

189. Priorities

By Arland Steen

Opening

Ephesians 5:15-16 (New King James): ¹⁵ *See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,* ¹⁶ *redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*

People have 24 hours each day within which to accomplish daily tasks. We have:

- Family to take care of
- Work to get done
- Friends to connect with
- And, fun to be had

Paul's life and style was quite different than ours but time was still an important factor in accomplishing things in his life.

If left unchecked, your carnal nature will waste a lot of time, as you attempt to accomplish the things that are significant in each day. That's why we are to redeem or recover that which is lost.

Ephesians 5:16 (Amplified Bible): ¹⁶ *Making the very most of the time [buying up each opportunity], because the days are evil.*

Request Specific Direction For Each Day

This is why a part of *Waling With Jesus Every Day Devotions* includes a section called *Requesting Specific Direction For My Day*.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own; in all your ways acknowledge Him, He shall direct your paths"

Proverbs 3:5-6 (New King James): ⁵ *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding;* ⁶ *In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.*

Father, I outline the major events and responsibilities this day holds for me, thus acknowledging them before You. As I do, I trust You will bring order to my day. I know whatever I put into Your hand always returns with Your blessing.

The Place For Prioritization

Along with this, if we are going to make the most of the time we have been given, one principle more than any other will determine whether our efforts will bear fruit and accomplish what we want – prioritization.

If you fail to prioritize what you would like to get done, your schedule will fail.

Since all of us build our schedule on everything that needs to be done, if it's on the calendar, it's a priority.

So, the question then becomes, "Are you scheduling the right things?"

Two Parts To Our Schedule

For most people, a schedule has two parts: vocational and personal.

Our vocational schedule may be the common 8-5 schedule or it may look different based on the nuances of your job or career and your families' needs.

Our personal schedules are similar:

- Taking care of children

- School activities
- Taking care of the house
- Lunch and dinner
- Personal hygiene

It's important to recognize that we all have more than enough things that we can accomplish each day, so it becomes significant to determine what is going to be at the top of the list and then 2nd, 3rd and so on.

To the extent that you prioritize will be the extent of your success.

Don't Schedule Everything

A wise word: Don't schedule each day to 100% capacity. It will be impossible to maintain. Some experts say you should not schedule about 20% of your day. Leave 20% for unforeseen events. Without this buffer, you will blow your schedule every single day, frustration will set in and you'll give up on following a schedule completely.

Prioritizing down time is important.

Time For God

What else should go on our schedule?

Most of us nod in agreement that Jesus takes priority. Acting that out in two ways fleshes it out:

1. We should walk with Him every day in daily devotions
2. He should also be empowered to set the standard for what is put in our schedules each and every day and what should be left out.

Here is where many people face a dilemma – they put a lot of good things in their schedule but have so many good things planned that time with Jesus is squeezed out. That's dangerous.

Some people don't include time with God in their schedules because they haven't learned how to distinguish between what is good and what is best.

Things that are good will not always benefit your life because they will keep you from missing out on something better.

See, very often good is the enemy of best. That's why we have to learn to prioritize.

How do you identify what is good and what is best?

Important v Urgent

It starts by identifying what is the most important in your life. Schedule that first.

Here's a trap. Many people fail to do this correctly because they assume their schedule should be first filled by what is urgent and crying for your attention the most; however, urgent and important are not equal.

Urgency competes with importance for your time and resources. Your job is to identify the difference and always come down on the side of important.

"Squeaky wheels" will always cry for immediate attention, but if you give yourself a moment to re-evaluate, you'll find what appears urgent isn't necessarily so. You can address urgent things after you've taken care of what is important.

Categories For Daily Activities

1. Important and urgent – these things get done first.

2. Important but not urgent – reschedule these for a time when things are a bit more manageable.
3. Urgent but not important – these are usually tasks that someone else considers your priority. Delegate these tasks to someone else.
4. Not important and not urgent – delegate these or postpone them indefinitely.

Delegation

Who can you delegate to?

This depends on your relationship to the people around you. Husbands and wives should consider each other a resource for accomplishing tasks. Your spouse is there to help you walk through life well.

You can also delegate to your children. Don't make their bed for them. Delegate it to them. Stop picking up their clothes and toys. Delegate it to them. As they get older, let them do their own laundry. When older, let them mow the lawn.

You are accomplishing two things: you are teaching and training them to be responsible adults and you're removing some of the load from your shoulders to accomplish every urgent task that comes your way.

Delegation is a way to handle the urgent.

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