



EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

PRIORITIES IN THE USE OF TIME

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Introduction

The Story of Bethlehem Steel



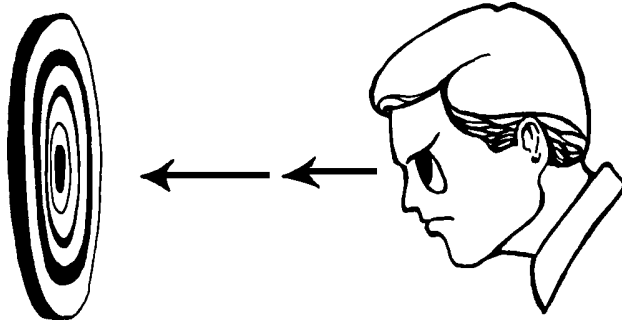
Many years ago Charles Schwab, president of an obscure steel company, was visited by an efficiency expert. In trying to encourage the company to use his services, the efficiency expert presented several methods of management. Finally Charles Schwab blurted out, "We already know too much. What we need is something to help us do what we already know we should be doing. Show me how to get more things done with my time, and I will pay you anything you ask within reason."

The efficiency expert, Ivy Lee, told Mr. Schwab that in 20 minutes he could show him something that could make him 50% more efficient. Then he handed Schwab a sheet of paper and told him to write down the six most important things he had to do tomorrow and number them according to their priority. "In the morning," instructed Lee, "take the top priority item and work on it until it is done. Then go on to numbers 2 and 3 in the same manner. If you do not finish all 6 items, don't worry, you have worked on the most important things anyway. Do this every working day and get your employees to do the same. After trying it for as long as you like, send me a check for what you think the idea is worth."

A few weeks later Schwab sent Lee a check for \$25,000 with a note saying the Priority List idea was one of the most important lessons he had ever learned. As Charles Schwab applied the plan over the next five years, Bethlehem Steel grew from an unknown company to the largest independent steel producer in the world. Schwab, needless to say, became a millionaire.

Years later, Schwab's friends, upon hearing this story, asked him if he didn't think \$25,000 was a rather high fee for such a simple idea. Schwab replied that in its simplicity lay its greatness and that it was perhaps the one best investment he ever made.

Priorities



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The Importance of Priorities

Since we can only do a small number of the possible activities that come our way, it is important that we decide all matters on the basis of our objectives. Once we have planned our day, week, or month based upon our objectives, we have a basis for selecting the activities in which we will involve ourselves.

One of the greatest reasons we do not accomplish our objectives is that we say, "Yes," to things that have nothing to do with reaching our goals. Our lives fill up with time-consuming activities that only lead us further away from our objectives. One of the greatest time-saving devices in the world is the little two-letter word **NO**. A person who has not mastered the art of saying, "No," to things that have nothing to do with his objectives is doomed to a frustrating and pressurized life.

Remember

Just because I say **NO** to a request does not mean it *will not get done*. If it is important enough, it *will be delegated* to someone else.

The simple Priorities Plan is the backbone of almost every successful person's management program. The idea of doing **First Things First** and **Second Things Not At All** will change your life from one of frustration and over-*busyness* to one of accomplishment and rest. Most **unsuccessful people** save the important things till the last. They take care of the non-essential trivia first; consequently, they never get to the priority items in their lives.

Value System and Priorities

Objectives and priorities are a reflection of our value system. Where our time and resources are expended is where our true values lie. The Bible says:

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.
(Matthew 6:21)

Therefore, we must be careful as to where the treasures of our time and money are spent, for that is where our hearts will be.

Often we hear people state very godly and worthwhile objectives, but if one were to analyze the expenditure of their resources, one would discover that their true goals were not what they stated.

What Are Your Priorities?

Are they in keeping with God's priorities and objectives for His Disciples?

The Kingdom First

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

(Matthew 6:33)

Jesus Pre-eminent

And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

(Colossians 1:18)

Obedience

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

(John 14:21)

Prayer

And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

(Mark 1:35)

The Word

This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

(Joshua 1:8)

Witnessing

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

(Acts 1:8)

Making Disciples

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

(Matthew 28:19-20)

The Personal and Spiritual Management Aid is a tool designed to help you make practical application to Jesus' command to **Know Him** and to **Make Him Known**. As you use it each day, you will be able to *plan your time wisely, live by your priorities, and keep Christ first*.



- **Live According to Your Priorities**
- **Put Christ First**

Tips in Priority Management of Time

Plan Every Day of the Week

If you do not plan your days according to *your* priorities, other people will fill up your days with *their* priorities. While they sleep like a baby at night because their priorities were accomplished or delegated, you will end up with insomnia because you have put yourself another day behind. On your Personal and Spiritual Management Aid there is a place for you to plan your day according to your priorities—use it.

