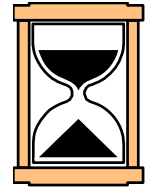


IT'S ABOUT TIME ...



(& Stress Free, Godly Use of It)

1. STRESS

2. BURNOUT

3. JESUS' SECOND MOST
STRESSFUL DAY (How To
Survive Stress)

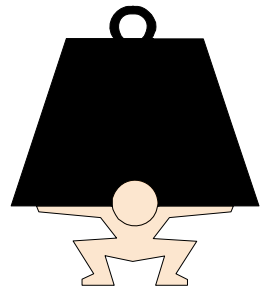
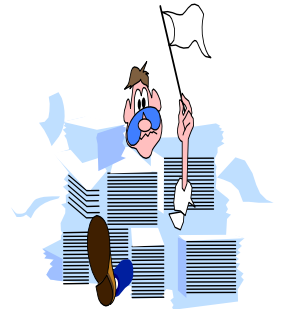
4. OVERWORK

5. HOW TO HAVE PROPER PRIORITIES

6. GOAL SETTING

7. TIME MANAGEMENT

8. HOW TO HAVE CHRISTLIKE
CONTENTMENT (Phil 4)



By Jerry Schmoyer

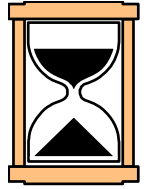
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IT'S ABOUT TIME ... (& Stress Free, Godly Use of It)



1. STRESS



Satan called a worldwide convention. In his opening address to his evil angels, he said, "We can't keep the Christians from going to church. We can't keep them from reading their Bibles and knowing the truth. We can't even keep them from forming an intimate, abiding relationship experience in Christ. BUT, if they gain that connection with Jesus, our power over them is broken.

"So let them go to their churches, let them have their conservative lifestyles; BUT steal their time, so they can't gain that relationship with Jesus Christ.

"This is what I want you to do, demons. Distract them from gaining hold of their savior and maintaining that vital connection throughout their day!" "How shall we do this?" shouted his angels. "Keep them busy in the nonessentials of life and invent innumerable schemes to occupy their minds," he answered. "Tempt them to spend, spend, spend, and borrow, borrow, borrow. Persuade the wives to go to work for long hours and the husbands to work 6-7 days a week, 10-12 hours a day, so they can afford their empty lifestyles. Keep them from spending time with their children. As their family fragments, soon, their home will offer no escape from the pressures of work!"

"Over-stimulate their minds so that they cannot hear that still, small voice. Entice them to play the radio or cassette player whenever they drive; To keep the TV, VCR, CDs and their PCs going constantly in their homes. And see to it that every store and restaurant in the world plays non-biblical music constantly. This will jam their minds and break that union with Christ."

"Fill the coffee table with magazines and newspapers. Pound their minds with the news 24 hours a day. Invade their driving moments with billboards. Flood their mailboxes with junk mail, mail order catalogs, sweepstakes, and every kind of newsletter and promotional offering free products, services, and false hopes. Keep skinny, beautiful models on the magazines so the husbands will believe that external beauty is what's important, and they'll become dissatisfied with their wives. HA! That will fragment these families quickly!"

"Even in their recreation, let them be excessive. Have them return from their recreation exhausted, disquieted, and unprepared for the coming week. Don't let them go out in nature to reflect on God's wonders. Send them to amusement parks, sporting events, concerts and movies instead. Keep them busy, busy, busy. And when they meet for spiritual fellowship, involve them in gossip and small talk so that they leave with troubled consciences and unsettled emotion." "Go ahead, let them be involved in soul winning. But crowd their lives with so many good causes they have no time to seek power from Christ. Soon they will be working in their own strength, sacrificing their health



and family for the good of the cause. IT WILL WORK! IT WILL WORK!"

It was quite a convention. And the evil angels went eagerly to their assignments causing Christians everywhere to get busy, busy, busy and to rush here and there. I guess the question is: Has the devil been successful at his scheme? You be the judge.

U. S. News & World Report, Dec 20, 1999, says: "Only a decade ago Americans viewed the work habits of the Japanese with awe (and horror). Reports indicate that America has now surpassed Japan in the number of hours worked per worker to become the most over-worked country in the world. Between 1977 and 1997 the average salaried American's weekly workload increased from 43 to 47 hours."



INCREASED STRESS Needless to say, this increase has brought much stress with it. Stress has been called "the emotional virus of our time." It has been estimated that 70% of the population is adversely affected by stress. Heart disease accounts for nearly 40% of the deaths in the United States (almost 2 million a year). In fact, the top ten killers today all have some relation to stress.

Time calls stress a national epidemic. "Two thirds of all office visits to family doctors are prompted by stress-related symptoms."

Stress is a by product of 21st century living. "It's a sorry sign of the times that the three best-selling drugs in this country are an ulcer medication (Tagament), a hypertension drug (Inderal) and a tranquilizer (Valium)."

WHAT IS STRESS? Selye, who for many years headed the International Institute of Stress at the University of Montreal defined stress as " . . . the body's nonspecific response to any demand placed on it, whether that demand is pleasant or not."

TYPES OF STRESS There are several different types of stress.

1. Emotional stress - Negative stress is usually caused by some loss or fear of loss.
2. Physical stress -- The body is stressed negatively as the result of improper diet, lack of rest and by various emotional factors.
3. Relational stress - We feel relational stress in our conflicts with people.

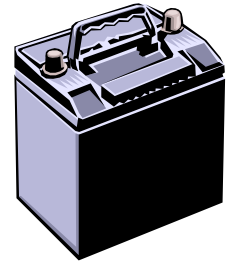
Stress simply means we feel under pressure. Often stress and time management are interrelated, and that's why these series of articles are covering them together. As home schoolers, most of our stress comes from trying to accomplish and achieve more things or participate in more and more events in less and less time. We want every minute of our lives, and our children's lives, to account for something. Added to that is the fear of failing in training and raising our children. In addition we have stress that comes from being with the same people 24 hours a day 7 days a week as parent, teacher, coach and friend. Stress is certainly an occupational hazard of home schooling – but does it have to be? Is that the way God wants us to live? I think not!

FOLLOWING JESUS? We are to be followers of Jesus, and thus we can't go faster than the one we are following. Jesus tells us to 'walk' in the Spirit, not 'sprint' in the Spirit! Stress is not sharing in His suffering. It is a self-inflicted disease.

Some stress is inevitable. Not all stress is bad. It can serve to motivate us in times of special need. Good stress brings out the best in us. Bad stress actually makes us less productive. Good stress we control, bad stress controls us and we can't stop. We become driven. Impatience and anger become our daily companions. Peace and joy flee. Little things become big things and big things fade to lesser priorities. Our work list takes priority over our relationship. Living with stress day in and day out is not God's way, however.

SYMPTOMS DO YOU ALWAYS/OFTEN:

1. Eat or talk too rapidly?
2. Rush people to hurry up and say what they are going to say?
3. Thinking of your problem, even when talking to someone about theirs?
4. Take work on weekends, vacation?
5. Feel guilty when sit down to rest?
6. Pack more and more activities into less and less time?
7. Become easily irritated by little things.
8. Lash out at the people whom you love the most and who love you the most?
9. Sense a loss of self-esteem and intimacy with others?
10. Feel a sense of loss of spiritual presence in relationship with God?



PHYSICAL SIGNS

1. Cold hands, esp. if one is colder than the other.
2. Indigestion, diarrhea, too-frequent urination.
3. Being susceptible to every cold or virus that goes around (immune system weakened).
4. Muscle spasms or a soreness and tightness in the jaw, back or neck, shoulders or =back.
5. Shortness of breath.
6. Headaches, tiredness, sleeping too much or too little.
7. Becoming accident prone.

When you recognize a symptom, see it as a warning light on the dashboard of your life. It means your battery is being drained too quickly and is getting dangerously low. It calls you back to the throne for 'repairs.' Where are you failing to listen or obey or trust?

Experts in a USA Today survey determined that to accomplish everything a well-rounded individual of the 1990s should experience every day, the average American would need a 42-hour-day. Since that's impossible, how can you redeem the 24 hours that you do have?

OVERCOMING TIME STRESS Know your Plimsoll mark and honor it. Ships once were required to have a line painted on the hull that would remain above water only if the vessel were not overloaded. Most people know where their line is, but neglect its warnings. Don't drown yourself in obligations or take on more than you should handle. You'll sink.

Take a trickle charge. When you can't fully recharge your computer battery by turning it off, you can plug it in and partially recharge it as you use it. Often we're forced to rejuvenate on the run, but it helps. Give yourself frequent short breaks for relaxation or prayer during the workday. If you can't take a weeklong vacation, get away for three days. You'll stave off exhaustion and depression until you can rest completely.

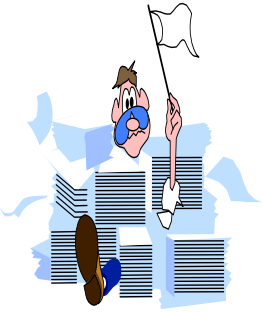
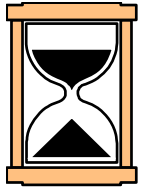
Strive for balance. In Eccl. 3:1-8, Solomon lists things that all have a place in every life. A good life has enough time for every worthwhile activity under heaven, including leisure. Do something that approximates every positive activity on the list.

Pursue peace. It's not a by-product of wealth or good health; it's an end in itself. You can find peace in any circumstances, even when it makes no earthly sense to have it. Peace brings contentment and long life (Phil. 4:11, Ps. 34:12).

Learn to enjoy. Many successful people feel a sense of accomplishment, but no enjoyment of their work or talents. The ability to enjoy yourself is a gift from God (Eccl. 5:19). He has given us all things to enjoy freely (1 Tim. 6:17). Ask Him to help you stop striving and accept His blessing.

IT'S ABOUT TIME ...

(& Stress Free, Godly Use of It)



2. BURNOUT

TWO PADDLE BOATS: , powered by coal, left Memphis about the same time, traveling down the Mississippi River to New Orleans. As they traveled side-by-side, sailors from one vessel made some critical remarks and jokes about the snail's pace of the other boat. Heated words were exchanged between the men on the two boats. Challenges were made. So the race began. The competition was hot and heavy as the two boats roared through the Deep South. Eventually, one boat began falling behind. The problem: it didn't have enough fuel. There had been plenty of coal for the trip, but not enough for the race. As the boat dropped back, an enterprising young sailor took some of the ship's cargo and tossed it into the boat's ovens. When his fellow sailors saw that the supplies burned as well as coal, they fueled their boat with the material they had been assigned to transport. Guess what? They ended up winning the race, but they burned their cargo!

Sometimes the price of being the fastest is too high! Many people don't realize that until they are on their death beds. Then it is too late. It's not how fast we go through life that counts, but how we enjoy the trip along the way. We are stewards for God. That means we are captains of His ship, delivering His cargo for Him. He doesn't reward us for speed but for faithfulness in the things HE wants us to do.

