

MANAGING YOUR TIME

INTRODUCTION

We will turn to Ecclesiastes 3:17:

I thought in my heart, 'God will bring to judgment both the righteous and the wicked, for there will be a time for every activity, a time for every deed.

Now notice that it says here, "God will bring to judgment..." because "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1). There is a time to die and a time to marry, but dying while you are getting married is not a good moment. The big part for us believers is not only using our time correctly, but finding out when is the **right time** to do the **right thing**. If you had organized a new church twenty years ago you would be sitting in Siberia. That was not a good time for it. But if you do not do it now, then I will send you to Siberia! There is a proper time for everything. One of the most difficult things for a sinful human being to find out is: **What is God's perfect time?**

I. THE SECRET OF TIME MANAGEMENT

A. The secret of time management is **self-management** within a time frame

How much time do you have? The answer is that everybody has the same amount of time. Is there anybody who is going to get 25 hours today? Is there anybody who is going to get 31 days in February? Nobody has more time than anyone else, yet some people get a lot accomplished and other people are panting all the time. What is the difference? The difference is **self-management**, within a certain time frame.



B. There are two things you must do to be successful:

- 1) You must **plan** your work.
- 2) You must **work** your plan

You already know about making a Weekly Plan. Some of you have already been changing your lifestyle to live according to your new weekly plan. That is good, but more of you need to listen to your own instructions. If you write down Monday evening May 3rd I will paint the bathroom, then Monday evening May 3rd you must obey your calendar and paint the bathroom, whether you want to or not. Maybe you do not feel like it, maybe you are tired, maybe you got delayed a little bit and it is already 8:00pm. But your instructions say, paint the bathroom! You begin with a little bit of adrenaline and you paint the bathroom. You must make a plan and then you must work according to that plan.

C. The secret of time management is managing yourself

I am not free to do what I want to do. I wanted to go swim in the Dnieper with my family today, but my plan said, "You must be right here at this Workshop and talk," so I will do this. That is the secret of time management: managing yourself. *Giving yourself instructions and obeying those instructions.*

D. Making a schedule rather than having the schedule make you

This is precisely the struggle we are having with time management. We make a plan and then the phone rings, then somebody comes, then you remember something you forgot to do yesterday, then your wife

gives you a list of products to pick up. Where is your schedule? You made a schedule and now all the other things are trying to make you.

You have to learn to say no to yourself. You have to learn to set priorities, to make a little checklist. You have to learn to show people your calendar and say, "I would like to help you but I am sorry I cannot." That is why a plan is important. Without a plan you can say, "Maybe I can do this and this." I have met lots of people who plan different activities for the same time. They say, "Well, maybe I can do at least a little bit of this and a little bit of that, maybe not all of it."

II. SETTING PRIORITIES

Setting priorities to avoid long-range crisis

A. Levels of priority — there are four levels of priority:

- 1) Important and urgent
- 2) Important but not urgent
- 3) Urgent but not important
- 4) Routine

B. Determine to work with these priorities.

It is one thing to sit here at this workshop and say, "yes, yes, yes," but it is another thing to firmly decide that, "Yes, I am going to follow this system at home."

C. Working from a *Scratch Pad* – a "To Do" List

Daily we are flooded with notes and memos we need to take care of. None of us can remember it all, we keep forgetting items and feel bad about it. The answer is to simply jot everything down on a "**scratch-pad**". We call that a "**To Do**" list. I often make up "To Do" lists.—see sample TM5-7SM1. Then at the end of the day you transfer it onto your daily schedule for the next day (see lecture TM3). All other information you write into your Weekly Plan or Monthly Calendar. That is a really simple way of doing it. The next morning you begin a fresh new day with another "To Do" list.
(If you need further details write in the day, date and time to do it. —see sample TM5-7SM2.)

III. UNIQUE PROBLEMS FOR CHRISTIAN LEADERS

A. Unplanned Counseling

If you are an elder, pastor or a choir director, people will come to you with their problems and say, "Can you help me? I do not know what to do?" It takes time, and you need to have time for that. It is an important thing. So you need to learn to make a plan for some of these difficulties.

B. Family Crises in the Church

It may be a severe illness, or it may be an important but unexpected training seminar . Maybe it is a death. Different things happen that you must take care of.