Don't Commit Yourself Hastily

Many times people will ask you to take on some job, responsibility or commitment and before thinking seriously about it you find that you

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have already said, “Yes.” This is a poor practice. We should not decide to undertake a responsibility simply because we feel pressed by someone else to do it, or even because the responsibility sounds like a good cause.

While checking carefully to see if the responsibility will help or hinder our stated objectives, we should decide such matters prayerfully before God. We must not feel reluctant to say to the person who asks us, “Could I have a day or two to think and pray about that before committing myself?” By doing this we can put some emotional distance between us and the pressure of the request. Our answer, whether “yes” or “no,” will be objective, rather than emotional and subjective. We will have an opportunity to review the matter realistically with our diary and objectives before us to see if this activity or engagement really ought to be among our priorities. If this is not a priority, we will not be whole-hearted in our efforts and will not be a good testimony for Christ. The Bible commands us:

And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

(Colossians 3:23)

Don't Let The Phone Destroy Your Day

The story is told of an old man who would never answer his phone. When someone asked him why, he said, “I got that phone to help me—not so people can call me to help them!”



This is probably not the proper attitude for a Christian to have, but the old man did have a point. It seems the phone interrupts our priorities so often that we fail to get anything done.

When you talk to a busy professional person, it is almost impossible to get past his secretary. She tells you he is not available and asks if she or someone else in the office can help you. She also inquires as to the nature of your business before taking your number. All of this tells you the executive has planned his day and is not allowing others to plan it for him. Most often, he has scheduled a time just before noon or at the end of the day to answer his phone calls.

You can do the same thing. When someone calls, ask the person if you could call them back later. You can explain that you are tied up for the moment (but you don't have to say exactly what you are doing). Then you can call him back when you have time planned in your schedule to deal with phone calls.

If you need to phone someone who likes to chat a lot about nothing, call him near meal time when he is hungry and anxious to eat or at quitting time when he is anxious to beat the traffic home. You will be surprised at how quickly he will finish his business with you!

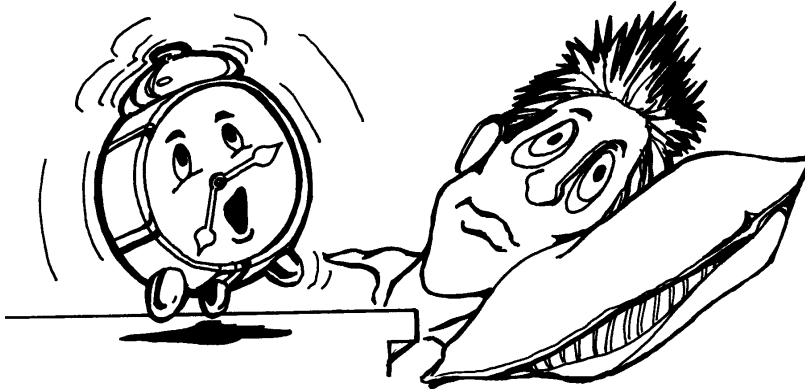
Kill Two Birds With One Stone

Take wasted time and redeem it. You can meditate, memorize, review or pray while you are driving, washing dishes, shaving, putting on makeup, or exercising. It is always nice to have a time to sit down and do our spiritual activities, but it is not always realistic or practical. Use occasions when your mind would otherwise slip into neutral or think about non-essentials to think about God and His Word. This is what is meant in Deuteronomy:

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.
(Deuteronomy 6:6-7)

Another way to **kill two birds with one stone** is to combine jobs or errands that can be done together. You may need to go to the post office today. Think about other places you need to visit which are near or on your way to the post office. Keep lists of things you need to buy or do which are not urgent. Then, when you have occasion to go somewhere, you can combine several things at once. This again goes back to planning ahead. If you do not take time to plan your priorities, you will never be able to combine them efficiently.





Discipline Your Time

Get on a schedule and *stay on it*. Go to bed at a planned time and get up at a planned time.

The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.

(Proverbs 13:4)

As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed.

(Proverbs 26:14)

Everyone needs adequate rest. If you are impulsive about when you go to bed—one night it is early, the next night very late—you will be irregular in how you function the next day.

Turn off the TV

Most Christians spend more than 15 hours per week in front of the TV set. Watching TV is sometimes relaxing but is not the only kind of recreation we need. We need active, leisure pastime where we exercise our bodies and relate to other people. Plan your recreation—don't let it plan you.

Plan Your Day With God And The Basics As First Priority

Make **no** allowances when it comes to putting God and His commands first. If we don't put God as our first priority daily, we *never* will. We will be exchanging our lives for the **temporal** rather than the **eternal**.