Today much focus is on doing as much as possible in as little time as possible. These unrealistic expectations cause us to drive ourselves harder and harder. Thus much self-induced stress results. Even if it is in response to the expectations of others, when we 'agree' to meet those expectations we pile stress on ourselves. Sometimes we even think God is requiring that of us, but He isn't, as future articles in this series will show.

BURNOUT Stress causes adrenaline to be dumped into the blood stream to prepare the body for a special challenge. If there is no special challenge to burn up the adrenaline it just hangs out there, causing us to run in overdrive. This uses physical, mental and spiritual energy and drains our system of reserves. Then we feel 'burnt out.' It takes time, then to recover and recharge. If enough 'down time' doesn't occur we run on adrenaline instead of energy, and that makes the drain even deeper and harder to recharge. Burnout is burning until the fuel is exhausted and the fire ceases. Burnout is prolonged stress.



Sometimes we go through extra demanding times and end up burnt out, like Elijah after the conflict with the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 19). Situations arise in life that can be very demanding and draining.

Financial problems arise, relationships can fall apart, physical problems may develop. These can't be helped. They are for a certain period of time, then the circumstances change and we, like Elijah, must rest and recharge our batteries. Most of our burnout, however, is because of expectations we put on ourselves. They have no stopping point – 'when the children graduate,' 'when I retire,' we aren't able to stop until we collapse from burnout.

SYMPTOMS OF BURNOUT These are symptoms that a person is experiencing burnout:

Works mechanically, showing little or no concern for the person being served.

Increased absenteeism, poor results when at work.

Develops a sense of detachment and lack of identification with other person.

Low level of enthusiasm, negative attitude to new plans or deadlines.

Reduced sense of reward in return for your work.

Work becomes a duty rather than a joy.

Your mind rejects new information. You don't even hear all that is said to you or remember it,

Trouble making decisions because you can't see your options clearly.

Cynicism and apathy keep person from really caring about others.

Becomes paranoid and blames others.

Fatigue, irritability and psychosomatic complaints develop.

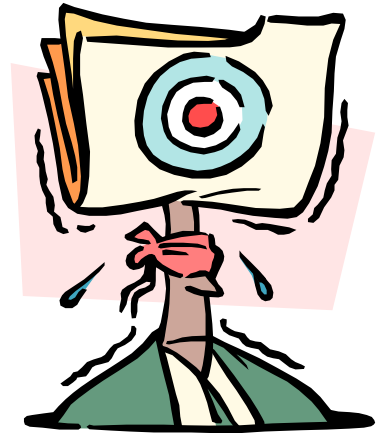
Regression, act childlike in responses to things.

Inability to change harmful patterns we notice. Unable to say no to additional demands.

Sleep disorders appear even though you crave sleep.

Feel bored, helpless, aimless.

Feelings of failure come.



BURNT OUT MOSES Moses is a prime example of this. He overworked trying to do everything himself (Exodus 18:13-26). Because he was burnt out he had no energy for the problems of those around him. He just saw them as a burden and drain (Numbers 11:4-15; Deuteronomy 1:9-13). He saw them as his own burden instead of realizing they were God's burden. Finally he lost it and reacted in anger and frustration, striking the rock twice (Numbers 20:1-12) and forfeiting his entrance into the promised land. His battery was empty and he didn't have the self-control he needed because all his energy was gone. Sound familiar?

RECHARGING Recharging your battery takes awhile. In fact, it takes longer to recharge it fully again than it did to discharge it in the first place. Seldom do we give ourselves enough time to recharge, so we find ourselves back in burn out again and again. We quit home schooling or drop some other legitimate responsibility God has for it because we 'just can't do it any more.'

Remembering that it takes longer to recharge our battery than it did to drain it may help us to pace ourselves better and prevent burnout. We never come out ahead when we push until we burn out. What we accomplish as such a high cost fades as we have to take time off from everything to get our energy back.

COPING... Psalm 46 is a good pattern of how to deal with stress instead of letting it build to burnout. "1. God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, 3 though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. 4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. 5 God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. 6 Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts. 7 The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. 8 Come and see the works of the LORD, the desolations he has brought on the earth. 9 He

makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire. 10 'Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.' 11 The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress."

The psalmist, one of the sons of Korah, is experiencing stress. His response is to not fear (2), but to look to God as a protector (7) and calm himself (10). In order to take advantage of divine resources in dealing with stress we, too, must believe in a big God (v 1) who is willing to help us (v 4-5; Isaiah 41:10).

CURE Burnout is not a self-terminating illness (like poison ivy). There is no short-cut to rebuild. It takes a slow, steady recharge, not a quick over-night jump.

Some say they'd rather burn out than rust out. Neither extreme is what God has for us. He wants us to hold out to the end. Paul said, "I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me" (Acts 20:24)

REPENTANCE The first step in the cure to stress-causing burnout isn't found in changing circumstances but in changing how we respond to them. We must admit that our present patterns aren't healthy and God-pleasing. We must recognize a problem with unrealistic expectations and a wrong response to stress. Anti-denial is the first step.

REST The second step, then, is to rest. Overworking ourselves, stressing ourselves out, often comes from insecurity. We feel we must perform in order for others to accept ourselves, or in order to accept ourselves. Thus we heap more and more stress upon ourselves. We strive to be more and more busy, but God calls us to REST. "For anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from His" (Heb. 4:10). "You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in You." (Isa. 26:3) "In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength" (Isa. 30:15) "Do not fret -- it only leads to evil." (Psalm 37:8) "The mind controlled by the Spirit is live and peace." (Rom. 8:6)

This rest from God is mainly an inner attitude to what is happening around us. It doesn't mean to always be physically inactive. However we all know that physical busyness goes hand in hand with inner stress.

Instead of trying to do all we can, we need to seek God's peace first of all. "the peace of God, which transcends human understanding, will keep constant guard over your hearts and minds as they rest in Christ Jesus." Phil. 4:7 (Phillips) "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27) "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33)



Jesus is our example in this as in all else. His pattern was to get away to pray and focus when life got busy and hectic (Matthew 14). He only had 3 ½ years to complete His whole ministry, and yet He never burnt out. He recognized His own limits and learned to say 'no.' He didn't try to do it all. He practiced consecrated negligence. He let His spiritual gifts set His agenda. He didn't try to do it all. He didn't travel very far from home. He didn't write. He didn't start any churches. He knew that you can't run in every race if you want to finish the most important one. He learned to delegate (II Timothy 2:2).

INTIMACY The third step, one that goes along with rest, is developing intimacy with God. That's why we have been created. God didn't make us to work for Him but to fellowship with Him. That's what He needs and what we need.

He has a perfect will for us. We don't have to try to do it all. We'll only know what that perfect will is as we spend time in intimacy with Him, however. He gives strength and grace for us to accomplish the work He gives us. However when we pick up loads He doesn't assign us we can't expect Him to provide strength and grace to carry that load. He won't help us carry loads He hasn't given us, He just wants us to put them down and focus on what He would have us do.

We also need to develop intimacy with those around us. Work often substitutes for intimacy. When we are so busy we don't feel we have to genuinely relate to those closest to us. This is all wrong.

Thus true intimacy with God and others really meets our inner needs for acceptance and security. Overwork is a poor substitute for these and will never meet our inner needs. That's why when we start down the path of doing more and more to win approval we never come to an end of that path. It's like drinking salt water to quench our thirst – it just can't do the job!

WHAT ABOUT YOU? How can YOU tell when you are burning out? What can you do to stop it? What can you do to prevent it? What stress most drives you to push too hard? What motivates you to keep pushing yourself more and more? What makes it hard for you to stop? The next articles will help you answer some of these questions and deal with some of these things.

HOW TO HAVE A HEART ATTACK:

1. Never say "no"
2. Insist on being liked by and try to please everyone
3. Never delegate responsibility
4. Never have a day off
5. Never plan a night at home.
6. Volunteer for all the extra work you can
7. Never leave enough time to get places, always rush



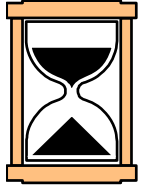
ANXIETY.

Worldly: Psa. 39:6; Psa. 127:2; Eccl. 4:8; Matt. 6:25–34; Matt. 13:22 Mark 4:19; Luke 8:14. Luke 14:18–20; Luke 21:34; 1 Cor. 7:32, 33; Phil. 4:6; 2 Tim. 2:4

Remedy for: Psa. 37:5; Psa. 55:22; Prov. 16:3; Jer. 17:7, 8; Matt. 6:26–34 Luke 12:22–32; Phil. 4:6, 7; Heb. 13:5; 1 Pet. 5:6, 7

Instances of: Martha, Luke 10:40, 41. Certain persons who desired to follow Jesus, Matt. 8:19–22; Luke 9:57–62.

IT'S ABOUT TIME ...



(& Stress Free, Godly Use of It)



3. JESUS' 2ND MOST STRESSFUL DAY

(How to Handle Stress)

The carpenter hired to help restore an old farmhouse had just finished a rough first day on the job. A flat tire made him lose an hour of work, his electric saw quit and now his ancient pickup truck refused to start. While a friend drove him home, he sat in stony silence. On arriving, he invited his friend in to meet his family. As they walked toward the front door, he paused

briefly at a small tree, touching the tips of the branches with both hands. When opening the door, he underwent an amazing transformation. His tanned face was wreathed in smiles and he hugged his two small children and gave his wife a kiss. Afterward he walked me to the car. They passed the tree and the friend's curiosity got the better of him. He asked him about what he had seen him do earlier. "Oh, that's my trouble tree," he replied. "I know I can't help having troubles on the job, but one thing for sure, troubles don't belong in the house with my wife and the children. So I just hang them up on the tree every night when I come home. Then in the morning I pick them up again. "Funny thing is," he smiled, "when I come out in the morning to pick 'em up, there ain't nearly as many as I remember hanging up the night before."

What do you do when:

Your life goes from calm to chaos in a few seconds?

Interruptions & distractions keep you from what you had scheduled to do?

Several people demand your attention at once?

You are so busy you can't stop to eat?

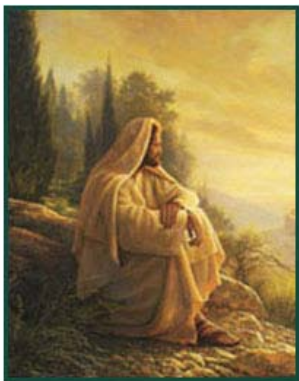
You look forward to a relaxing evening after a very hectic day, and the evening gets worse than the day?

Demands exceed resources?

Everyone seems to want to 'use' you but no one cares about your needs and feelings

Jesus faced just such a day, His 2nd most stressful day ever – the first being the day He was crucified of course. He is our example in all things. If we are to become more Christ-like then we must learn how He responded to stress and follow that example.

