

Living
The Maximum Life
With
Power and Purpose

Organizing My Time

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What are you trying to do with your life? What is your mission, your vision? How do you want your life to look in accomplishing that mission? You've got to set goals. Goals are those steps that are going to lead you to the vision in the accomplishment of the mission and they must be specific and measurable.

This lesson is primarily about how to organize your day-to-day living to accomplish those goals. How do you manage your time? Time is your most precious asset. In fact, your time is your life. So obviously if you're going to live the maximum life, you've got to make maximum use of your time.

"Be very careful, then how you live—not as unwise but as wise... making the most of every opportunity..." (Ephesians 5:15) Do you understand what Paul is saying? "Make the most of every opportunity because time is precious." Time is worth far more than your money because, unlike your money, you can't save your time. You can't borrow it, buy it or manufacture it. All you can do is use it. If you don't use it, it's gone. If you don't learn to manage your time, nothing else will be managed in your life. It's that critical.

How many of you would admit "I just don't seem to have enough time to get everything done I want to do"? I saw a *Calvin and Hobbs* cartoon that I got a kick out of. Calvin turned to Hobbs, and he said to him, "I know that God put me on earth to accomplish certain things. Right now, I'm so far behind, I'll never die." Have you ever felt like that? The problem is not having enough time. No! To the contrary, time in many senses is the great equalizer.

Unless the world ends today, virtually every one of us will live all the way through today. If you live all the way through today, it is the one thing that you have in common with everybody else who lives through the day. You're not of equal strength, age, money or opportunity. But there's one thing all of us who will live through the day have in common, each one of us will have 24 hours, 1,440 minutes, no more, no less. The problem is not that we don't have enough time; we all have really the same amount. The question is: How do you use your time?

Are you disorganized? Are you mismanaging your time? A lot of people don't know. They have plodded along, or gone in circles for so long, they really don't realize the goals that could be accomplished and the vision that could be achieved if they properly managed their time. Evaluate your situation. Do you recognize any of the following symptoms of time mismanagement?

1. Messiness.

Is your desk cluttered? How about the top of your dresser in your bedroom? Some of you know exactly what I'm talking about; they're just filled with stuff. What about your car? Is it dirty on the inside and the out, constantly? Do you remember the last time you had your oil changed?

2. Forgotten appointments, messages, and deadlines.

Now quite frankly, those things occasionally happen to the best of us. They happen to the most organized of people. But for the disorganized, virtually every day becomes filled with broken commitments and lame excuses.

3. Lack of productivity.

You find yourself doing small, boring tasks, just so you'll feel like you got something done. You can check it off your "To Do List." There's a tendency to daydream and to avoid making a real decision, a tendency toward procrastination.

4. Poor or lower self-esteem.

Disorganized people tend to feel poor about their work. They find it very hard to accept the compliments of others because deep down they know they're really not doing what they could do. Frankly, poor time managers often don't like themselves very much.

5. Poor quality of personal relationships.

If you're a poor time manager, you may be finding that days will pass without your having significant conversation between you and your spouse or children. When you do talk, those conversations may be shallow and devoid of self-revelation. They may be un-affirming. You may sense yourself becoming increasingly irritable at home. These are a key sign of time mismanagement.

6. Lack of intimacy with God.

Disorganized Christians want to feel close to God, but they seldom do. A preacher doesn't need to get up and say, "Now you need to set aside time for daily Bible reading and personal prayer time and time of meditation and reflection." They know all that. They simply are not doing it. They excuse themselves by saying, "Well, there's just not enough time in the day." But deep down they know it's really more a matter of priorities, organization, and personal will.

Did three or more of those symptoms hit home with you? How do you manage your time for the maximum life? Well I want to share with you now the seven laws for managing your time. Beside each of them I've given you a scriptural example. I think every one of them is as spiritual as it can possibly be. If your will, if your mission is to please God, you need to examine these seriously and apply them.

Laws of Managing Time

A. Take control of your time.

The central principle of all personal time organization is simple: Time must be budgeted. People who say, "Well, I'll get to that when I have the time," they've blown it right there. You never have the time, you make the time. Take control of your time.

Look at what David said in "Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." (Psalm 90:12) Now that may be a little bit poetic for you, but David is saying. if you're going to have a heart of wisdom, you must know where your time goes. Better yet, you must decide where your time goes so you can devote your time to the important rather than the urgent.