C. Discipline Situations in the Church or Ministry Team

Different disciplinary-type activities in the church team . Maybe a teacher is doing a poor job or maybe a member is causing a big argument in your church and it affects the reputation of the pastor . So you have to do something about it.

Many of these things are especially related to Christian ministry. If you are a director of a factory or the manager of a bank you just take care of issues at work. Whatever happens with these people at home and in their personal lives you do not care about. But there are unique problems which do exist for Christian leaders and you must take time to take care of them.

D. A lack of a plan is the biggest time waster

If you learn to do things as a routine, you develop a system by which it goes faster and faster. The biggest time waster is **not** having a plan. So the first thing to do is systematize your lifestyle.

I know for instance that many of your lifestyles are not systematized. One time you are tired and you go to bed at 9:30pm, then another night you feel good and you stay up until 1:00am and you do not have a system. My little boy goes to bed at 8:00pm. My older girl goes to bed at 9:30pm and if she is not in bed and lights out and finished and laying down by 9:45pm there is a problem! If it has to be different, then somebody has to first get permission to have it different.

We have our lifestyle very organized. Some years ago I wanted to visit a school and someone was going to pick me up with the car and I told the driver to be there at 8:00am, not 8:05, but 8:00am. This person told the teachers this and this was the biggest joke of the week for that school because nobody understood what the difference was. To me it was a huge difference.

Let me repeat: "A lack of a plan is the biggest time waster!"

III. WORKING WITH YOUR SECRETARY

Many pastors and other ministry leaders ~~have spent time helping a secretary~~

***Write it down—
don't trust your
memory for any-
thing!***

A. Trust her.

That lady is one of your most valuable assistants. She works quietly in your shadow.

She is the FACE of your ministry. Although you are the final authority, for most of the contacts by phone or in person visits she represents the ministry.

Respect her as an equal and treat her with dignity as a worthy person.

B. Communicate with her

Keep her informed (your attitude is key).

It is a partnership to manage the church or ministry office. Work with her, not against her.

C. Use her effectively.

Use her, do not abuse her. Use her to her capacity, but do not wear her out. Have reasonable expectations, priorities and workload.

D. Train her in:

- 1) Chain of Command
- 2) Office functions and procedures

- 3) Policies
- 4) How to represent you
- 5) Who gets through to you on phone or visit

E. Occasional compliments where due

Compliments (give compliments where and if due). Women thrive on compliments. Many need daily encouragement. Give a secretary a little boost and it will affect her performance.

F. Be truthful and up front about her performance

She needs to know if you are dissatisfied with her work so she can improve. (Your attitude towards her work is very important to her.)

G. Don't be so dependent on her that every thing would fall apart if she were not around

Go for a little walk and pick up the mail yourself. Or treat yourself with a little extra sugar and make your own coffee.

H. Exercise patience

Love is patient. 1 Cor. 13:4 So no patience — no love!

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction. Romans 12:12

Be humble, and gentle, be patient. 1 Thes. 5:14

IV. ORGANIZE THE ROUTINE AND LIMIT THE TIME-WASTERS

A. The Telephone



1. In your office - Do not answer it, let a secretary

Upon arriving at your office bunch your messages and answer them immediately or leave them until after your primary time slot. Turn off your phone. Specifically turn it off during your "Kingdom Time" i.e. your 3 hours prime time slot.

2. Let today's messages set tomorrow's priorities.

If you get an text message, or email copy the dates on your phone or in your computer and Mark them in your calendar with a signal that brings up the info a day before you need it.

3. Respond to your messages with a phone in hand, and make your voice reply as you read.

So you read it and then give your answer right away. You will find you can go through your mail much, much faster. Your wife, secretary or somebody else can listen to it and write it out if so needed.

4. Teach your secretary or your wife to screen the calls

Many churches have a "ministry" phone number or one for a part-time secretary. So let the secretary answer it. There is a lot of simple information that people need that a secretary can give. You do not have to give that. you do not need to answer the telephone yourself, someone else can do it.

There is a lot of simple information that people need that a secretary can give. You do not have to give that. Make a habit of referring people to whoever keeps track of schedules and details, whether a secretary or wife.

B. Paper Mail

1. *Let your secretary open, categorize and route the mail.*

Now a days important letters, messages, memos, etc. are all electronically forwarded. Paper now is mostly limited to very official letters, documents, bills, magazines, and junk mail. Nearly all of these should be handled, organized, filed, paid and simply taken care by a trained part-time helper.