THE DEMANDS OF JESUS' STRESSFUL DAY This day starts off like any other but many different things combine to make it a most stressful time, one that was out of His control. His wasn't self-inflicted stress but the kinds of things that sometimes happen in life.



Sorrow was the first thing that hit Jesus that day. Followers of Jesus' cousin, John the baptizer, arrived and told Jesus that John had just been beheaded (Matthew 14:3-12). Not only did the loss hit Jesus hard because they were related, but even more so because they shared a common commitment. John came closer to understanding Jesus than anyone else. No one else really understood what Jesus' ministry was all about as well as John. Imagine getting the news suddenly one morning that the person who knows you best had just been violently murdered? Your life goes from calm to chaos in moments. How would you handle it?

Danger is also present for Jesus now, but word also came that Herod, who killed John, wanted to get a hold of Jesus (Luke 9:9). What happens to the forerunner will happen to the one He represents as well. If Herod could easily silence John, he'll try to silence Jesus, too. Thus Jesus feels a need to get away (Matthew 14:13a), not so much to protect Himself but more to have some time to think, grieve, and process what this means to Him. Before He could act, though, another interruption came making his time for Himself impossible.

Excitement erupted all around Him as the disciples, who had been sent out 2 by 2 to minister, pick that very time to return (Mark 6:12,30). Imagine the excitement as Peter describes a lame man God healed through him. John tells about a crowd he taught. Andrew reports on the deliverance of an epileptic. Matthew talks about the healing of a blind woman. James tells about the crowds that followed them. What conflicting emotions this must have brought out in Jesus: sorrow over John and the danger to Himself along with joy over their excitement and success. But before Jesus can even have a time of debriefing with them or tell them about John another interruption occurs.

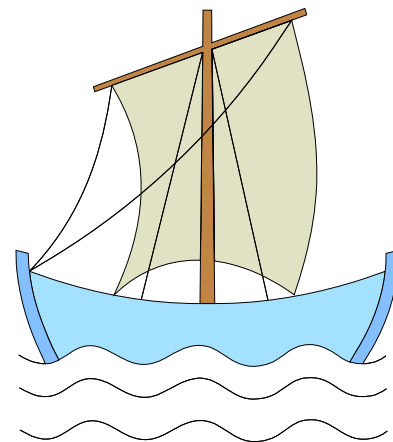
Bedlam then overtook the small group as the word spread of the disciples' return and people came from every direction to hear their report (Mark 6:31a). Thousands of people came, preventing them from even having their noon meal. Imagine it in your mind. Have you ever had several people demand your attention at once? Ever get so busy you can't even stop to grab a bit to eat? How do you handle bedlam and too many demands on your time?

What Jesus did at this point was prioritize. He dropped the good for the best. He didn't push to get it all done at once. He made a quick mental decision about what mattered most. He had a goal and kept His eyes on it even when distracted. He knew that the disciples' needs came before His own needs. He would temporarily put His own needs on hold to meet those of the people closest to Him (Mark 6:31-32). What about the crowds? They would have to wait. No one can do it all. Priorities must be set. Saying 'yes' to one thing means saying 'no' to something else. To the crowds (outsiders) He said 'no,' to His own needs He said 'yes, but later,' and to His disciples (family) He said 'yes.' That's how it should be for us, too. Having made that decision, now He would have to implement it, and that wouldn't be easy.

Confusion reigned everywhere as people pressed from every side. To some it may have seemed a great opportunity to preach, to teach, to heal. After all, wasn't this why He came? How could He turn down such a fine opportunity? Didn't He have faith enough to keep ministering and pushing Himself through it all? His example to us is that there are opportunities which must be passed up. There is a time to not answer the phone, to say 'no' to that legitimate need you hear about so you can focus on your family.

Jesus somehow pushed through the crowd with His disciples and got in one of their fishing boats to get away from the confusion there (Mark 6:31-32). But as we all know, getting away from it all is often easier said than done.

Demands continue for as the boat crosses the Sea of Galilee Jesus sees the city of Tiberias on the horizon. Tiberias, constructed by Herod, who beheaded John – and all the hurts rush back on Jesus as His eyes fill with tears. At least He'll have some time with His disciples when they get to the shore. They can unwind, debrief, and He can enjoy their enthusiasm sitting around a campfire. Then He can work through His own emotions and needs.



But sometimes things just don't work out like we want them to. That happened to Jesus as well. When the crowds saw the boat leave they knew they were headed across the lake so thousands of them started the 6-mile walk to meet Him there (Mark 6:33-34). Five thousand men would be there, so the grand total could easily be 25,000 people, counting women and children. This really stretched Jesus the man to His limit. How do you respond when stretched to the limit?

THE DEALINGS WITH JESUS' STRESSFUL DAY Here we see not only how Jesus responded, but also how the disciples responded. This was a testing time and a teaching time for them as well.

How the disciples handled stress The disciples had a simple solution to handle this stressful situation – send the people away! (Matthew 14:15). Jesus said they didn't have to go, that the disciples should feed them (Matthew 14:16). Now remember they had just come back from a time of seeing miracles done by God through them. They need to trust and have faith for this miracle, too. The disciples look to their own resources, as we do, and see that they come up short. There isn't enough food (Matthew 14:17) or money (Mark 6:37) to feed everyone. They just saw the people as potential problems, not as potentials to minister. True, Jesus had decided to say 'no' to the people's needs, but now things have changed. The are thrust into His lap, hungry and needy, and there I no one else who can do the job if He doesn't. Still, notice that He just quickly meets the most pressing need then sends them away to get back to his set priorities. Sometimes God intervenes where we can't say 'no' so we must do what we can, in His strength. This is temporary, though – not an ongoing situation. It's once and done.



How Jesus handled stress Remember that Jesus faced intense sorrow, the death of a dear friend & relative. He faced immediate threat, his name was now on the wanted posters. He faced immeasurable joy with the homecoming of the disciples. He faced immense crowds of people following Him everywhere. He faced incredible demands of thousands needing His time and attention. He faced inept assistance from His disciples who, instead of helping Him, just made things worse. And no one asks Him how He's doing. Everyone is thinking about themselves and not Him. Everyone is more concerned with getting than giving. How would you respond?

Notice first what Jesus didn't do. He didn't stomp His feet and demand His own way. He didn't tell the disciples to find an empty beach. He didn't ask the crowds why they didn't bring food. He didn't send the apostles back out for more training. He did stay calm in the midst of chaos. In fact, He even paused in the midst of it all to offer a prayer of thanks for the food.



Have you ever seen such a mature attitude? What was His secret? He was motivated by love for the people above love for Himself (Mark 6:33-34). We tend to think of our needs first and others second, but Jesus did just the opposite. He had set His own needs aside temporarily and trusted God with them so He could meet the needs of His disciples first. God made it clear that someone else needed Him, too. He had to then temporarily put the disciples' needs on hold for a short while. He trusted God to take care of Him until He take time to deal with His own emotions and needs. Jesus responded with love to the people (Mark 6:34; Luke

9:11; Matthew 14:14). He taught, fed and healed the people. He remembered that people are precious. I know I wouldn't have had that kind of patience and other-first attitude.

Well, you say, it was easier for Him because He was God. He could love them easier than I can love those around me! But how much easier would it be to help others knowing that they would misuse their new health, take advantage of the free food, abuse their freedom, and one day soon reject Him and want Him killed. Then why would He do it? Remember, God's goodness, to them and to us, is spurred on by His nature, not by our worthiness.

LISTENING TO ADVICE WHEN STRESSED Notice the influences on Jesus during this whole event. The people wanted to make Him king and lead them (John 6:14). That sounds good, it sounds like the reason He came! But it would mean bypassing the cross and paying for our sins. Besides, the people just wanted a physical king, someone to give them free food and medical care. They were thinking about themselves, not Him.

What was even harder, though, was the advice that those closest to Him gave Him. The disciples wanted Him to be king, too. This was what they wanted for themselves as well. It was tempting for Him because it was the easiest way out. Aren't we tempted to take the easy way?

So what did Jesus do? He hid! (John 6:15) He took off and went back up into the hills where they couldn't find Him. He needed to be alone with God. The easy way was getting too tempting, too easy. He knew He needed an intense time of listening to God to get things reset in His mind and heart. He needed quality time and quantity time. He knew the majority wasn't always right, that Satan provides an easy way out, and the flesh looks for a quick fix. The same is still true today. NOW He can no longer put off meeting His own needs. He has met the most pressing needs of the crowd. Notice He does it quickly and doesn't let it keep on going and going. Other things come first. Now He must take care of some things in His own life so He can better serve others. What about the disciples' needs? Wasn't He putting them before His own? He was, but their attitude to the crowds means they have a lesson to learn (an attitude change) before Jesus can go ahead with them. That's what comes next.

LESSON FOR THE DISCIPLES Jesus told the disciples to sail back across the Sea of Galilee without Him. Soon after they began they ran into a large storm which threatened to sink the boat and kill them(Matthew 14:24) . Any second they could have died. The interesting thing is that Jesus knew about this storm when He told them to sail. He sent them into a storm! If you are in a storm and feel you have been following the Lord, then you are in the center of His will. Sometimes He sends us into storms.



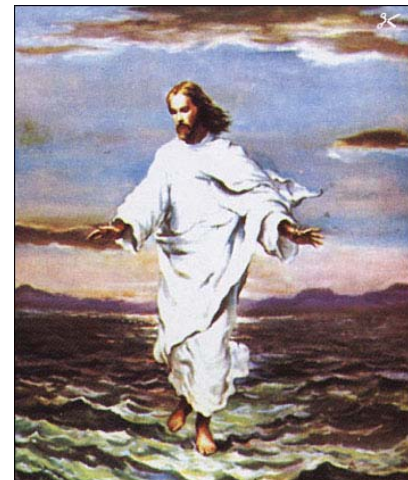
The other interesting fact is that He let them struggle in that storm for 9 to 12 hours! He was up on the hill where He could see what was happening, but needed that time to pray and connect with God the Father. And they needed that time to come to grips with some things in their own hearts. Their hearts were hardened, bitter, because Jesus didn't send the people away (Mark 6:52). They were pitying themselves because they didn't get their own way. They were humbled by a little boy who was used to do a miracle when they weren't, despite all the good things they had seen happen on their recent tour. They needed to learn to trust and obey Jesus. He teaches us the same lessons by the same means today!

Still, despite how it seemed to them (or us in similar situations), they weren't deserted and left to their doom. Jesus did come to them, walking on the water. He stilled the water and brought them immediately to their destination. Then they responded to Him in a way they hadn't when they saw other miracles done. It makes a difference when it is THEIR neck in the noose! Maybe God is trying to teach you a lesson by the storm you are in. Maybe there is some hardness in you He is trying to soften. He's watching and He cares – He cares so much He will do anything to help us grow to be more like Him in all ways.

