

# Time Management

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## *Detailed Outline Part 1 of 2*

### **Introduction**

#### **A. A common complaint we hear is that elders are too busy.**

1. Unless they are retired from secular work or are independently wealthy, elders have a huge number of demands on their time. Employment occupies a majority of their waking hours. Often children are still living at home, which brings additional time demands.
2. Add to all this, chores around house, fixing car, relatives' birthday parties.
3. Elders tend to be in the "Sandwich Generation": kids and elderly parents to care for.
4. Then there are the elder's personal ministries in the areas of their giftedness and calling.
5. Elders' meetings, dealing with conflicts—all this adds up to a busy person!

#### **B. On top of everything, there is the nebulous feeling of burden for church.**

#### **C. Paul understood this quite well:**

*"Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches." (2 Cor. 11:28 NASB)*

### **I. Analyzing and Planning**

#### **A. An elder must learn to manage his time.**

1. Time is at a premium for an elder and a man can be crushed by it.
2. He must learn how to manage his time so that the joy of serving the Lord is not squeezed out by the burdens of life and ministry.
3. In other material on our website we have talked about the elder's inner life of prayer, devotion to the word, family life—so essential!
4. In this segment we want to look at the practical side of things, how to manage our time in the midst of the myriad of responsibilities facing elders.

#### **B. This is what is called *time management*.**

1. Time management requires analyzing and planning our time.
2. Lest we think this idea of time management and planning is somehow sub-spiritual, consider what Jesus said:

*"For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?" (Luke 14:28)*

3. He taught us to analyze and plan before we act so that we do not fail in our task, whatever it might be. This would certainly apply to the task of shepherding the people of God. The old saying rings true: "If you fail to plan, then you plan to fail."

**C. There are two aspects to managing our time well.**

1. Setting goals and planning our time to reach those goals. Both are important.
2. Without goals, no amount of effort at time management will be meaningful. Without time management, no amount of goal setting will ultimately be reachable.
3. Story of an airline pilot who reported to his passengers: "I have good news and bad news. Good news, we have a tailwind and are making good progress. Bad news, our compass is broken, we don't know where we are!" So an elder needs goals and needs a plan.

**D. At the core of time management is self-management.**

1. We cannot control the demands on our time.
2. But we *can* control our response to those demands.
3. In order to do that we need to control ourselves and how we spend our time.

*Time management = self-management*

## **II. Self-Management is a Biblical Qualification for Elders.**

**A. Self-Controlled (Titus 1:8)**

1. Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit. We need to learn self-control in how we spend our time AND our resources.

**B. Not Addicted to Much Wine (Titus 1:7)**

1. Addictions come in many forms; alcohol can be one of them.
2. Addiction is a lack of self-control, a giving of oneself over to the control of something else.
3. Tyranny of the urgent is an addiction, and can be just as debilitating as addiction to wine. Always being controlled by the immediate, pressing concerns, which causes failure to reach that which is truly important, to attain long-term goals.
4. An elder can become consumed with the urgencies of people, and never accomplish the long-term goals of ministry.
5. In ministry, an elder can run circles trying to solve every personal conflict in the church, or he can provide teaching on biblical patterns for conflict resolution.
6. People pleasing is addiction to the desires and expectations of others. The man who lives his life running from one expectation to another, day after day, will only burn out.

## **III. Time Needs to be Managed**

**A. Self-management comes into play particularly when it comes to our use of time.**

Therefore it is critical that an elder understands the entity we call time. Peter Drucker makes these astute observations:

1. Supply of time is totally inelastic.

2. No matter how high the demand for our time, the supply of our time will not go up.
3. Time is totally perishable and cannot be stored.
4. Time is totally irreplaceable. There is no substitute.
5. Everything requires time.
6. We humans are ill equipped to manage time.

**B. We need to use our time wisely!**

*Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. (Eph. 5:15–16)*

## **IV. Setting Goals**

**A. How do you handle it all as busy elders?**

1. In a nutshell, managing time involves two things:
  - a) Setting your goals.
  - b) Developing a plan to reach your goals
2. What is it that you want to accomplish with your life and as an elder? What is your mission? Where are you going? How are you going to get there?

**B. Setting Goals**

1. God's Goals or Our Goals?
  - a) Now in the ultimate sense, it is God who has set the goal for our lives—and that is to glorify him through his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 10:31, Eph. 3:21).
  - b) But, we need to grab hold of how that looks like in our own lives.
  - c) So when we speak of setting goals, we understand that to mean doing within God's overall plan and purpose for our lives
2. Setting goals is like doing a jigsaw puzzle.
  - a) You first set up the box top that shows the picture. What does the picture look like for me, for you?
  - b) How does God want to show his glory in our own individual lives?
  - c) God's glory will work out differently in each of us.
3. So, the first thing you need to do is make sure you know what the goal, the mission of your own life is. Joshua introduces us to this concept:

