts and apply it to our use of time.

The first portion of the book deals with the evolution of marginless living, moving alongside the growth of "progress." Swenson states it well by saying, *"Because most of us do not yet know what margin is, we also do not know what marginless is. We feel distressed, but in ill-defined ways. We can tell life isn't quite what it used to be or perhaps not quite what we expected it should be. Then we look at our cars, homes and big screen TVs and conclude that our distress must be in our imaginations."*

My Encounter with Margin

I first encountered the concept of margin long before I knew there was a term for it. But there was a definite need for it. Daniel and I were on the brink of facing burn-out from being too involved in too many areas of life with too little time. At least, the problem I *thought* we had was *too little time*. In reality, we had just as much as everyone else: 24 hours in our days, and 168 hour each week.

We had moved into a lower-income neighborhood for the specific purpose of trying to get to know our neighbors and having a ministry with them (that was linked with our church at that time). Our problem of not enough margin came to our attention both gradually, but also through some very vivid instances. We began to realize that we had no time to actually get to know our neighbors--there was always a church activity, school activity, or work scheduled into every hour. We were working with the youth group of our church, and though we often did yardwork as a youth group activity, our own yard was becoming overgrown because we never had time to be at home much more than to head to bed or make and eat a quick meal. My husband was in seminary during that time, and several times a semester he would get so sick that he would just stay in bed and sleep for a 24-hour period. We couldn't hear the "you need margin" alarms elsewhere, and so his body was forcing him to slow down.

Gradually, we began to. I was pregnant, and stopped working outside the home several months prior to the baby's birth. My husband, too, began to slow down, and eventually the problem became much clearer. We heard whisperings of margin as a friend advised, "You don't have to be back in church the Sunday after having your baby--it does not make you more or less spiritual. In fact, it might be the opposite." I heeded her advice, and my first months of motherhood were better for it. Although she intended her advice for a specific season, I began to see that I needed margin in many other areas of life, as well. Busyness was not synonymous with godliness, contrary to my previous belief that more busy equaled greater spirituality.

I was excited to learn that there was also a book by this title, and of course, a much more in depth look at the concept of and need for margin. I came across the book in attempt to do further study on the subject, and am definitely the better for reading this book.

#### Convicting and Encouraging

Although I felt we have moved forward in this area, I was reminded of the importance of continual reevaluation in this area, particularly as members of a society that prizes and honors busyness. As Swenson remarks, *"Often we do not feel overload sneaking up on us. We instead feel energized by the rapidity of events and the challenge of our full days. Then one day we find it difficult to get out of bed. Not all threshold limits are appreciated as we near them, and it is only in exceeding them that we suddenly feel the breakdown."*

Swenson touches on margin far more than it relates to margin in our use of time. He addresses the need for margin in financial matters, simplicity, and many other areas of life. The book is written from a Christian perspective, and I found the latter portion both convicting and encouraging. In the final portion, Swenson broaches on the issue of contentment, taking on a devotional tone.

In some areas, I felt the style of the book to be weak, but overall, the message of the book comes across loud and clear. It is also clear that Swenson practices what he preaches, and is quite passionate about the dire need for lifestyle changes among American people, Christians in particular. The first few anecdotes that open the book are like far too many sermons I have memories of--you get the idea that the speaker has a really good story that he really wants to tell, but then it has nothing to do with his sermon. I felt like this was what happened in the first two chapters; after that, I either noticed it less or the anecdotes actually connected to the theme a little better. :)

I definitely recommend this book for anyone living in our busy culture, and doubt that there anyone who would not profit from it in some way.

Have you read *Margin*? Do you see the need for margin in your life?

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#### **Sara Larson says**

This was a very interesting read. I'd be interested in re-reading it with a paper book next time, as this time I listen to it as an audiobook. I read it in a huge time of transition in my life and it was really encouraging to think about the intentional ways we should structure our lives for God's glory and our wellness. This book was hard for me to get into at first because the first section of him describing the need for margin seems so long. But the second half of the book giving detailed "prescriptions" for specific areas (financial, emotional, spiritual, time, etc) in your life and especially the chapter and contentment were really really good and things I look forward to discussing with my husband. I would love to talk through this book with someone soon. They are good ideas; I'm just not sure how it works itself out in different seasons of life.

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#### **Hunter Satterfield says**

A helpful read for those struggling with busyness in their life. Nothing ground breaking for those that have

done considerable studying on the topic, but would be helpful for those graduating from college especially before they find themselves lacking "margin" in life.

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