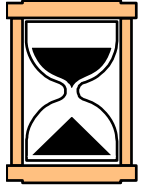
LESSONS ABOUT DEALING WITH STRESSFUL SITUATIONS

So back to learning about how to handle stress. What lessons can we learn from Jesus' handling of His second most stressful day ever? For one thing, Jesus didn't try to do it all. He prioritized. His own needs of those of His immediate 'family' came first. He helped others when it was obviously God's will but He made sure His own needs and His disciples' needs were met first. Also we learn that as soon as possible Jesus slipped away to have down time on His own. He made sure His tank was always full and didn't run on empty, as we often do. Pacing ourselves, taking time to meet our own needs, getting away alone with God is a must if we are to consistently serve God as He wants us to serve Him.

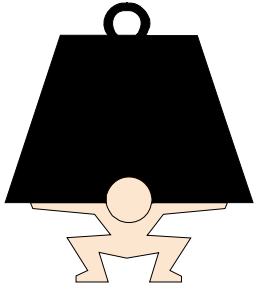
Jesus is our example in all things. We are to be like Him in all things, including how we handle stress. We aren't to give in to it, try to do it all, or lose it in frustration and self-pity. These are hard lessons to learn but important lessons nevertheless. How are you doing in learning them? The quicker you learn them the better!



IT'S ABOUT TIME ...



(& Stress Free, Godly Use of It)



4. OVERWORK

From Mrs. Lettie Cowman's wonderful book, *Springs in the Valley* (pp. 196-197), comes this interesting tale from African colonial history: "In the deep jungles of Africa, a traveler was making a long trek. Coolies had been engaged from a tribe to carry the loads. The first day they marched rapidly and went far. The traveler had high hopes of a speedy journey. But the second morning these jungle tribesmen refused to move. For some strange reason they just sat and rested. On inquiry as to the reason for this strange behavior, the traveler was informed that they had gone too fast the first day, and that they were now waiting for their souls to catch up with their bodies. Then Mrs. Cowman concludes with this penetrating exhortation: This whirling rushing life which so many of us live does for us what that first march did for those poor jungle tribesmen. The difference: they knew what they needed to restore life's balance; too often we do not." It is incredible to realize that Lettie Cowman wrote these words almost fifty years ago.

William McNamara noted, "Possibly the greatest malaise in our country today is our neurotic compulsion to work." Tim Hansel issued a warning to "Bionic Christians", who view leisure as "superfluous and wasteful."

It's been said that workaholism is a killer stalking our society. It is the pain others applaud. It is called the only lifeboat guaranteed to sink. It is the cleanest of all addictions. It is socially promoted because it is seemingly socially productive. Really, it is a progressive, fatal disease in which a person is addicted to the process of working.

As we consider the whole topic of stress and burnout that results we must look at the role overwork plays in that. It's all about time – and overwork is a very stress-producing way to misuse time! We need to have a balanced view of work today.



THE NEED TO WORK God designed man to work (Genesis 2:8-15; 3:17-19). A woman needs to know her husband is doing all he can to provide a secure income for the family. The Bible commands a man to provide for his family (I Timothy 5:8). We are told that if a man doesn't work he shouldn't be fed by others (II Thessalonians 3:10-12). In the Old Testament law it was written (by God) that if a man had more than one wife and didn't meet the needs of one of them she was free to leave (Exodus 21:7-11). The problem is that man is a creature of extremes. Some don't work enough and are lazy. Others go to the other extreme and overwork.



THE MISUSE OF WORK God wants man to work, not overwork. God did not design man to overwork. When Moses overworked himself Jethro's God-given advice was to divide the work so he wouldn't have so much himself (Exodus 18). In Ecclesiastes 3 we read that there is a time for everything: a time to work but also a time to rest.

WORK ADDICTION TEST Do you regularly do any of the following things? Score 1 for never; 2 for sometimes true, 3 for often true and 4 for always true.

1. Do you get impatient in slow-moving lines?
2. Do you find yourself doing 2 or 3 things at once, such as eating lunch and writing a memo?
3. Do you tend to put yourself under pressure with self-imposed deadlines?
4. Do you get upset with yourself for the smallest mistake?
5. Do you prefer to do things yourself rather than ask for help?

Verdict: 5-10: you are not overdoing it; 10-14: you are mildly overdoing it; 14-20: you are seriously overdoing it.

WHY MEN OVERWORK Too often men turn to work to find self worth. Work becomes a measure of success: what kind of work and how much work. Men tend to value themselves by what they do and they use their work to impress others as well as themselves. That's why when a man loses his job, is sick for an extended period of time, or retires, he often feels like a failure and without worth.

Another reason men especially tend to overwork at their jobs is because they have found it to be a socially acceptable way of numbing themselves from life's problems. When busy a man doesn't have to think about deeper things in his life and family. He doesn't have to face emotions in himself or others. He doesn't have to develop relationships and become intimate with others. Work is a protective wall against all those things that men so often avoid.

Work becomes an external standard of measuring how a man is doing in life. In a world out of control and often a family out of control, it is one area where he can exert control. Men are by nature competitors, and in work he can compete and measure who wins and who doesn't. A man can get a mild 'high' from crossing something off his list as accomplished.

Families often reinforce this in a man. They thank and encourage him for the financial benefits he provides to his wife and children. Their greed keeps them wanting Dad to work and work for more and more. They become, in effect, enablers who encourage men in their addiction for their own selfish reasons.

Our fathers worked to keep their families from starving, but no one needs to starve today even if the father doesn't work. Government and insurance companies provide, assuring no one will starve. Thus men today work for a different reason than their fathers.

Work has been called the addiction others applaud because it is so socially acceptable. Our society applauds and rewards those who work the hardest. In school and college we are trained to be productive perfectionists. The church applauds the Puritan work ethic. The pastor and top church leaders are characterized as being very busy and therefore very successful.

WHY WOMEN OVERWORK More and more women are becoming workaholics, too. As they enter a man's world of careers and competition they are often reacting more and more like men



react. Even those who stay home and home school can become addicted to their work. They can lose themselves in their home and children, not knowing when to stop, but always pushing for more and more. It's easy to miss an even balance in these things.



WORK ADDICTION Because of the reasons we use work as a substitute for self worth or intimacy, and because it is an escape from facing problems in life, work can often become an addiction. Adrian Cole, addiction therapist, says, "Work addiction is becoming more prevalent ... and like any other drug, it can, if pursued to its conclusion, be fatal. In Japan, 10 percent of male deaths are work-related."

Addiction to work has the same characteristics as addiction to alcohol, drugs, gambling or sex. Work is, for many, their 'drug of choice' and they keep their stash handy at all times.

MYTHS ABOUT WORKAHOLICS The first myth is that **workaholics are always working**. They are not. Some binge, just like in other addictions. Others are closet workers who appear relaxed so no one knows they are workaholics but their mind doesn't stop working. They sneak work home and hide it on vacation.

A second myth is that **only high-powered executives become workaholics**. Housewives can be compulsive cleaners. Careaholics can always be doing things for others. Busyaholics are always running around doing errands and things. Rushaholics over schedule themselves.

The third myth is that **workaholics get ahead in life**. In reality they soon fall apart, make poor decisions and become less effective instead of more productive.

CHARACTERISTICS OF WORKAHOLICS Following are some traits and characteristics of all addicts, including workaholics.

Workaholics often have **multiple addictions**. One addiction leads to another. Workaholics are often addicted to smoking, coffee, food, sex, alcohol or other things. It could be any combination of the above.

Often workaholics are **in denial** about their addiction. They seem to be hard workers, good providers, efficient housewives or mothers, so their problem is masked. They will deceive others, often even fooling themselves. They lie to protect themselves and keep addicted. Still, they keep their lists so they feel in control of life.

These people also have **an inability to relax**. Since they run on adrenaline they can't slow up and relax. They sometimes have trouble sleeping well. They seek and set up crisis and deadlines to motivate and stimulate themselves. They feel guilty about 'wasting' time. They are obsessed with thinking about work, even when not at work.

Perfectionism is another trait to watch for. They have high expectations of themselves and what they can do for others. They will deny themselves pleasure, rest and healthy food to meet these high goals. They are overly hard on themselves when they make a mistake. They must blame someone else when things go wrong.

Workaholics work best in **isolation**. Others may hold them back or discover their workaholic tendencies. They aren't good team players, therefore. They don't relate well with other people and prefer





being along with their work. Being busy becomes their excuse for not being close to others.

Physical or psychological problems will result from workaholicism. The immune system is suppressed and ripe for infection. Ulcers and gastro-intestinal problems, backaches, difficulty sleeping, headaches, high blood pressure and other things result. When hospitalized they bring along their brief case and work in their hospital bed.

CURE & RECOVERY The first and hardest part of the cure is to 1. admit to the problem. The surface problem, workaholicism, must be admitted to. As in any 10-step program, without this happening nothing else can result. But then one must seek out the root problem. **WHY** do you overwork? Is it because of insecurity? Fear of failure? Being unsure of yourself as a person? Avoiding intimacy with others? Impressing self and others? Escaping facing other problems? Seek your heart carefully to find the root problem. Ask God to search it out for you.

Then 2. **plan your options** to overcome your problem. Don't replace one addiction for another, as so often happens! Find someone to talk to and hold you accountable. Write down your goals, limits of hours worked, etc. Set your limits and stick to them, in your mind as well as in your life. The goal isn't to fool your family to think you're doing better, but to really be free from your addiction to serve the Lord and others as you should. Learn to value yourself by other standards. Connect with people you love. Face problems and work them through. Don't substitute with a hobby, church work, or some similar activity. Remember that it is OK to relax and enjoy.

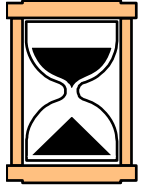
INDUSTRY. Gen. 2:15; Ex. 23:12 Deut. 5:13. Ex. 35:2; Prov. 10:4, 5; Prov. 12:11, 24, 27; Prov. 13:4, 11, 23; Prov. 14:4, 23; Prov. 16:26; Prov. 20:13; Prov. 21:5; Prov. 22:29; Prov. 27:23 vs. 23–27.; Prov. 28:19; Prov. 30:25, 26 vs. 27,28.; Prov. 31:27 vs. 13–27.; Eccl. 1:3; Eccl. 2:10, 11, 17–22; Eccl. 9:10; Eccl. 11:4, 6; Rom. 12:11; Eph. 4:28; 1 Thess. 4:11, 12; 2 Thess. 3:10–12; 1 Tim. 5:8 **Instances of:** Jeroboam, 1 Kin. 11:28. Paul, Acts 18:3; 20:33, 34; 2 Thess. 3:8.