*If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. (Josh. 24:15)*

### C. Articulating Our Goals

1. There is biblical precedent for being able to articulate our mission in life.
2. Some might say, “I like Joshua’s statement; that’s going to be mine.” But look how Paul articulated his life goal/mission differently:  
*... [I want to] know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death. (Phil. 3:10)*
3. Everything Paul did fit into this vision and was conditioned by it.
  - a) Since “knowing God” intimately was part of his mission, he knew the love God had for the lost and shared that love with others.
  - b) Since sharing in Christ’s suffering was part of his mission, he was able to withstand tremendous hardship.
4. Paul made tangible plans to reach the lost.
  - a) He laid out plans to go to Spain after first visiting the Romans (Rom. 15:24).
  - b) For example, he wrote ahead to the Corinthians about his plan to take up a collection for the suffering saints in Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8–9, Rom. 15).

### D. Your Life Goals

1. We recommend you give serious thought to your life mission statement. This needs to be done so that time management of your life has a goal; so that you are motivated to make the right choices in daily life that support your life mission. Let me encourage you to stop now and begin to think about your life goal, the mission for which God has placed you on this earth, as an individual with all your gifting and abilities and passions.
2. This is a matter of deep thought and prayer. What is my life all about? What does God want for me as an individual? Write and rewrite. The goal is make it succinct, easy to remember and articulate. In a nutshell, this statement will reflect what you believe God wants you to accomplish with the life he has given you. Remember your life is a stewardship.
3. As you work on this, ask yourself questions like: Since your ultimate goal as a Christian is to glorify God (this would be true of all Christians), what will that look like in your life? How is that affected by your gifts and calling from God?
4. Take time now to develop your own personal mission statement. How you would like to glorify God through your entire life? Try to hone it down to one or at the most two sentences.

(NOTE: See additional resources – “Mission” form to help you in the process of writing your Life Mission Statement.)

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*Detailed Outline  
Part 2 of 2*

## **V. Three Levels of Goals or Objectives**

### **A. Long-Term, Tangible Objectives**

1. From your life mission will come career choices goals for your family and ministry.
2. Where do you want to be in your career 10 or 20 years from now? What would you like to look back on when you are 60 or 70 years old?
3. This is a question I often ask young people, because it is good to have the end in mind when you are beginning life. But this question is good for Christian leaders to have because it is easy to get caught up in the process and forget the end target. Being an elder is not the end game. It is a means to an end, and it must align with your life mission.
4. An illustration:
  - a) My life mission is “To glorify God through equipping others to serve Him.”
  - b) In light of this, I want to nurture my wife and children to live their lives of wholehearted service for the Lord. This looks different now that my children are adults from when they were younger. But, the objective is still the same.
  - c) For example, when our children were young, we took every opportunity to invite missionaries into our home, so that our children were exposed to positive role models of people who were wholeheartedly serving the Lord.
  - d) When my son was organizing a mission trip as a young adult, we signed up to be part of the team he was leading—an interesting role-reversal. That was a short term goal and it required setting priorities in terms of financially saving for the trip, carving out time to prepare, beginning a workout regime (preparing for backpacking around Tibet giving out Christian materials), getting all the medical inoculations, etc. To be honest, we did not feel a particular call to missions work in Tibet but we felt called to encourage our son in his wholehearted commitment to serve the Lord. The trip to Tibet was a short-term object to help achieve a long-term goal.

### **B. Short-Term Goals**

1. For me, I think of five-year and one-year goals, with tangible objectives.
2. How can we begin to think concretely about short-term goals and ultimately how we can manage our time to reach those goals. It is helpful to think of the four areas Jesus grew:  
*“And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” (Luke 2:52 NASB)*

### 3. Four Areas

- a) This four-part division forms convenient framework for addressing goals.
- b) In my life, I set goals for growing in wisdom (my reading and study plan), physical life (my exercise, recreation), spiritual (for my spiritual growth, ministry, and exercise of my spiritual gift) and social (developing social and family relationships).
- c) For each of these areas, I can then formulate specific commitments.
- d) I may set a goal of reading twelve books in the year. That's one per month.
- e) I might set as a goal to read through the Bible in the next year.
- f) Short-term goals are a matter of specifically identifying what I want to accomplish in the next one to five years.

### C. Daily/Weekly Goals/Disciplines

- 1. These are specifics that I commit to on a daily or weekly basis.
- 2. My yearly goals are translated into daily and weekly disciplines.
- 3. They are tangible and concrete, and help me keep on track to reach my longer term goals.

