

Priority Management

Matthew 25:14-30

All of us hold responsibilities ranging from work schedules, school schedules, school work, and so on. To accomplish each task we establish a time schedule to get all these things done. Each person has their own way of setting up their own time schedule. You have the planner and every minute is scheduled in a calendar, you have the person that jumps from one task to the next until all tasks are complete, and then you have the last person that says, "oh my goodness, that is due tonight," I have to get that done right now. When you are in college there are so many "responsibilities" or "activities" that you can add to your calendar. Universities know this and the nature of a college student's busy schedule, therefore, they offer time management classes to help incoming Freshman to learn how to manage their schedules well.

Most of the lessons center around the idea of time management; which is important. However, time can always be managed well. The best way to establish our time management is by setting our priorities. Harvey Herman says, "The priorities of your life are most clearly seen by your use of time."

As a child I remember so often hearing my parents and grandparents say, "wow, how time flies." I never felt like time went by so fast, I just wanted to grow up and it took a long time to get there. However, now I hear those very same words come out of my mouth. An hour turns to eight hours, which turns into the end of the day, eight hours turns into a week, just even skip past the next twelve months the year is over. Then at the beginning of each new year I ponder these questions; What did I do with that year? Did I become a better person, did I go anywhere significant, did I make great relationships - time flies. "It's not so much what you do each day - it's what you get done that counts." (Will Rogers) Time is a valuable resource because it is not able to be stored or saved it is only used and then it is gone.

Jesus knew His time on earth was very valuable, and how he spent he knew was important. John 15 gives us the example of how he set his priorities.

A Life-Style of Biblical Priorities Being a Steward of My Resources		
Priority One John 15:7-11	Priority Two John 15:12,13,15b	Priority Three John 15:18,19,21,26,27
A Progressive commitment to Jesus Christ.	A Progressive commitment to the body of Christ.	A Progressive commitment to the work of Christ in the world.
This involves: Bible study, personal worship, and prayer.	This involves my family and the larger body of Christ. (ie: Life Groups and TNW)	This involves the evangelistic mandate and social justice mandate. (ie: Mission Trips)
This demands time alone.	This demands time to love and serve one another.	This demands time to go as a servant.
Beware of over-emphasis here and becoming a Pharisee.	Beware of over-emphasis here and becoming a parasite.	Beware of over-emphasis here and becoming too task-oriented.

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Just like Jesus' time on earth was valuable, our lives and what we do with them are important. In "The Parable of the Bags of Gold," you have a master that has given each of his servants a bag of gold. The master's expectation is that each servant will invest this gold wisely, so that when he returns the servants will have made more gold due to their investments. As believers we know that the Lord has entrusted us with time here on earth. What we do with that time matters to Him. In the parable, two of the servants took the gold and increased the amount they were given, the master's response was "well done my good and faithful servant." Our hope as disciples of Christ is that at the end, the Lord can say to us, "well done my good and faithful servants". That will be due to the fact that we made an important investment with our time here on earth.

Many times we can fill our schedule with many "responsibilities", however, we have to be most careful that what we are investing our time with what is truly a wise investment. The third servant in the parable, said he did not invest his gold because he knew that his master was a hard man, so he hid it in a field. He was unwise in his investment. The interesting comment that this servant said, if you did not catch it, is that he knew his master. If he knew his master, he would have chosen to invest his gold wisely because he would have known that his master's response would have been disappointment. In scheduling our time, we have to listen to the heart of the Father. Are the "responsibilities" we take on a wise investment of our time? We don't want to fill our schedules up because that makes us look important, we want to make a wise investment of our time that will best glorify our Master.

The third row in the above table, states the practicality of the time needed to accomplish our set priorities. One priority that is not listed in the table is schoolwork. However, it can fall under our commitment to Jesus Christ. Our lives are meant to worship him, therefore we worship Him through being diligent in our schoolwork. If we model a life after Christ then we can list our responsibilities under one of these three categories of priorities. Then from that list you can establish a time management schedule needed to complete each task. Keep in mind, "the greater the priority, the more frequently one has to say no."

Below are exercises that you can use to set-up a time management schedule.

Procedures for Developing a Weekly Activity Schedule:¹

1. Make a list of next week's activities.
2. Determine if each activity is to be done next week or during some future week.
3. Select only those activities to be done next week and determine which ones should be delegate.
4. Set priorities for the activities.
5. Determine the amount of time to be allotted for the completion of each activity.
6. Assign a specific day on next week calendar, impose deadlines on yourself, even if none are required.
7. Conduct a follow-up at the end of the week to determine whether all projects were accomplished on schedule.

¹ Rush, Myron, *Management: A Biblical Approach* (Cook Communications Ministries, 2005), 151.

Fill in the blanks to see if you are using your time wisely. You would be surprised with what you can do in an hour, if it is a focused hour.

A Full Day Time Schedule:
8:00 AM:
9:00 AM:
10:00 AM:
11:00 AM: Interruptions (You cannot schedule interruptions but this is your time to get ahead or catch up from prior interruptions.)
12:00 PM:
1:00 PM:
2:00 PM:
3:00 PM:
4:00 PM:
5:00 PM: Interruptions (You cannot schedule interruptions but this is your time to get ahead or catch up from prior interruptions.)
6:00 PM:
7:00 PM:
8:00 PM:
9:00 PM:
10:00 PM:
11:00 PM:

Discussion Questions:

1. What kind of investments are you making with your time now?
2. When you have to “get things done,” does it feel overwhelming to you, and why?
3. What are things that rob you from investing your time wisely?

Application:

- Take time to pray about your time management schedule, and ask the question: with the responsibilities I have, am I truly making a wise investment of my time so that my Master would be able to say, “well done my good and faithful servant”?
- Now make your own schedule for a day. List your responsibilities, arrange them in the order of their priority, and then put them into the above schedule.
- Follow up with your resource group leader or life group leader to see how well you have done to make wise investments of your time according to the schedule you have made.