LABOR. Gen. 3:19; Ex. 20:9–11; Ex. 23:12; Ex. 34:21 Lev. 23:3. Lev. 19:13; Deut. 24:14, 15; Deut. 25j:4 1 Cor. 9:9; 1 Tim. 5:18. Eccl. 5:12; Jer. 22:13; Mal. 3:5; Matt. 20:1–15; Luke 10:7; Acts 20:35; Eph. 4:28; 1 Thess. 4:11, 12; 2 Thess. 3:7–13; Jas. 5:4

LAZINESS. Prov. 6:6, 9–11 Prov. 24:33. Prov. 10:4, 5, 26; Prov. 12:9, 24, 27; Prov. 13:4; Prov. 14:23; Prov. 15:19; Prov. 18:9; Prov. 19:15, 24; Prov. 20:4, 13; Prov. 21:25, 26; Prov. 23:21; Prov. 24:30, 31, 33, 34; Prov. 26:13 [Prov. 22:13.] Prov. 26:14–16; Eccl. 4:5; Eccl. 10:18; Isa. 56:10; Ezek. 16:49 Luke 19:20–25. Matt. 20:6, 7; Matt. 25:26, 27; Acts 17:21; Rom. 12:11; 2 Thess. 3:10, 11; 1 Tim. 5:13; Heb. 6:12

IT'S ABOUT TIME ...

(& Stress Free, Godly Use of It)



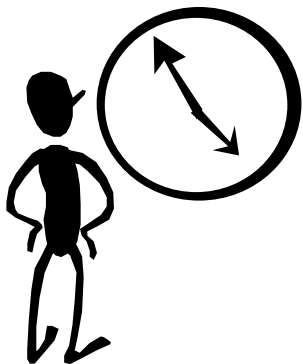
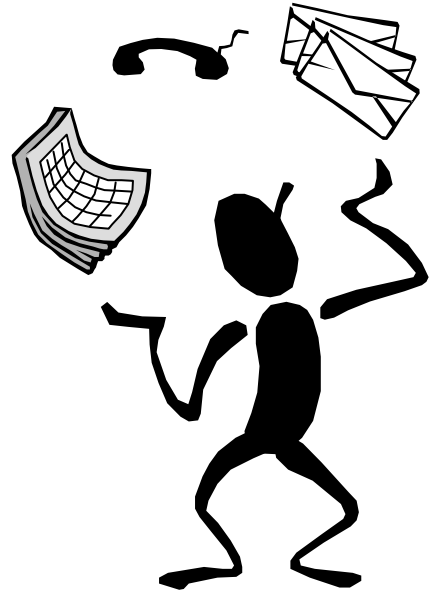
5. HOW TO HAVE PROPER PRIORITIES

PRIORITIES CHECKLIST

List the following according to the way you are currently living (the way a neutral observer would list them): 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 etc. THEN go back and list them the way you would like them to be, the way you wish they were.

- ☐ mate
- ☐ hobbies
- ☐ children
- ☐ God
- ☐ work outside the home
- ☐ home responsibilities
- ☐ church
- ☐ job
- ☐ recreation
- ☐ social activities
- ☐ relaxation
- ☐ sports
- ☐ material goods

What specific steps do you need to take to have them change?



Imagine there is a bank that credits your account each morning with \$86,400. It carries over no balance from day to day. Every evening deletes whatever part of the balance you failed to use during the day. What would you do? Draw out every cent, of course!!!! Each of us has such a bank. Its name is TIME. Every morning, it credits you with 86,400 seconds. Every night it writes off, as lost, whatever of this you have failed to invest to good purpose. It carries over no balance. It allows no overdraft. Each day it opens a new account for you. Each night it burns the remains of the day. If you fail to use the day's deposits, the loss is yours. There is no going back. There is no drawing

against the "tomorrow." You must live in the present on today's deposits. Invest it so as to get from it the utmost in health, happiness, and success! The clock is running. Make the most of today. To realize the value of ONE YEAR, ask a student who failed a grade. To realize the value of ONE MONTH, ask a mother who gave birth to a premature baby. To realize the value of ONE WEEK, ask the editor of a weekly newspaper. To realize the value of ONE HOUR, ask the lovers who are waiting to meet. To realize the value of ONE MINUTE, ask a person who missed the train. To realize the value of ONE SECOND, ask a person who just avoided an accident. To realize the value of ONE MILLISECOND, ask the person who won a Silver medal in the Olympics. Treasure every moment that you have! And treasure it more because you shared it with someone special, special enough to spend your time. And remember that time waits for no one. Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is mystery. Today is a gift. That's why it's called the present!!

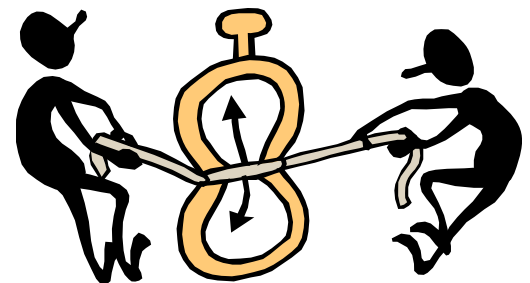


Peter Drucker, in *The Effective Executive*, says: "Time is the scarcest resource, and unless it is managed, nothing else can be managed." Hlary of Tours diagnosed our busyness today as "irreligiousa sollicitudo pro Deo," a blasphemous anxiety to do God's work for him.

THE PROBLEM: WRONG PRIORITIES There are so many demands on our time today that it is hard to keep everything straight. Despite all our 'labor-saving' devices, we are busier than ever.

Mates need our times. One of the biggest problems facing marriages today is not taking enough time to enjoy and grow together. Time is before marriage time is carved out to build a foundation, but then after marriage, especially after children arrive, demands come to the forefront. Thus we are always giving and not getting. We work together but don't have time to enjoy each other and get to know each other better. We spend time together working and raising a family, but not quality time of really connecting. That must be a first priority.

Children need our time. I read once of a little boy who found out his father was paid \$20 an hour at work and so he saved his money until he had finally accumulated \$20. He took the money to his father and asked if he could buy an hour of his time. That's how much this son wanted to have time with his father. Studies show that the average father has 2.7 encounters with his children each day, lasting ten to fifteen seconds each. It's been said that if we want our children to turn out well we should spend twice as much time with them and half the amount of money on them.



Work needs our time. We have a responsibility to earn a living, and that obligation means spending time to do it. Often it means spending more time than we used to have to spend. Leisure time has decreased 37% since 1973. The average work week (including commuting time) has increased from 41 to 47 hours per week. However we don't want to be like the man who spent all his time building bigger barns and then dying.

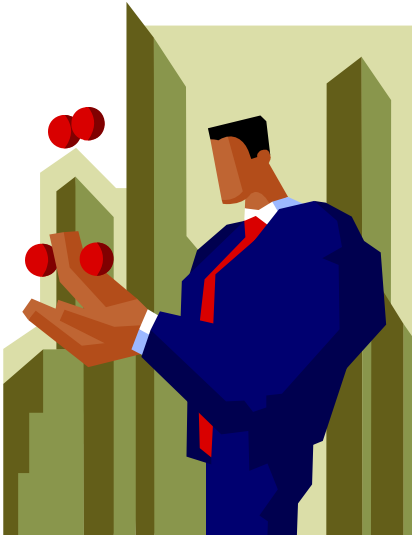
Others need our time. Friends, relatives, people at church – there is no end of places to spend time in worthwhile and helpful activities.

Boredom is not a problem, for there is always more to do than we have time for. That's why proper priorities are so important.

THE SOLUTION: RIGHT PRIORITIES Turning to the Bible we see God's priorities for us clearly outlined. This is how I see God's priorities for us:

1. Self - basic maintenance The Bible tells us that 'judgment begins at the house of God.' That means God holds us accountable for ourselves first. If we don't take care of ourselves we won't have anything to give to others. That doesn't mean we spend most of our time on ourselves, but that we do make sure basic maintenance is covered. It's like taking care of your car. You must put gas in it first or you won't go anywhere. However you don't spend all day putting gas in – you do it and then get on to other things. Likewise we must make sure we are filled spiritually at the start of each day (Gal 2:20; 5:22-26). We must make sure that

emotionally we are sound and growing as well (Mark 12:33). If we are controlled by fear, anger, lust, pride or any other negative emotion we won't be able to relate to others around us as we should. We also need to take care of ourselves physically (1 Kings 19). Healthy bodies come from proper exercise, diet, sleep and relaxation. Our physical health affects all we are and do as well. Thus our first priority is to make sure we are healthy and growing spiritually, emotionally and physically. Jesus had these priorities – that's why He would slip away from the crowds, and even His own disciples, to spend time alone in prayer and reflection. He knew He had to take care of His own needs or He wouldn't be able to meet the needs of others. This doesn't mean that He indulged Himself or just lived for Himself, but He did know that basic maintenance had to be done first.

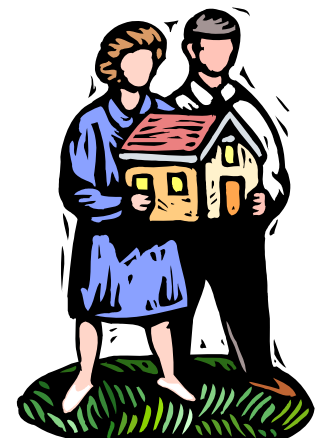


2. God Our second priority is God. Before anyone else in life God must be first. Anything before Him is an idol. That means having time for devotions, worship, learning the Bible, spiritual growth, and serving Him in whatever way He wants. Remember Mary and Martha? Jesus commended Mary for putting spiritual things before work and daily activity.

3. Mate Our third priority, after only our own basic maintenance and then God, is our mate. They rate before children, job or anything else (1 Timothy 3:4-5). Authorities on the subject say it takes 15 hours a week for a husband and wife to really connect. These hours are spent focusing on each other and the relationship, not just time working together in the same house or room. Fifteen hours focusing on each other wasn't enough before marriage, and we all assumed we'd have more after marriage. What happened?

Bill McCartney, Promise Keepers founder, wanted to practice what he preached. So when he took a serious look at his own shortcomings at home, especially with his wife, Lyndi, he decided to do something about it. In 1994 Bill announced his resignation as football coach at the University of Colorado. Although she liked the prospect of seeing more of her husband, Lyndi also had concerns. "If he quit what he loved, for me, then eventually he wouldn't love me anymore." But, "when [Bill] was talking about how he was hearing the call from the Lord to do this, that gave me a peace. It wasn't on my shoulders; it was on God's shoulders, and his are big and strong and dependable."

4. Children Before outside activities, hobbies or work come our children. Motivational speaker and leadership trainer Sheila Murray Bethel expresses a profound thought in his manner: "Never once have I heard an older person look back on life and say, "Boy, oh boy! I wish I had spent more time with the corporation!" or, "If I had it to do over, I



would get up even earlier in the morning and go down to the company and really get after my job!"

A young successful attorney said: "The greatest gift I ever received was a gift I got one Christmas when my dad gave me a small box. Inside was a note saying, 'Son, this year I will give you 365 hours, an hour every day after dinner. It's yours. We'll talk about what you want to talk about, we'll go where you want to go, play what you want to play. It will be your hour!'" "My dad not only kept his promise," he said, "but every year he renewed it -- and it's the greatest gift I ever had in my life. I am the result of his time."