C. Availability and Privacy

1. *Make a list of people who can phone (or visit) and talk to you*

Also make a list of people who should NOT talk to you but that the secretary can help.

2. *Be available or not available*

Either be available or not available. Arrange some time when you are available and organize other days that say, "Every Tuesday I do not want to see anybody, I do not want to talk to anybody, that is my private day I want to study for my messages."

In other words you should be totally available to the people sometimes. You are living on this earth in order to help other people, but you do not need to be available for them all the time. You have other things to do. Organize a time when you are going to do special activities and you do not want to be bothered by anybody, but do not allow isolation to develop.

D. Communication with Team Members

1. *Team meetings*

The best thing you can have is meetings every other week for your team of coaches or church workers. Everybody should know when "regular" meetings are and write their ideas and questions down in a notebook so they can be discussed at the meeting.

For churches a very effective way is to combine a one biweekly works/helpers meeting on the night of prayer, and attach a deacons or leadership meeting to the other weekly prayer event.

2. *Use two-way memos instant messaging or email*

Encourage all of your team members to use text messaging or possibly, for more important issues, email, to do communications. It is much better than verbal communication because it can be followed up. And it is not as disruptive in an office situation.

E. Visitors

1. *Visitors by appointment only*

Try to make appointments with people when they can come. As a spiritual leader it is much better for you to organize one evening or one afternoon and invite people to come to you at that time. Now I know that people are not used to that, but you can train them, and you can do that real simply. Do not let everybody come but only let people come by special appointment, those who have previously arranged to see you.

Somebody comes to you and they want to have your advice or they want to talk to you about something, so you say, "That is great I would like to talk about that. Could you come tomorrow night, let's see. 8:00pm would be very good." And you are just beginning to teach people about time management. Of course it is not going to happen perfectly right away, but if you do not try it your life will not change. You need to try several different things so your life slowly will begin to change and become better.

2. *Closed door vs. open door policy*

Have a time for visits before and after the church services. Soon all people begin to know that you are free to talk to before the church service or after the church service.

3. *Limit the time of visits*

The way you do that is, somebody comes to you and you look at the time and you say, "Ok, somebody else is going to meet me in fifteen minutes so we have about fifteen minutes to talk together." So before you start you set the time limit. You will find that is a wonderful tool.

Usually people do one of two things;

- a) They are afraid to talk about the real problem so they just babble and talk about everything but not about the real thing until maybe twenty minutes later.
- b) Another kind of person gives his problem first and then maybe you can solve it very quickly, but he feels it is too short and that he cannot just get up and leave now, so he says, "What did you think about the weather last week?"

By giving people time limits you help people to concentrate.

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CONCLUSION

In closing let us review some of the crucial elements of this lecture.

You must plan your work --- and -- — You must work your plan.

Self-management is giving yourself instructions and **obeying** those instructions

You have to learn to say **no** to yourself. You have to learn to set priorities.

By giving people time limits you help people to concentrate.

Set priorities to avoid long-range crisis:

- Important and urgent
- Important but not urgent
- Urgent but not important
- Routine

Write things down — don't trust your memory for anything!

Love is patient; so be patient in affliction — no patience — no love!

Brothers you would do well to practice these points. You would do better to include them into your ministry. You would do the best if you changed your lifestyle. God wants to anoint his servants with beauty. He says "*My yoke is easy, my burden is light.*" God wants to give that to you. He wants to anoint you with such a blessed new lifestyle. Let us praise Him for that. Hallelujah Lord, praise be to your holy name. Thank you. Thank you. Amen.

Practical assignment

Completed

- Organize your day according to your priorities ☐
- a. Over the next three months daily write down your "To Do" list according to your priorities and incorporate it into your daily plan. At the end of each day note how many of your highest priorities you accomplished. Adjust your next daily schedule accordingly.

- b. Weekly make a progress report stating what priorities you accomplished, when you accomplished them, and how you can improve your use of time during the next week. You will be required to show these reports at the next meeting.
- Choose a time every week when you are not available at all, and a time when you are fully available. At the beginning of the week write these times down and give a copy of them to your secretary, wife or anyone else who helps you to guard your time. At the end of each week note how successful you were by placing a plus or a minus beside the time in question. Bring these records to the next meeting. □

Blessings to you, our dear friends!

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