One of Satan's most effective strategies for Christians is just to keep us busy doing less important things. If Satan can't make you bad, he'll just make you busy. In other words, he can make your life ineffective by distracting you with worthless activities.

A few years ago *Time Magazine* came out with an issue and on the cover there was the headline "The Rat Race, How America is Running Itself Ragged." It said "What money was in the eighties, time is going to be

in the nineties because we're running out of time." No, we're not running out of time, we're not scheduling our time. We're not numbering our day's right. Take control of your time.

Have you ever noticed for example that we tend to give priority to scheduled events over non-scheduled events? Let me explain. If the only thing you've scheduled on a Monday is a 2:00 dental appointment, you will revolve the rest of your day around that dental appointment. Well, I might can go here, I might can go there, but I've got to go to that 2:00 dentist appointment. In other words, you give priority to scheduled events.

Rather than always letting other people determine what's important in your life by scheduling your time, you determine what's important. You schedule time for the things that you value and that you want to accomplish. That is your responsibility. Stewardship is critical to living the Christian life. You are a steward of your money, abilities, activities, functions and time. Don't let people take it from you unconsciously. It's your decision.

B. Start with God.

When you begin to take control of your time, you make sure you're spending time with God. "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." (1 Corinthians 10:31)

I want to share with you an amazing principle. Whatever you turn over to God, He blesses and gives you more of that thing. I did not make that up. It's from Luke 6:38, "Give and it will be given unto you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap." Whatever you give to God, He gives more to you.

Now the first thing we think this means is money. Give your money and He'll give it back to you; good measure and press down. But it's true for good deeds just as it is for money. It's true God will give you more opportunities. Remember, Jesus also said, "If you're faithful in little, I'll give you the opportunity to be faithful in much." It's true for your love. Have you found that out, yet? You give your love to God; He'll give love to you in all kinds of ways. If you love other people, more of it will come back to you. It's also true for your time. If you turn it over to God, He'll give you more time.

In the *Good News Version* Proverbs 10:27 states "Reverence for God adds hours to each day." That may be physically impossible, but it is a spiritual truth. If you start each day with time before the Lord, it will amaze you how much extra time you'll have for the rest of the day. You don't have time for devotions? Get up 15 minutes earlier. Don't be like the fellow who was so busy swatting mosquitoes, he never drained the swamp. If you want more time, you've got to start by giving more time to the Creator of time. Let Him multiply the time at your disposal.

C. Plan your day around your goals.

If you have a life mission to please God with goals, then plan your day around those goals. If you do not have a life mission, shape your vision now and visualize how you want your life to be three to five years from now. Remember, a good vision covers all the facets of your life. Be sure not to omit purpose, passion, people, and praise, otherwise you'll leave out major parts of life. Now, set your goals to help you accomplish your vision. Once you've written them down, reflect on them regularly in your daily activities. This constant follow-up is where people miss it.

Almost everybody I know has set goals at one time or another in their lives. Most of us have made a New Year's resolution. Haven't you? Even if you never had a life mission, even if you never had a life vision, most of us made a resolution. That's a form of a goal.

We set goal and "To Do List" and never even thinking about them. That's because most of us are activitydriven. We think of all these things we could and should do. Then we start our day just randomly doing those things on that "To Do List," things that we believe are good and necessary. The problem with a "To Do List" is that the things on that list vary widely in value. If you're just going to start doing things on your list, you may leave out the most valuable things. If you just live by your "To Do List," you're not purposedriven, but activity-driven. Don't think it's time management just because you have a list. You must establish priorities.

Your "To Do List" should reflect your goals you have written down. Your "To Do List" should reflect the really important things you want to see done in your life. Each day when you shape a "To Do List," try to move toward the accomplishment of at least one goal in each of the four major areas of your life. Move toward the accomplishment of your passion, purpose, people or praise goals.

There are all kinds of books out there on goal setting, but they don't tell you the most important thing. They tell you how to make a billion dollars. But none ever mention that one day you will stand before God in the Judgment. God is going to call that billionaire a failure if he didn't construct his life around the goals of doing what is pleasing to God.

Paul said "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize." (1 Corinthians 9:24) When you have a race; a sprint, a mile or a marathon, you've got to go in the direction of the finish line. "Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly..." (vs. 26) Can you picture a hundred yard sprint and some guy takes off in another direction? How ridiculous that is! But that's what so many people do with their lives.