5. Work Work is a definite priority in our life, for God told Adam and Eve they would have to work to make a living on this earth. The woman in Proverbs 31 is an example of the blessing and joy that work brings. It does come before self-serving pleasure, but not before children, mate or God.

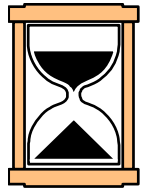


6. Self – pleasure, indulgences There is nothing wrong with wholesome activities that are done just for joy and pleasure. It is legitimate to enjoy the world around us. God made it for our pleasure. We don't always have to be working. He told us to take 1 day in seven for rest and refreshment. He also established periodic festivals and rest periods. One year every seven years was to be work free for people, animals and the land. God knows that this is important. A bow won't work to its best if it is taunt all the time. It needs to be relaxed until needed. The same is true of us. Using our time is similar to using our money. If we waste it we will regret it. Most is to be spent in a worthy way. Some is to be invested for future benefit. We do this with time when we get away, relax, do things that are pleasurable and refreshing to us. That's an investment in the future because it paces us and assures us there will be resources available in the future.



SETTING RIGHT PRIORITIES Determine to line your priorities up with God's priorities. Pray about this. It's one thing to say it but something entirely different to actually do. Getting our priorities right sounds great, but the price can be high for it means saying "No" to some things that are very hard to say no to: boss, self, laziness, doing things to impress others, greed, etc. There is a price to be paid but it is well worth the price. Time is our most valuable possession, and it can only be used once – so please use it wisely.

Write below what God wants you to change in your life so you line up better with His priorities. Also how you will do this. What does God want you to do MORE of? What does He want you to do LESS of so you have time to do more of what He wants?



IT'S ABOUT TIME ...

(& Stress Free, Godly Use of It)



6. GOAL SETTING

When she looked ahead, Florence Chadwick saw nothing but a solid wall of fog. Her body was numb. She had been swimming for nearly sixteen hours. Already she was the first woman to swim the English Channel in both directions. Now, at age 34, her goal was to become the first woman to swim from Catalina Island to the California coast. On that Fourth of July morning in 1952, the sea was like an ice bath and the fog was so dense she could hardly see her support boats. Sharks cruised toward her lone figure, only to be driven away by rifle shots. Against the frigid grip of the sea, she struggled on - hour after hour - while millions watched on national television. Alongside Florence in one of the boats, her mother and her trainer offered encouragement. They told her it wasn't much farther. But all she could see was fog. They urged her not to quit. She never had . . . until then. With only a half mile to go, she asked to be pulled out. Still thawing her chilled body several hours later, she told a reporter, "Look, I'm not excusing myself, but if I could have seen land I might have made it." It was not fatigue or even the cold water that defeated her. It was the fog. She was unable to see her goal. Two months later, she tried again. This time, despite the same dense fog, she swam with her faith intact and her goal clearly pictured in her mind. She knew that somewhere behind that fog was land and this time she made it! Florence Chadwick became the first woman to swim the Catalina Channel, eclipsing the men's record by two hours! Keeping your goal in sight makes all the difference!

WHAT IS A GOAL? In sports it's easy to know what your goal is – to win by scoring the most points. Often these points are even called 'goals' because that's the goal of the game. In life, however, it isn't as easy to know what our goal is, nor is it easy to meet it. A goal is a response to a need. It's something that can be accomplished. It's a statement of God's will for you. It's a future objective. Goals are like stake posts in the distance to help plow a straight line in life.



WHY HAVE GOALS? If you don't have a goal you will wander. One day Alice (*Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll) came to a fork in the road and saw a Cheshire cat in a tree. Which road do I take? she asked. Where do you want to go? was his response. I don't know, Alice answered. Then, said the cat, it doesn't matter. We must set goals in order to attain them. If we don't have a target, how will we ever know if we hit it or not? Goals motivate us. Goals give us purpose and direction. Goals help us focus. Goals help us know what our priorities need to be. Goals measure how well we've been doing.

WHO SET GOALS? Jesus had a goal in mind throughout His whole earthly ministry. *Luke 13:32 He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.'* Paul had his goals as well. *2 Corinthians 5:9 So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. Philipians 3:14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

WHICH GOALS SHOULD BE SET? Everyone has goals, if they realize it or not. Everyone has things they want to achieve, even if they are self-centered or lazy. Laziness' goal is to not have to do more than absolutely necessary. Many of the things that people live for today aren't worthy goals for living.



One night, a group of thieves broke into a jewelry store. But rather than stealing anything, they simply switched all the price tags. The next day no one could tell what was valuable and what was cheap. The expensive jewels had suddenly become cheap, and the costume jewelry, which had been virtually worthless before, was suddenly of great value. Customers who thought they were purchasing valuable gems were getting fakes. Those who couldn't afford the higher priced items were leaving the store with treasures. Application: In our world someone came in and switched all the price tags. It's hard to tell what is of value and what is not. Great value is given to the accumulation of material wealth and the power that goes with it. The world puts a high price on popularity, prestige, beauty, and fame. But Jesus taught that such things are virtually worthless in the only "jewelry store" that matters: the kingdom of God. *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal" (Matt. 6:19, 20).*

Jesus gives us guidelines for setting godly goals: *Luke 12:29-31 29 And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. 30 For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. 31 But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.*

Everyone has goals, but not everyone acts on them. We all set goals, perhaps even without knowing it. We don't start out on a vacation without knowing where we are going, don't plant a garden without knowing what we want to grow, or build a house without giving the builder any instructions. The more intentional we are in setting our goals, the more likely we will be to achieve them. And for the Christian, when we include God in the process, we are assured success.

The Taj Mahal is one of the most beautiful and costly tombs ever built, but there is something fascinating about its beginnings. In 1629, when the favorite wife of Indian ruler Shah Jahan died, he ordered that a magnificent tomb be built as a memorial to her. The shah placed his wife's casket in the middle of a parcel of land, and construction of the temple literally began around it. But several years into the venture, the Shah's grief for his wife gave way to a passion for the project. One day while he was surveying the sight, he reportedly stumbled over a wooden box, and he had some workers throw it out. It was months before he realized that his wife's casket had been destroyed. The original purpose for the memorial became lost in the details of construction. This legend may or may not be true, but its theme is a familiar one in the lives of people. How many of us set out to build dream castles but lose our focus along the way? We realize too late that it is loved ones and our children that really matter.

Another classic example of misplaced values occurred in the life of J. Paul Getty, one of the richest men of this century. He wrote: "I've never been given to envy, save for the envy I feel toward those people who have the ability to make a marriage work and endure happily. It's an art I've never been able to master." While we're building our Taj Mahals, let's not forget the purpose with which we began building.

HOW TO SET GOALS Godly goals come from God, therefore we must spend time with Him. It's only His goals that will ultimately succeed (Proverbs 19:21). God's goals for us are beyond our human ability and necessitate us relying on His strength alone.

Write your goals down in words on paper. That way you can state precisely what you feel God wants you to accomplish with your life. Don't use fuzzy generalities such as 'be more spiritual,' 'be a better husband,' or 'read the Bible more.' To be more spiritual or a better husband is not a goal but a statement of purpose. A goal would be to spend 15 minutes in prayer and Bible reading the first thing every morning. A goal would be to take my wife on a date every week and initiate a conversation about how I can better serve her.

To be a good goal remember that it must be measurable. It must have a time factor and description of what is expected in that time. "Travel to the Caribbean for our 20th anniversary" and "become a Christian school science teacher within the next 7 years" are measurable and attainable goals. Then intermediate steps to get from where you are to the goal can be set.

These intermediate steps are goals, too – lesser goals along the way to help us achieve our main goal. To travel the Caribbean as a long-term goal would mean having short term goals of saving so much money each month. It would be gathering information about cruise lines and making a decision about which one to use one year before the sailing date (by your 19th anniversary). It would mean having passports by a certain date, etc.

HOW TO REACH YOUR GOALS While goal-setting is important, just having words written on paper does no good. The story of David and Goliath in I Samuel 17 is a good example. David had a clear picture of his goal – to kill Goliath. His goal wasn't to win the king's daughter in marriage, to make a name for himself or to impress others.



David had a clear motive for this goal – to glorify God. He did it because of God's testimony and reputation. He had a consuming desire to reach this goal and not even the criticism by his brothers or the doubts of King Saul could keep him from it.

Despite how impossible it seemed humanly speaking, David had the utmost confidence that, with God's help, he would achieve his God-given goal (I Samuel 17:37, 45-47). After, if this is what God wanted him to do, and God would be with him, how could he fail?

David didn't just sit around, though. He worked to bring about the achievement of his goal. He developed a course of action. He wouldn't use the king's armor but would use a sling instead. His long-range goal was to kill Goliath, but he had short range goals: collecting rocks, practicing with his sling, being ready as if each day was the battle.

It was important for David to keep his eyes on his goal and not be drawn away by others who would sow doubts in his mind, discourage him, or interfere (as his brothers tried to do). He didn't let fear, anger, pride, discouragement or doubt sidetrack him. We, too, must keep our eyes focused on God's goal for us (Proverbs 4:25-27). Paul did this (II Corinthians 11:22-28). Now you work on your goals, using the chart on the following page. Pray first, then get to work!

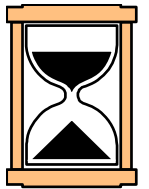
GOALS

Use the chart below to help formulating your goals. Use other paper if there isn't enough room in the slots. First pray about the long range goals God would have for you in the following areas. You may not want to write a goal for every one of the areas, just the ones that most apply to you in this time of your life. After you have long term goals formulate the short term goal and then finally the immediate goal. You must work from right to left in this way. You can't come up with an immediate goal first.

	IMMEDIATE (This day/week)	SHORT TERM (This month/year)	LONG TERM (Next Year/End of Life)
Personal (overall)			
Intellectual			
Spiritual			
Communication with god			
Bible knowledge			
Worship			
Use of spiritual gifts			
Emotional			
Physical			
Vocational			
Social			
Family (overall)			
Relationship with mate			
Relationship with children			
Financial			
Friends & Extended Family			
Church			

IT'S ABOUT TIME ...

(& Stress Free, Godly Use of It)



7. TIME MANAGEMENT

Today "Whirl is King." Peter Drucker in *"The Effective Executive"* says "Time is the scarcest resource, and unless it is managed, nothing else can be managed." We have been talking about setting goals (pages 23-26) based on our priorities (pages 19-22). Now let's talk about carrying out these goals that we have set. Putting them down on paper is the first step. Putting them into life is the next.

