

Time Management Discussion – RRR NSOFT – Feb. 8, 2008

When I graduated from college and joined a venture capital company, one of the first things that I was sent to was a time management course taught by Steve Covey's company based on his book, "First Things First". There was a filter for how you should look at your work life and personal life that looked like this:

- I. Important and Urgent (crises, deadline-driven projects)
- II. Important, Not Urgent (preparation, prevention, planning, relationships)
- III. Urgent, Not Important (interruptions, many pressing matters)
- IV. Not Urgent, Not Important (trivia, time wasters)

To Live, To Love, To Learn, To Leave a Legacy

The idea behind this book and this method was not only to focus on the important right now, but to also live in a way that focused you on your ultimate goals, what type of legacy do I want to leave. It requires you to make a personal life mission and then work backwards in relation to how you set priorities in your work, your life and in your relationships.

While I don't follow that method with the orthodoxy that I once did, there are still many parts of that training that are ingrained in me that help me process my life and my schedule. I do know that I have to continue to seek out the Quadrant III (Important, but not Urgent) items to make sure that I am setting priorities by the importance rather than what is "screaming" in my face.

Since then (1994), there have been a lot of new time management books and methods that have come along that profess to improve upon the First Things First and other "earlier" generation time management tools.

One that I recently had training on was "Getting Stuff Done" by David Allen. It is a great book on how to effectively stay focused on Quadrant III (Urgent, Not Important) and to use your time more effectively. By setting up your Outlook in a way that maximizes each time to meet with others and setting your projects up into parts that you can be complete at one sitting. It helps you to control the inflow of information.

I think these methods are great and useful tools. The one thing that I think that are lacking is a definition of what the "important" or "legacy" should be. For the most part, these books do a great job of organizing your thoughts and actions once you have found your "North Star", but don't really help you too much find your "North Star" except by your gut instinct. It goes to the adage that, "she climbed the corporate ladder and found out that it was leaning against the wrong building".

If there is anything that I want you to take out of our short time together, is to take some time to look at the basic, yet transforming principles that we find in God's Word that helps us to find that center that we can effectively manage our lives around.

Carolyn Raye recently gave me a book that seems to hit this issue right on the head, it is a little book published in 1962, by Pastor Charlie W. Shedd titled, "Time For All Things: Ten Affirmations for Christian Use of Time". In his introduction, he identified why he wrote this book. He had just started a new church and it had grown to 1,500 rather quickly. He realized that the needs of the church overwhelmed what he could possibly manage and came to this observation, (p. 9 - 10).

I can identify with that and as I read his book, it resonated in my heart and soul that I am not going to find my "North Star" unless I am fully serving my Lord.

What I want to do over the next few minutes is to examine a few of his Affirmations and ask a probing question at the end of each Affirmation:

Affirmation I: "I Have Only One Thing to Do"

Our lives assume their maximum worth when we turn our **wills** over to God and ask that we might be of assistance to his purpose.

Life does not **belong** to us.

For the concerned disciple with the heavenly connections, **outer action** and **inner communion** are not separate things.

Life's highest goal for ordinary servants of God is first of all to **know** Christ and to let him **live** in us.

The Holy Spirit is essential to managing our life and choosing the right things; for the Holy Spirit:

Directs our **conversations** (Luke 12:12, Mark 13:11, Matt. 10:20)

He is our **teacher** (John 14:26)

He separates the **genuine** from the **false** (John 16:13)

He shows us how to **pray** (Rom 8:26-27)

But he is not our partner in this; we must be willing to give our full life to him so that he may direct us.

Do I surrender my life and daily schedule to the Lord and do I pray that the Holy Spirit will lead me in the decisions that I make?

Affirmation II: I Have as Much Time as Anyone

There is tendency in life to complain about how much you have to do. That we have 1,000 e-mails and had to work 80 hour weeks. In reality it is a badge of honor for most of us, it shows that we are needed, important, and hard working.

But there is a counterbalance to this in look at what God is calling us to in our life. Has God called us to this hectic schedule? Are we seeking only to serve God by doing all of these assignments?

