

Time Management

MANAGE YOURSELF, NOT YOUR TIME!



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Would you like more time for yourself? Need more time to pray or for personal Bible reading at home? How about finding time for at least one group Bible study class each week? Of course, we all do! Let's see how we can find that time.

Do you linger just a little longer in bed before tossing the blankets off in the morning, take extra-long coffee breaks, watch TV shows you don't enjoy, or continue non-productive telephone conversations? And then have you wondered why you never have enough time to do the things you really want to do?

Time management is defined as "the analysis of how working hours are spent and the prioritization of tasks in order to maximize personal efficiency in the workplace." (Collins English Dictionary, <http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/time-management>.) William Penn is said to have commented that "time is what we want most, but what we use worst."

Time cannot be managed. We all have the same number of hours and minutes: 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 52 weeks a year. Hours and minutes cannot be saved and used at another time, new minutes cannot be created, and hours cannot be hidden and found later. We all have 24 hours a day. How we use that time is what is important.

*There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under the heavens:
a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,
a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,
a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,
a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,
a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,
a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace
(Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 NIV).*

Since you can't manage time, manage yourself! John Maxwell developed the following formula to rate the importance of a task in order to manage yourself effectively (<http://johnmaxwellonleadership.com/2010/11/29/dont-manage-your-time-manage-your-life/>).

1. Rate the task in terms of importance.
 - Critical = 5 points
 - Necessary = 4 points
 - Important = 3 points
 - Helpful = 2 points
 - Marginal = 1 point

2. Determine the task's urgency.
 - This month = 5 points
 - Next month = 4 points
 - This quarter = 3 points
 - Next quarter = 2 points
 - End of year = 1 point

3. Multiply the rate of importance times the rate of urgency.
Example: 5 (critical) x 4 (next month) = 20

Using this formula, assign your tasks a number and then make a to-do list from highest number to lowest number. Start each day by working on the task with the highest number, setting your priority.

We have a tendency to spend far too much time on things that don't matter. For example, we may spend too much time at the beginning of our day on social media sites or reading emails instead of doing our critical tasks first.

You may have heard the story about a professor who held up a jar of rocks in front of his class. He asked them if the jar was full. They all agreed it was. Then he took a bag of small pebbles and poured them into the jar. The pebbles filled in the space around the jar; he asked again if the jar was full. Everyone again said yes, it was full. Next he took a bag of sand and poured it into the jar. The sand filtered through the rocks and pebbles until it seemed that all the space was filled. For the third time the class agreed that the jar was full. Finally, he filled a pitcher with water and poured it into the jar until it spilled over the top. The professor said, "Now we can say the jar is really full." He also asked his class an important question: "Do you think if I had started with the water, then the sand, and then the pebbles, there would still be room for the rocks?" (Adapted from <http://www.livingwellspendingless.com/2013/09/03/filling-the-time-jar-5-steps-that-will-change-your-life/>.)

If we compare the jar to our day and the rocks to our tasks, we can see the need to fill our day with the critical tasks first, completing them in terms of importance, or we will not have time to get everything accomplished. Applying this strategy to your day helps you to get more done in less time, leaving more time for the things you want to do. You may consider that quiet time for personal devotions is a daily priority, so do that first, and then go down the list of other priorities. You will find that you now have time for attending a

new Bible study group, keeping a date-night with your husband, spending extra time with your children, or having more time with friends.

In managing yourself, try to follow these six simple steps:

Step One: List priorities

Define what's important. You cannot prioritize your time if you don't know what is most important to you. Analyze the tasks ahead and then prioritize what needs to be done. Utilize John Maxwell's formula for rating the importance of each task.



Step Two: Set specific goals

To set specific goals, list several important tasks you would like to accomplish in a specific length of time and then determine the urgency of completing these tasks. Be sure to set realistic, manageable goals.

Step Three: Begin with the hardest, but most important, tasks

Start your day by tackling your most difficult, most important tasks. Even if you don't do much for the rest of the day, you will still have accomplished a lot.

Step Four: Reset your habits

Make a list of items you want to do every morning, such as enjoying a cup of coffee or tea while reading personal devotions and saying your daily prayers; maybe you want to spend time each morning listing your priorities for the day, or perhaps you would prefer to do that in the evening. After repeating these tasks each day for several weeks, they will become automatic.

Step Five: Eliminate things which are not necessary

If your day is filled with activities which don't match your priorities and goals, then you may need to reconsider how you spend that time. It may be difficult, but start by eliminating the tasks which don't match your priorities and fill in that time with activities that do. Productivity skyrockets if you practice self-discipline and leave unproductive, time-consuming things to later in the day.

Step Six: Get it done!

Get your tasks done and build rewards into your schedule. Take time for yourself, for exercise, for enjoying time with family and friends, and getting plenty of sleep. Accomplishing your goals will help to boost your confidence and self-esteem.

Tips for Managing Your Time

1. Start your day 20 minutes earlier. In a month you will have 10 extra hours, a whole work day of extra time.
2. Continually look for ways to become more efficient.
3. Vary activities. Change keeps you mentally alert and energized.
4. Keep a notebook for jotting down things you need to do.
5. Plan your daily priorities each morning or the night before.
6. Concentrate on one task at a time.
7. When you catch yourself procrastinating, check to see what you are avoiding.
8. Delegate responsibilities whenever possible.
9. Do first things first and thank God for the gift of time!