Never say you are 'busy.' Even if someone suggests that you are, reply that you are involved in a lot of activities but you don't feel busy. This will serve to stop reinforcement of the busy image; no longer will you get reinforced to be a martyr. Give up the overworked, under-appreciated image. This is difficult to do since many enjoy the strokes they receive from others who see them as very busy: they feel sorry for you and give the impression that you must be important since you are so busy.

Say 'no' to people's request for your time if it is an inappropriate one. If you can't say no, give an enthusiastic maybe and tell them you will get back to them tomorrow. This will give you 24 hours to decide what you really want to do, to structure your response, and gain the stamina to set limits for your time and energy.

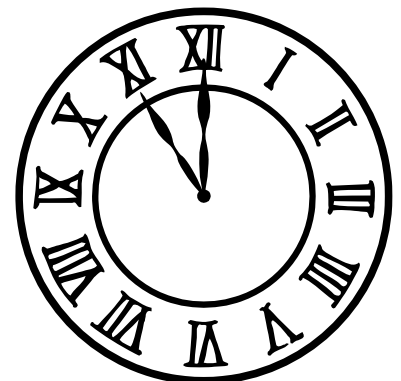
TO HELP YOU SET GODLY PRIORITIES Remember, time for the Christian is not any more his own than his money is. God doesn't give us more to do than He gives us time to do it. Just like He doesn't give us more expenses than He gives us money. The trick is to eliminate the things we add ourselves.

Identify and eliminate the things that need not be done at all, the things that are purely waste of time without any results whatever.

What activities do you do that could be done by someone else almost just as good? Even children can do many things -- pay them for it! Proverbs 31 is an example of a man who delegated much responsibility to his wife.

Watch your expectations. If you expect too much of yourself you will fail. If you expect to be overworked you will be. We usually live up (or down) to what we expect. Often the cure to overwork isn't doing less work but in aligning our expectations with reality through wise planning.

When working -- work! Watch for distractions. Concentrate and accomplish. Disruptions, side tracks, etc., waste much time. Pick your best time and place, protect yourself from disruptions, and apply yourself until done. Picking at work, stalling, playing around and only half going at it are a real waste of time. Either do it or don't!



Opportunity does not equal a mandate to act. Just because you become aware of a need does not mean God is calling you to meet that need.

Be flexible with yourself. Don't make a fetish out of saving time. Don't be paranoid about wasting time. Occasionally you need to waste some time. Some people need to go to a time-wasting seminar, not a time-saving one.

Never plan to do an hour's work in an hour -- you'll be frustrated and stressed. It almost always takes more than an hour to do an hour's work!

Think of your time as money. Spend it as money -- it is a limited resource. Don't let others spend it for you. Use some for needs (present and future- savings) and wants (present).

Remember, it's not how much you do with your time that counts, it's how much that really gets done. You must do the right thing and do it right the first time -- at the right time. It's not just being busy and doing a lot, but doing the right things. So be careful how you act ... Make the most of every opportunity you have for doing good" (Eph. 5:15-16) "A relaxed attitude lengthens a man's life" (Proverbs 14:30)

Be industrious but not over-anxiously busy.

Avoid spinning your wheels, activity without productivity. Luke 10:41-42

Don't postpone things that can be done right now.

Use your time twice. Listen to tapes while traveling. Pray while jogging. Talk with your wife while walking. Enjoy the children while shopping (make up games to play).

Chart your energy cycle. Know when you are most productive in a day and play appropriately.

Save all the junk, uninteresting work that takes a lot of self-discipline to do for one day and do it all at one time. Make it the same day each week (Thursday morning for me). You know it'll get done and don't have to feel guilty ahead of time. That is 'wasted' time anyway so nothing lost!

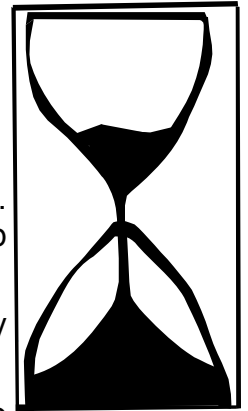
Settle trifles quickly. When things don't really matter one way or the other, don't waste time on them. Make minor decisions quickly.

Group your telephone calls. Do things you can do while talking (shuffling papers, straightening up desk, etc.)

Only handle papers once, don't put them off, make another stack, etc.

Learn when to relax and not work, and do it without guilt! Like harpooner on a whaling ship didn't row, but was just ready for his work at the right time, so we must know when to NOT work.

TESTING YOUR PRIORITIES For a full week write down what you do, in 30 minute increments, so that you have a record of how your time is spent. This is a good way to see if you are carrying out your new priorities. After a week write down how much time is spent in each area. Look for ways and places to improve and change your priorities. Make out a schedule for the next week so you can apply these changes.



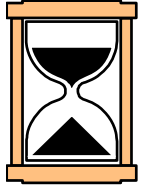
RECORD OF DAILY TIME USAGE FOR WEEK

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PLAN FOR DAILY TIME USAGE FOR WEEK

TIME	MON.	TUES.	WED.	THURS.	FRI.	SAT.	SUN.
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6:30 AM							
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IT'S ABOUT TIME ...



(& Stress Free, Godly Use of It)

8. HOW TO HAVE CHRIST-LIKE CONTENTMENT (Phil. 4)

My daytimer goes with me wherever I go. I write everything I need to do in here including my future schedule. I keep my church activities scheduled here, home school plans, 'to do' lists for upcoming work and all kinds of miscellaneous information to better help plan my day. I started using it to serve me and make life easier. Now sometimes it feels more like I am serving it. It seems I start my day with 150 things to do and then end up with 140 left at the end of the day – some days 160! Next day I have another list to add to it.

Sometimes I feel like a car with its wheels on ice. The speedometer says I'm doing 110 but I look around and I'm not getting anywhere. Ever feel that way?

I go on vacation and come back 100% committed to change by doing less and enjoying it all more, but after a few days I'm back in the same pattern. I get tired of trying to do 2 or 3 things at the same time, always being behind, and feeling guilty if I slow the pace or stop for awhile. By nature I'm a relaxed, easy-going person. Peace is what I long for. Retirement appeals for it seems to be the only solution, yet everyone I know who is retired says they are busier now than before! I guess I'll never find contentment and peace by crossing everything off my list and be able to sit around because there just isn't anything more than needs to be done!



PEACE IN A PERSON However the Bible tells us peace is found, not in a program or place, but in a person – Jesus. *"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."* (John 14:27) The world's peace is shallow and short-lived. Christ's peace is much greater – it's the real thing!

Paul, who had the same temperament and same problem I have, found out the solution to this and shares it in Philippians 4. He was a real go-getter who started dozens of churches and stayed in touch with them. He trained scores of pastors and leaders, had a busy correspondence (13 letters in the Bible plus many others), counseled and advised people and had a solid devotional and Bible study life. Yet he had no email, Internet or fax. There were no cars or planes for travel and no computer to process his mail and writings. How did he do it all, and then be able to write about the peace of God which transcends all understanding? What was His solution?

PHILIPPIANS 4:11-13 *I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength.*

Paul is here referring to a life attitude. He says the key to peace and contentment is found in the proper attitude to possessions (or lack of them) and time (or lack of it). It's not in trying to have more or do more but in how one approaches what one does have and do. We can glean 10 principles from Paul that can help us today:

1. CONTENTMENT MUST BE LEARNED *I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.* (Phil 4:13) Contentment doesn't come naturally. I wasn't born with it and neither were my children. It doesn't come naturally to any of us. We are all born naturally impatient, selfish and never satisfied. We want things to go the way we want them. We seek control, not contentment. We feel if we can control things we'll be OK. That's our substitute for peace. Controlling circumstances without, however, doesn't bring peace within. Yet the 10th Commandment commands us to not covet – in other words to be content!

No, contentment must be LEARNED. That implies occasion to learn it, times when it is easy to not be content. Let's face it. We can't ever expect to get everything done. We need to prioritize and then accept what happens. We must submit to God's vetoing our desires to control our schedule and accomplish all we would like. We must learn to be content.

2. CONTENTMENT IS AN ATTITUDE OF TRUST *I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.* (Phil 4:13) Contentment is an attitude, a state of mind. Even when we aren't in control, we have more to do than time to do it, and things are falling apart, we can still be content knowing God is in control and He won't give us too much to handle. Contentment is calm acceptance that God rules my time. He gives me 24 hours in a day and knows I can only do so much in a given day. I expect more than that, but the trick is to remember that He doesn't!

We must find our contentment in God, not in how many things got crossed off our 'to do' list. It's often been said that peace is not the absence of trouble but the presence of God.

Paul, who wrote these words, had as much or more to do than we did. Yet he found himself chained in jail for no legal reason and spent almost 5 years there. He had so much he wanted to do, so much that needed doing, so much started yet unfinished. He HAD to learn an attitude of trust (contentment) during that time or he'd go crazy from the stress and frustration that would build in him.

If home schoolers don't learn this there'll be no peace in their home. Unrealistic expectations of themselves and others will cause blame to be made, then anger, then the children will be back in school! Contentment, on the other hand, means trusting a sovereign God to understand my limits and to find peace within functioning on a lower level of accomplishment than we would like. Let's face it, we'll NEVER come to the place where it's all done and we can take it easy for lack of anything else to do! The Energizer Bunny may sell batteries, but he's no example for Christians today.

3. EVERYONE NEEDS ONE DAY A WEEK OFF *Exod 31:15 For six days, work is to be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day must be put to death.* The Bible COMMANDS us to rest. In the Old Testament the Jews were commanded to rest one day a week (Sabbath), seasonally (numerous feasts and holidays that lasted several days each) and for extended periods from time to time (Sabbatical year, one year off every 7).

Let me ask you. What day of the week do you take off? Would your mate and children agree? You can't run a battery and not recharge it! Jesus Himself withdrew and took much time off, despite all He had to do. When the Old Testament Jews neglected to



take one year off in 7 for 490 years, He sent them into captivity for the 70 years they owed Him and the land.

Everyone needs a day off. During World War II factories found a worker could get more done in 6 days with one off than in working 7 days. Try it yourself and you'll see its true! Don't do it in a legalistic way or you'll defeat the purpose and find ways around it. Instead truly trust God in this. Use the day for time with your mate and family – enjoyable, relaxing time, not doing things you would do the rest of the week. Sunday is still the best day for this. Have devotions, talk a walk or a nap, play a game, talk together, read, visit family or friends, get some exercise together. Plan ahead so there isn't homework, big meal preparation, shopping, home repair, yard work, etc., that is necessary to do.

According to tradition, when the apostle John was bishop in Ephesus, his hobby was raising pigeons. On one occasion an Ephesian elder passed his house as he returned from hunting. When he saw John playing with one of his birds, he gently chided the old bishop for spending his time so frivolously. John looked at his critic's bow and remarked that the string was loosened. "Yes," said the huntsman, "I also loosen the string of my bow when it's not in use. If it always stayed tight, it would lose its rebounding quality and fail me in the hunt." "And I," said John, "am now relaxing the bow of my mind so that I may be better able to shoot the arrows of divine truth."