I think this is the heart of the story of Martha and Mary, Martha was very much overworked, but it was not for the right purpose. God has created us for his good works, and he has given us the resources to do this good work. Romans 12:1-8

This is not to say that we are to hang up our hammock and relax through life. Christ admonished his disciples when they did not stay awake with him and pray through the night. The issue isn't working hard or not, but the issue is following God's lead and doing all for him and the right things for him, not we choose to do.

Jesus is the Holy center of reference that:

Judges our **Work**
Directs our **Service**
Brings each **new day** to us, and
Us to each **new day**

For what needs to be done **for him**.

Am I taking on new assignments and keeping my hectic schedule because I prayerfully believe that God is calling me to this work for this season of my life or I am doing it to please others or find my own self-worth?

Affirmation III: I Will Set Aside Moments to Be Alone with my Lord

For me, this is the most difficult and most telling of the affirmations in Pastor Shedd's book, a true barometer of my time management. This is not rocket science to us, but at the same time. I don't need a load of time management books to help me realize if I am truly following the Leader of my life. This simple act of devotion tells so much for me.

But it is also the hardest for me, and I would assume for you as well. If you want to go back to the Covey's First Things First, you would know that this is the quintessential QIII activity. The important, but in earthly terms not urgent. Your Bible or prayer journal does not e-mail you, call you to a meeting or conference, doesn't cry or ring. And because it does not do those things, it can easily be pushed to the side. Yet, how are you going to ministry or love or live with out it. It defines the whole process of time management.

Most of us get done what we **most want** to do.

The initial move of real **prayer** is from God.

What did I find that is was more important in my schedule than spending time with God and His Word?

Affirmation VI: I Do Not Attempt to Do It All

Luke 5:15-16: read pages 55-56

No Christian can do all the good. True, we must love the world and have concern for it needs. But it is not our job to save it by ourselves.

Efficiency in the management of time may wait on our recognition that we can never please all people. Unless we say “yes” to Christ first, and seek his leading in our planning, we may “yes” to too many request because we care too much about what the world thinks.

Steve Covey said it in his training like this, “You can say “no” when there is a deeper “yes””

Are there responsibilities in my life that I have said “yes” to that weren’t directed by God? What can be my next step to remove myself from those commitments?

Affirmation VII: I Will Make Friends with Divine Interruptions

In many ways, this seems like a contradiction of the last affirmation, and yet I think that it is just another reminder of how much we need to be dependent on the Spirit with all our decisions.

The story of the Good Samaritan has always fascinated me, mostly because Christ chose the first two travelers to be a Priest and a Levite (Luke 10:30-37) and being in full-time ministry that hits pretty close to home for me.

It makes me ponder so many times when I feel prompted to do something for the Lord, but rationalize in my own mind that I am doing “ministry” already and just don’t have the time to do it. Yet God keeps prompting my heart.

First paragraph of pg. 65

The quality we should strive for is to have the flexibility and peace in the Lord’s leading that we can react to needs/interruptions in a graceful and heartfelt way.

It is a real indication of our calling by Christ when he calls for our service at any hour or any place and we are able to respond.

If we are living the Christ-centered life, it is a foregone conclusion that there will be interruptions.

Have I allowed time in my schedule for interruptions and promptings of the Holy Spirit?

I hope you hear me when I say that these points of thought aren't in contrast to the excellent materials that are out there right now on how to use your time wisely, how to be wise stewards of the time that God has given you. I just know that I see those of us who are Christians who are just as overwhelmed by our schedules, e-mails, and projects as those in the outside world. We have no peace and no priorities in our day and it makes me sad. I worry about myself as well, will the business of my job keep me from listening to God's calling in my life. Thus, what I like about this book and what I hope you can take home from our time here is just a few (five) questions that you can ask yourself and bring before God in prayer as you look over schedule and use effective tools to manage your time.

I remember when I went through Crusade's international training out in Bakersfield, CA when I just joined staff. There was so much training and other things that we received over those three months, but the one thing that I remember more than anything was when one of our speakers got up and said, "Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy." And that was the focus of her talk.

There were so many times when I was worn-out and trying to get all our programs together and missing out on taking a day of rest or a day with the Lord and I would think back to that one talk. I hope that these five simple questions in this talk can be the same for you, as you move on in your work that these questions will bring you back to the reason for why you are doing what you are doing.