

Priorities: Effective Use of Time

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The Gift of Time

God intended for a 24 hour day it to be sufficient for us to accomplish everything necessary within that timeframe.

The issue is never a “lack of time” but a lack of proper planning, prioritizing and execution. Time is a gift from God. We must endeavor to serve and please Him with every second He has given us.

We need a mindset-shift in order to start taking responsibility for our actions.

Our mindset determines our behavior. We must have a “value mindset” as described by Paul in Colossians 3:23, “And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men.” (NKJV)

Discerning Timing (What to do and when to do it)

Timing is everything – Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 NASB

The secret to peace with God is to discover, accept, and appreciate God’s perfect timing. Time is assigned to PURPOSE.

We must differentiate between the urgent and the important. The “urgent is fleeting and the “important” is lasting.

Effectiveness vs. Busyness

Effectiveness is having a definite or desired effect. It is productivity with minimum waste. Effectiveness is employing your full potential to glorify Jesus Christ.

Busyness is to keep busy or full of activity; characterized by much action or motion. (Luke 10:38-42)

*Task-oriented Martha was distracted with all her preparations

*Jesus reminds Martha of the need for right priorities

*Identify and understand your main priority in each situation

*Be willing to rearrange your schedule/activities to keep the main thing the main thing

*This requires an intimate walk with Jesus

Satan is hindering Christians from reaching their potential and being fully effective by doing these three things:

1. He is keeping Christians too tired and self-assured to pray
2. He is keeping Christians too in debt to consistently give tithes and offerings
3. He is keeping Christians too busy in church activities to really focus on making disciples of Jesus Christ

Issues with effectiveness

We have technology to encroach on our lives and instead of reducing stress and improving relationships, it's produced the opposite result! The benefit of having more time is negated by adding significantly more tasks to our daily routine.

Cell Phone
The Internet
E-mail

Priorities

The most important thing in life is to know what you are supposed to do. Any activities that we undertake consume our time, talents, effort, energy, and life. The key to this ability is applying the principle of priority.

What is Priority?

Something that has a prior claim on us

Something that merits our primary attention

Something that receives our primary resources

Something that has a right to supersede other things

*Exercise: Make a list of your top 6 priorities.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Purpose helps in setting priorities.

The purpose God has for your life today is rooted in the scriptural assignment found in Genesis 1:28 to "be fruitful and multiply..."

You must ask yourself several questions such as: "Is this important...?" or "If it is important, why? These questions help you set priorities.

The apostle Paul had an intensely focused purpose and highly defined priorities. "This one thing I do: forgetting those things which are behind..." (Philippians 3:14)

Paul said, "There is one thing I do." Paul had one purpose – one goal – and everything in his life filtered through it.

One of the greatest challenges in Jesus' time as well as now is the need to identify God's purpose for one's life. Once you find it, you must focus on it – disregarding things that would distract and pull you in other directions. These distractions are especially difficult when they appeal to your talents and abilities.

Setting a Life Goal – God’s purpose for your life

Jesus teaches us in Matthew 6:10 to seek His will; and in Matthew 6:33 to seek first His kingdom. So, our main goal must be to find out and then do His will. Your life goal is your personal mission statement. Each believer is given the Great Commission to “make disciples” (Matt. 28:18-20) as the believer’s general mission. So, each believer has the same general life goal; but God chooses a specific mission for him as part of the Great Commission. God prepares a person’s life goal before He created him (Ephesians 2:10). The personal life goal is on-going and each person gets it in God’s time. To seize your personal life goal, you need to be ready to do what God asks even when you think you don’t have needed gifts, training, or skills. God gives the life goal and then He equips you.

How do you get your personal life goal? Be alert to what God is doing in your life and work with him in those areas. Be alert to what God asks you to do, and do it.

Setting Goals

A goal is your destination: Where you wish to go, precisely what you wish to achieve. Define your goals in clear, complete, and concise statements, capable of measurement. What will it take to get there?

Examples of How Jesus Prioritized His Time

1. He went to the Temple as was his custom – Luke 4:16
2. He spent time in prayer – Luke 5:16
3. He would go to a solitude place for “Quiet Time” – Mark 1:35
4. He knew how to balance the demands of ministry with personal development
5. He was so focused on His purpose that he would not let the threat of death distract and disrupt from his timeframe – John 8:58-59

Evaluate Your Current Priorities

What purposes do you need to “take hold of” – personally, professionally, spiritually?
How do your current priorities line up with them? Are you aware of your purpose and actively working toward it?

Make a distinction between an opportunity and a distraction, and between what is good and what is right. Priorities protect your valuable energy, time, resources, and talent.

Personal Application/Questions

1. Do you have a “life goal?” If so, state it here. If not, begin to think about it.
2. How do you think having a life goal could help in making better decisions regarding your time?
3. List the things you are passionate about and feel are your purpose in life.

Use “selective neglect”

Available time is fixed but available work isn't. We can't do everything we initiate, plus what others want from us, in the required timeframe, which is usually now! Thus, our conscious or unconscious neglect of things we promise to do but must delay will disappoint somebody. Equally, we will disappoint someone by delaying or by canceling his or her appointment because of more important, often unexpected priorities. Through selective neglect we first choose consciously to disappoint because of a more important existing priority. Then, we choose consciously to defer a specific task in order to complete another more important task that may not necessarily disappoint another.

Considerations before Making a Decision

1. **Parameters.** Parameters prescribe generic conditions that you do not influence.

Consider these four critical factors before making a decision:

Success - What is your definition of success? Is it the attainment of wealth, fame, and turning out well? This is the secular viewpoint of success and influences the decisions a person makes. We need to understand success from God's perspective. Success is an evolving process, a journey. Success is:

To know Christ

To be secure in whom you are, and who you are in Christ

To be the best you can be, using your talents to the maximum degree possible and for His glory

Work- Answers the question: What is the right attitude for performance? Your attitude toward work is fundamental because how you view the activity will determine how much time, effort, and energy you will devote to it. (Eph 6:6-7)

Time - Time available is fixed. You have all the time you need to do God's will for your life. We have to be responsible with the time we have. Time is not the issue; it's our performance within the time available.

Today - Life is comprised of a series of moments. Many fail to seize the moment by either dwelling too much on the past or anticipating the future. To be effective with our time we must make decisions today and do what we can do today.

2. **Priorities.** Priorities define the order of relationships you will respect as you work towards your goals. Priorities help to improve our daily effectiveness by emphasizing the important rather than the urgent but temporary need. Priorities help to distinguish between options that are good and ones that are best for you. How do we determine what is really important in our lives? An important guideline can be found in Paul's statement in I Corinthians: "Everything is permissible for me - but not everything is beneficial. Everything is permissible for me - but I will not be mastered by anything." One of our major responsibilities is determining what is best for us according to our life's purpose and vision.

3. **Principles.** Principles emphasize values to guide you in your daily tasks. Consider everything we do in the context of our discipleship role and always be prepared to implement biblical truths. As followers of Christ, He has called us to be His disciples and to fulfill the Great Commission given to us in Matthew 28:18-20. Consider the full implications of your decisions and actions before rushing ahead, particularly the impact on time, talent, and other resources. Jesus said we must sit down and “count the cost.” What is the time investment?

4. **Process** using the PEAR approach.
 - Plan** for a specific period to achieve specific goals Develop a plan to reflect the steps needed to achieve the goal.
 - Estimate** the time and costs needed to achieve this plan.
 - Act** on the plan
 - Review** and reflect on progress

Psalm 90:12 – “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom”