4. HEAVY BURDENS DON'T COME FROM JESUS *Matt 11:28-30 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."* "Easy"? "Light"? Does that describe your yoke? If it isn't easy then it isn't from Jesus! Jesus doesn't help us carry the burdensome yokes of our own ego and accomplishments. He only helps us carry the yoke HE custom-designs specifically for each one of us. He won't help us carry our yokes, just His. We can't say "I can't" or "It's too much" to His yoke, but we can say that to our own yokes. That doesn't mean we won't be stretched right to the very limit of our own resources. We will, but we'll find Him right there to carry us to the next level.



By saying 'heavy burdens don't come from Jesus' I am referring to stress from time over commitments and burdens (mentally and physically). Jesus does give us heavy burdens of suffering and stretching, but He is there with us to carry them.

Jesus promises He will give us 'rest.' This doesn't mean rest FROM a work load (retirement, vacation) but rest IN our work load. When we are doing what He requires He also provides an attitude of peace, a soul at rest while the body works. If that is absent we are either 1) carrying burdens He didn't give us or 2) carrying His burden in our own strength. Which is it?

He promises that His "toke is easy" and His "burden is light." The burdens we give ourselves aren't, neither are the yokes we allow others to place on us. Those expectations are draining and exhausting. They are never satisfied. Jesus us. It's not a matter of having more time or better cooperation, it's a matter of making sure we are just carrying HIS burden with HIS strength – nothing more and nothing less.

5. HAVING PEACE MEANS GIVING UP CONTROL Most of us like to have things under control and going our way – smooth, efficient, planned ahead. However that seldom happens. Too much comes at once, interruptions change things, last-minute changes disrupt. When that happens we tend to try hard to force things into our mold, keep them under our control. Instead we should submit to Jesus as the one changing our schedule and go with the changes and

additions. We need to be open for Him to choose to change our schedule or alter it in any way. We can't see it as MY schedule, but His schedule carried out through us. That's not as easy to do as it is to say, however. Jeremiah 10:23 says *"I know, O Lord, that a man's life is not his own; it is not for man to direct his steps."*

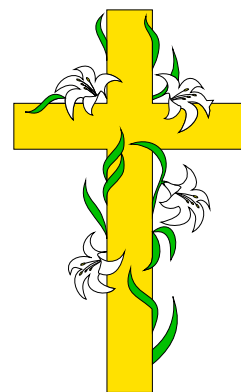
After William Carey was well established in his pioneer missionary work in India, his supporters in England sent a printer to assist him. Soon the two men were turning out portions of the Bible for distribution. Carey had spent many years learning the language so that he could produce the Scriptures in the local dialect. He had also prepared dictionaries and grammars for the use of his successors. One day while Carey was away, a fire broke out and completely destroyed the building, the presses, many Bibles, and the precious manuscripts, dictionaries or impatience. Instead, he knelt and thanked God that he still had the strength to do the work over again. He started immediately, not wasting a moment in self-pity. Before his death, he had duplicated and even improved on his earlier achievements.

Peace is an attitude of giving up control, not trusting God with it.

As we all know, though, saying these things is one thing but doing them is something quite different. How can we really, consistently do them? How was Paul able to do this? What was his secret?

6. Secret 1: REMEMBER THE CROSS: Keep This Life in Eternal Perspective

Paul reveals the first part of his secret in an earlier chapter of Philippians, 1:21. *"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."* The cross frees us from sin and bondage and gives freedom, both now and eternally. It's important for us to keep this world and its work in eternal perspective. Twenty years from now, what of all you have done today will really matter? What about 100 years from now? No one on their death bed says they wished they would have worked more or harder, instead they wish they had spent more time with family and enjoying life.



Nothing else in life is important when placed next to the cross. Only what lasts for eternity really matters. Getting too bogged down with our own yokes, which will burn, is a poor use of time. That doesn't mean that support processes must be omitted. Floors cleaned, wash put away, meals cooked – many things like that must be done. However we must remember that they are just that – support activities. They are just means to an end (doing what will matter and last for all eternity). They are not an end in themselves. When they become our goal, instead of just a means to our goal, we have our perspective wrong.

7. Secret 2: LET GO OF THE PAST: Forgive Yourself and Others In the 3rd chapter of this letter to the Philippians Paul writes: *"Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead."* This is important advice and part of Paul's secret to being content. He knew he couldn't be content today if he held onto the failures and mistakes of the past. He had to forgive himself and others. If not, there would be no peace and contentment available. He wouldn't be able to enjoy what he did accomplish, just be miserable over what he had not done.

Perfectionists especially need to do this, or they (we) will never be content and satisfied. No matter what is accomplished, it could have been more or better. When we put ourselves on a performance standard we believe that God has us on that same standard. Then our acceptance of ourselves becomes conditional on our performance. We assume God feels the same way about us. Thus the foundation for everything becomes what we are able to do, not God's unconditional love and mercy shown to us no matter what. Letting go of the past and our perfectionist standards is an important secret to learn.

8. Secret 3: LET GO OF THE FUTURE: Live Life One Day at a Time Paul says in Phil 4:19 *"My God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus."* That means, among other things, surrendering our timetable to God and waiting patiently for His timing. It means not trying to handle tomorrow's problems and needs today. You know that feeling of running downhill one step in front of an avalanche, and if we pause for a second it'll over take you? That's self-inflicted stress. That's not carrying God's burdens with His strength, is it?

Be honest, it's not today that really get us – it's tomorrow. Today we can manage and get by, but thinking of all that needs to be the next day, rest of the week and next week gets too much. It is too much. God promises His grace one day at a time. *"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."*

Worry leads to heart attacks, and all kinds of misery along the way. The Bible says God will provide for us one day at a time so we must learn to live one day at a time. *"Give us each day our daily bread."* (Luke 11:3; Ex 16:4).



In the early years of the ITALIAN RENAISSANCE painters like MICHELANGELO were often commissioned to paint enormous murals on walls or ceilings. The best method they found for these murals was FRESCO painting, in which you paint right onto a wet plaster wall. That way the paint and the plaster dry together, and the crisp, vivid colors are preserved. But it isn't possible to plaster and paint an entire wall in one day. All that can be done is one small part of the whole. Sometimes a fresco painter can expect to make great progress in the course of a day; if he's painting the background he might be able to do several square feet. Then, too, something might interrupt and keep him from doing that much. If he's working on the details of, say, a bouquet of gladiolas or a dimple child's face, he might finish only a small portion the size of a plate. Each morning he mixes up as much plaster as he'll think he'll need, then coats the portion of the wall that he believes he will be able to finish. That small portion is called the GIORNATA, "day-piece" - Same in our day and time use!

9. GOD GIVES STRENGTH TO DO ALL HE WANTS DONE PHILIPPIANS 4:11-13 *I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength.*

We CAN do all God wants us to do. The key is not adding our own agenda to it as well as making sure we do it by His strength. *"If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."* (John 15:5) God's work in God's strength always accomplishes what God desires (John 8:28; 5:30).

John Henry Jowett told about a small village where an elderly woman died. She died penniless, uneducated, unsophisticated, but during her lifetime her selfless service had made a tremendous impact for Christ. On her tombstone they chiseled the words, "She did what she couldn't." That can be the epitaph for every Christian who will allow Christ to live through us: HE can do through us what we can never do ourselves. *John 14:10 it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.*

Jesus is our example. He had 24 hours in a day, 7 days in a week. Yet He was never rushed or frustrated. He didn't even carry a watch. He didn't try to do everything, there was much He left undone. He only focused on the most important chores God gave Him. He had His priorities and followed them. He took time off to get alone and pray. He lived life one day at a time. He said 'no' to some things and delegated other things to others. He knew God gave Him strength to do all God wanted Him to do.

10. LEARN TO SAY 'NO' AND TO DELEGATE We've learned to never agree to take on new responsibility without thinking and praying overnight (just like a larger financial purchase). I need to check my motives for taking on new responsibilities. Did I agree to it because I felt guilty to say no, because I like the affirmation I get from someone when I agree to do something for them, or because I knew in my heart that God wanted me to do it? Would I have felt free to say 'no' if I wasn't sure God really wanted me to do it?

I've learned, too, that when I agree to do something God doesn't want me to do, I rob the right person of the opportunity of doing it. It's pride to think that I am the only one that can do it and not trust the job to someone else.

In summary, then, we see that we can do whatever God wants us to do when we follow His principles:

Principle 1: CONTENTMENT MUST BE LEARNED

Principle 2: CONTENTMENT IS AN ATTITUDE OF TRUST

Principle 3: EVERYONE NEEDS ONE DAY A WEEK OFF

Principle 4: HEAVY BURDENS DON'T COME FROM JESUS

Principle 5: HAVING PEACE MEANS GIVING UP CONTROL

Principle 6: REMEMBER THE CROSS

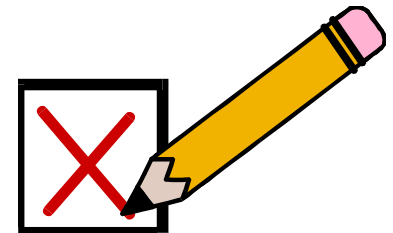
(Keep this life in eternal perspective)

Principle 7: LET GO OF THE PAST (forgive yourself & others)

Principle 8: LET GO OF THE FUTURE (Live life one day at a time)

Principle 9: GOD GIVES STRENGTH TO DO ALL HE WANTS DONE

Principle 10: LEARN TO SAY 'NO' & TO DELEGATE



Which principle (or principles) give you the hardest time? Which one(s) do you need to better focus on, starting today? Write it/them down and put them where you'll see them several times a day. It's not an easy, automatic switch to make, but with God's help all things are possible.

A woman who had been living a very high-pressured life moved with her family from the city to the country. The family had resolved to reduce the stresses and tensions that they had been under by entering into a gentler, easier life-style. A neighbor called on the mother one day and noticed something that had been pinned on the family bulletin board. She asked about it and the mother said, "Oh, that's a poem that represents what our moving here was all about. The poem starts out, 'Lord, slow me down --' But I haven't had time to read the rest of it."

This is the poem: "Slow me down, Lord.

Ease the pounding of my heart by the quieting of my mind.

Steady my hurried pace with a vision of the eternal reach of time.

Give me, amid the confusion of the day, the calmness of the everlasting hills.

Break the tensions of my nerves and muscles with the soothing music of the singing streams that live in my memory.

Teach me the art of taking minute vacations -- of slowing down to look at a flower, to chat with a friend, to pat a dog, to smile at a child, to read a few lines from a good book.

Slow me down, Lord, and inspire me to send my roots deep into the soil of life's enduring values, that I may grow toward my greater destiny.

Remind me each day that the race is not always to the swift; that there is more to life than increasing its speed.

Let me look upward to the towering oak and know that it grew great and strong because it grew slowly and well."

Isa 26:3 You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.