

How to Manage Time and Set Priorities

Objectives

To develop solid time management skills in order to be able to succeed at work, school and spiritually

References

First Things First, by Stephen A. Covey et al. (Simon & Schuster, 1994)
Time shifting, Stephan Rechtschaffen, (Broadway Books, 1996)

Scriptural verse

“Let all things be done decently and in order” 1 Corinthians 14:40

Other relevant verses:

1 Thessalonians 5:14,

2 Thessalonians 3:6-7, 11.

Lesson Guidelines

A. Rules for Effective Time Management as a Student

1- Don't Create Impossible Situations.

Do not get trapped into doing too much. Be realistic in assessing how much you can accomplish in a given time period.

2- Define Your Priorities Using the 3-List Method.

Use lists to set priorities, plan activities and measure progress. One approach is the 3-list method.

List #1 - The weekly calendar.

- Create a weekly calendar and list all your commitments and activities for the week.
- Allocate time for weekly Church activities such as attending the Liturgy, Bible Study and youth meeting, and being involved in a service.
- Make a calendar for spiritual activities where you check off daily prayers, Bible reading and other activities. Share this calendar with your Father of Confession and monitor your progress.
- Be flexible; adapt your schedule to changing needs.

List #2 - The daily "Things to do".

- Write down all the things that you want to do today. Set daily priorities and use the list as a reminder. If time is tight, move items to your long-term list.
- Establish a regular time of the day that is spent with God reading Scripture and praying; making sure it is not when you are tired and ready to go to sleep.
- Allocate a certain amount of time for this devotional time, e.g. 30 minutes and stick to that time. Do not cut that time short for any reason.
- Try to remember God throughout your day even if it is very briefly (e.g., reciting the Arrow Prayer: O Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me, a sinner).
- Rewrite your list each morning. Check off items as you finish them.

List #3 - Goals and other things.

- Write down your goals and things you want to accomplish over the next month or year.
- Also, include spiritual goals, such as a service you would like to be involved in, or a personal Bible Study you would like to complete.
- Ask your father of Confession for advice on setting spiritual goals and pray that God gives you grace to complete these tasks.
- Use this list to keep track of all your commitments. The purpose of this list is to develop long-term goals and to free your mind to concentrate on today.

3- Avoid Distractions and Lack of Focus.

Many people waste precious time by getting stuck in one or more of the following habits:

1. Procrastination

2. Crisis management – “putting out fires”

3. Switching and floundering - lack of concentration and focus on one job.

4. Television, telephones and friends - these are all ways of avoiding work.

5. Emotional blocks - boredom, daydreaming, stress, guilt, anger and frustration.

6. Sickness - getting sick and blowing your schedule.

First, recognize which habit is a problem for you and resolve to improve by setting priorities, encouraging yourself, and avoiding distractions.

B. Setting Your Work Priorities

Many people work very hard all day doing little jobs that do not actually affect the quality of their work.

1. Do what you enjoy

It is important for your own quality of life that you enjoy what you are doing. If you know broadly what you like and dislike, you will be more able to move your job towards doing things that you enjoy.

Understand how to excel at your job

Ask your employer the following questions:

- *What is the purpose of the job?*

If possible, express this in a single sentence starting with the word 'To' -

- *What are the measures of success?*

Find out how your employer will measure your achievement and success.

- *What are the priorities and deadlines?*

This will allow you to focus on the most important tasks.

- *What resources are available?*

This ensures that you are using all the tools at your command.

- *What costs are acceptable?*

This lets you know the boundaries within which you can move.

- *How does this relate to other people?*

This will allow you to understand how your work fits into the broader picture.

C. Time Management Techniques at Work

General Tips and Techniques

- Clear your desk and plan your activities for the next day.
- Start your day with a quick prayer asking God to help you and bless your work.
- First, list your 'time specific items, (e.g. meetings)' and then write down the tasks you have to complete.
- Once you have prioritized your tasks, make a 'to do' list and work through the items in priority order.
- Ensure that you have given yourself sufficient time to complete your 'to do' list, taking into account your daily interruptions.
- Do difficult jobs first, when you are at your best. Look after minor jobs when you are tired.
- Fix deadlines for all jobs and stick to them. A task should only take the time set aside for it.
- Do not postpone important matters that are unpleasant.
- Try to arrange set times for routine jobs such as going through the mail, etc.
- Try to fix definite times when you would not like to be disturbed, and make the system work except for genuine emergencies.
- Plan your telephone calls. Make a brief note of what you want to say and what you want to find out. It saves time later.
- If you have several phone calls to make, do them all in a burst.
- When you start a task, try to finish it without interruptions to avoid time wasted trying to pick up where you left off.
- Arrange your breaks at times when you cannot work effectively.
- Learn to say 'No'. Get used to asking yourself 'Am I the right person for this job?'
- Monitor how you use your time, and make conscious changes to your behavior.
- Stress and fatigue are rarely caused by the things you have done, but by the thought of what you have not done!
- Make a habit of finishing the main job of the day before you go home.

Conclusion

Failing to plan is considered planning to fail. Since our God is a God of order, we too are required to live an orderly life free from chaos, unnecessary stress and confusion. We must remember that the most important task of each day is to make time for God. In order to become successful we must daily define what we are trying to accomplish.

Discussion Points/Activities

1. Create scenarios of busy days and have the youth plan how to accomplish the set tasks for that day. See who has the best/most realistic plan.
2. How do you organize your life at school?
3. What are your priorities at work?
4. Did you set your priorities in life?
5. Do you think these techniques will help you organize your time?