### D. What about when God changes our goals?

- 1. At times Paul received direction from Lord before he went out. When he was at the church in Antioch, the Scripture records:  
*"While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them' " (Acts 13:2)*
  - a) This commissioning turned out to be the first of his mission trips around the eastern Mediterranean area.
  - b) Upon completion of that assignment, Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch from where they were sent out (Acts 14:27).
- 2. Yet on his second mission trip, there is no record of God's specific direction to go out again.
  - a) From all appearances he just went out (see Acts 15:36–41), presumably trusting the Lord would guide his plans.
  - b) Then we find God redirecting him, changing Paul's plans. He had planned to go to certain areas of Asia and Bithynia (Acts 16:6–11), but the Holy Spirit prompted him to change directions, Paul simply changed directions.
  - c) There was no sense of error or chastisement of Paul because of this.
  - d) Sometimes God directly gives us goals before hand, other times he leaves it to us to set goals, but he may change our direction.

### 3. Illustration from Steering a Car

- a) Have you ever noticed how difficult it is to turn a parked car?
- b) You need to get it moving and then you can steer it.
- c) Setting goals is like moving a car. There will be turns and changes as we attempt to reach our goals, but the process of working toward them will bring greater clarification.
- d) Underlying it all, we make our plans dependent on will of Lord.

*"Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.' Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.'" (James 4:13–15)*

- e) Some Christians remind themselves of this principle by adding on the end their plans "D.V.," an abbreviation of a Latin phrase meaning "God willing."

## VI. Concrete Steps to Take Control of Your Time

**A. I have found it very helpful to consider goals for four different areas of my life. Each of these goals fits into my life goal or mission. The four areas correspond to areas in which Jesus grew as a child:**

*"And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." (Luke 2:52)*

- 1. Developing my abilities to think and apply wisdom in my life and work and ministry. Includes what I want to accomplish in my career.
- 2. Looking after my health – my body is on loan to me from God and is my primary tool for accomplishing my life goal.
- 3. Developing good social and work relationships – life is about relationships. God created us in community so we could help each other reach our life goals. How can I grow in my ability to related to others?
- 4. Nurturing my spiritual life – this has to do with my relationship to God. As Peter says, *"Grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 3:18)*

### **B. Making It Work**

- 1. We have included a sample chart you can download at our Biblical Eldership website that you can use as a model for determining your goals.
- 2. Once you have these, you can plan your daily disciplines to ensure you meet your goals.
- 3. The first step in learning to set your goals and do time management is to chart out how you are actually using the time now that you have! Every time management seminar I have ever attended has advocated charting your time usage for 1 or 2 weeks.

4. For years, I ignored that, because I was pretty sure how I used my time. It wasn't until I read Peter Drucker's book *The Effective Executive* that I discovered I was in good company. He would consult with CEOs of major corporations, blue chip companies. First thing he would tell them was to chart their time for two weeks. Without exceptions, they would all say that they didn't need to do that because they knew exactly how they spent their time. Some even produce a written statement indicating in % how they spent time.
5. However, Drucker insisted they track their time in 30 minute intervals. Simply write down every 30 minutes how you spent your time in the slot. Then at the end of two weeks summarize it based on what you wrote down. Every one of the execs came back sheepishly amazed. One exec said that before this exercise he would have said he spent one-third of his time on sales, one-third on production, and one-third on personnel issues. But his actual time spent was quite different. He began to see why certain parts of his company were suffering from the imbalance of attention. The point is that how we think we are spending our time doesn't always line up with the reality.
6. I was convinced to try it. Here is a personal example, one time when I did this, I had been thinking I was spending a certain amount of time studying to preach on Sunday mornings. When I charted my time, I found out that the four hours I usually planned Wednesday morning to study, was in reality only 2.5 hours, after I allowed for phone calls, going for a snack or reading an article that had nothing to do with my message preparation.
7. So, chart your time. We have included a sample time chart on our website for you to download, or you can use a computer spreadsheet and create your own. Remember to track your time in 30-minute slots. Include the entire awake portion of your day, including recreation, ministry, family, commute, and work time.
8. Once you have done this, you are in position to evaluate your daily life-habits realistically. Give special note to your tendencies and weaknesses. If, for example, you have a tendency to let phone calls interrupt your study time, then maybe you need to schedule time specifically for phone calling and then turn off your phone during your study time.

### **C. One Last Illustration**

1. My wife and I at times will go away for a weekend for long-term planning. We spend a quiet evening over dinner and just talk about where we have been in our lives and how we have done with our previous goals. Were they realistic? Where did we succeed/fail?
2. The next day we find a table or a secluded area, grab some coffee and tea, and some muffins and then begin the hard work of thinking through our goals, updating them, revising, adding new ones. In this way we begin to articulate and write down where we would like to see our lives in the next year, next five and 10 years. This can be a fun and exciting process, as we go through each of the four areas of life mentioned above.
3. We ask ourselves: What do we need to do this year, so that we can be where we want in 10 years? What do I need to do on a daily basis so that I can accomplish my one-year goals? What are the roadblocks and hindrances to accomplishing these daily objectives?



4. This can be a long process, but stay with it.
5. On our website we have links to helpful resources for time managements, goal setting. Check out our helpful charts and forms that you can adapt to your own person needs.