Your challenge will not be separating the good from the bad; your challenge will be grabbing the best from all possible good. Therefore, plan your day around your goals.

D. Focus on the important over the urgent.

Most people organize their lives around two things: the urgent and the unfinished. We wake up in the morning and we think: What's urgent today? What fire do I need to go stomp out? Remember that which cries the loudest is seldom the most important. You need to prioritize what's really important.

E. Spend time on your strengths.

We've discussed living the maximum life by doing less of what you're not shaped to do and doing more of what you are shaped to do. Do less of what God isn't expecting you to do, and do more of what you are created to do. One of the sad realities about un-seized time is that it tends to flow in the direction of our weaknesses. We tend to spend more time doing things of what we're not very good at. But with proper planning, we'll spend more time on doing those things than what we do very well.

Don't misunderstand. We need to budget some time to improve our weaknesses and to develop skills. But that should not be most of our time. "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (Ephesians 2:10) I want to find my shape and spend as much of my time doing that which I know God wants me to do because he's given me strength to tackle those tasks.

F. Budget time in advance.

Solomon said "The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty." (Proverbs 21:5) There's a financial implication in that proverb, but look at it, he says, if you plan ahead, it will profit your whole life. If you do everything in haste, you're going to have problems. I have learned the hard way that the principle elements of my time need to be on the calendar eight weeks in advance of the date.

Do you know the type of things that need to be budgeted in advance?

- a. Spiritual disciplines.
- b. Time with spouse
- c. Time for my children and their activities
- d. Friendships
- e. Rest and recreation

This may be the most critical of the seven laws because budgeting time in advance allows me to take control of my time, it allows me to allocate time with God, it allows me to focus on my goals and it allows me to deal with the important over the urgent if I do it ahead of time. The plans of the diligent lead to profit, but haste will cause poverty.

G. Busier is not better.

There is an example found in Exodus 18. When Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, came to see Moses, the leader of the Children of Israel, Moses was judging two to three million Israelites from sun-up to sundown. Don't you know Moses was glazed over by the end of the day? Jethro said, "You're killing yourself, and you're wasting their time, too." Jethro then taught Moses how to break it down into different divisions.

Are you too busy doing good things to be effective? Are you spending your time as God would have you spend it? Are you like a hamster on his little wheel?

I found a little parody of the 23rd Psalm which may help you remember to be effective not just busy. It goes like this:

The clock is my dictator, I shall not rest.
It makes me lie down only when exhausted.

It leads me to deep depression, it hounds my soul. It leads me
in circles of frenzy for activity's sake.

Even though I run frantically from task to task, I will never
get it all done. For my ideal is with me.

Deadlines and my needs for approval, they drive me.
They demand performance from me beyond the limits of my schedule.

They anoint my head with migraines. My in-basket overflows.

Surely fatigue and time pressure shall follow me all the days of my life; And I will dwell in the bonds of frustration, forever.

What's sad is more people live by that *23rd Psalm* than the real one. They might not admit it, but they do.

Are you tired of just trying to keep up? Are you tired of being activity driven? I've got great news Jesus Christ offers you an alternative. Remember when He said in Matthew 11:28-30 "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden" heavy laden, by the way, just means stressed out. "All you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (RSV) I don't know what you think that means, but it's a promise from our Lord. He says, you come to me, get your will in sync with my will, your life set by my purpose and it will quit being real hard. In fact, I'll make sure that it's the most productive and effortless life that you'd ever live.

People, we've have just enough time in this old world to do God's will. If we try to do more, then there won't be enough time. Stop living by a "To Do List" and start living by goals based upon your life's mission to do God's will. Schedule those activities to lead you to those goals. That's not just some kind of business mumbo jumbo, that is exactly what our Lord did. He didn't let everybody else tell him what to do. He knew exactly what he wanted to accomplish. He got up early in the morning and went to a far place to pray. I think that's telling us He did that every day. He started with God and then He planned everything around His life mission and the goals to getting there. It's a spiritual activity not some management activity. As God's steward, He compels you to do it.

But going back to Matthew 11:28-30 "Then Jesus said, 'Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke fits perfectly, and the burden I give you is light.'" (NLT) It will only happen if you're in Jesus. He is the power for life management no place else. If you are not in Christ today you need to come to Him, put your trust in Him and obey His gospel. Lesson # 1301 January 19, 1997