

Priorities and Decision Making

(Making the Most of Your Time)

BIBLICAL
BASIS

“You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.” (Matthew 23:24)

Mistaken priorities lie at the heart of ineffective leadership. In Matthew 23:24 Jesus scolded the Pharisees for confusing what was and wasn't important. Their priorities were enforcing laws and rules. Christ's priorities were the spiritual needs of others. Great leaders know the heart of their people, and act with the end in mind.

As spiritual leaders we know that Jesus died for us and that our ultimate mission is the Great Commission. We also know that the Bible rarely gives us step-by-step instructions for a given task. Consequently, we must ask God for wisdom, keep the big picture in mind, lead from God's priorities, and make the most of our time since the days are evil (Ephesians 5:15-17).

How Can I Get More Out of a Day?

CHECK YOUR
HEART

Test yourself and see. The following quiz is based on the concepts of Jimmy Calano and Jeff Salzman, founders of Career/Track, a national training organization in the U.S.

Check yes or no:

1. Do you plan tomorrow's work today? ☐ Yes ☐ No
2. Do you perform routine chores at your daily "low energy" times and creative tasks at your "high" peak? ☐ Yes ☐ No
3. Do you get unpleasant duties out of the way as soon as possible? ☐ Yes ☐ No
4. Do you mentally "preview" the day's work at the beginning of the day? ☐ Yes ☐ No
5. Are you able to deal with people who waste your time? ☐ Yes ☐ No
6. Do you know how to log your time – that is, occasionally write down just how long it takes to accomplish each day's tasks? ☐ Yes ☐ No
7. When you promise that you'll get something done on time, do you always try to keep your word? ☐ Yes ☐ No
8. Do you set aside a portion of each day to think, create, and plan? ☐ Yes ☐ No
9. Is your workplace tidy? Can you find what you need without wasting time? ☐ Yes ☐ No
10. Do you have an efficient filing or organization system? ☐ Yes ☐ No
11. Do you know how to choose your most productive tasks? ☐ Yes ☐ No
12. Do you know exactly what your top priorities are? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Evaluate Your Score

- ☐ If "Yes" to 10-12 questions above, you handle your time excellently.
- ☐ If "Yes" to 7-9 questions above, you are good, but still need to grow.
- ☐ If "Yes" to 6 or below, you are wasting valuable time and may not even know it.

Question: What are some areas in your day where you can improve?

Biblical Answers on Priorities...

EXAMINE
THE WORD

What Was Jesus' Priority? — Mark 1:35-38

"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where He prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for Him, and when they found Him they exclaimed: 'Everyone is looking for You!' Jesus replied, 'Let us go somewhere else — to the nearby villages — so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.'"

What Is the Christian's Priority? — Luke 10:39-42

"As Jesus and His disciples were on their way, He came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to Him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what He said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to Him and asked, 'Lord, don't You care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!' 'Martha, Martha,' the Lord answered, 'you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.'"

What Is the Priority of Church Leaders? — Acts 6:2-4

"So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, 'It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.'"

What About Distractions and Hindrances? — Hebrews 12:1

"Let us throw off everything that hinders, and the sin that so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the particular race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus..."

How Does Our Purpose Help Us with Our Priorities? — I Corinthians 9:24-27

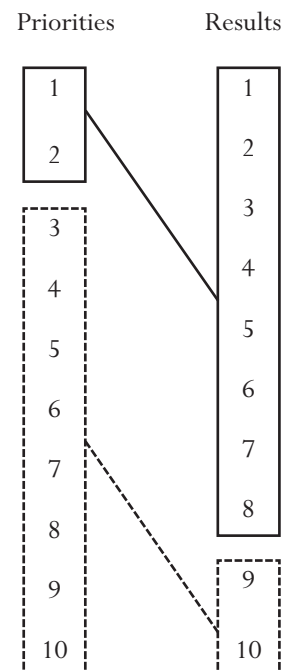
"Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize."

The 80/20 Principle

The 80/20 Principle teaches us that if we focus our attention on our most important activities, we gain the highest return on our effort. In fact, if we tend to the top 20% most important priorities, we will accomplish 80% of the results we desire. The principle can be applied to your everyday life to enable you to lead more effectively. Take a look at this diagram on the right. The column on the left represents your “to do” list. Accomplishing your first two priorities will give you 80% of your desired results. This occurs because you have made the list in the order of priority. Many of the lower ones are much less fruitful for the Kingdom. They’re not priorities you should focus on.

If you embrace the wrong priorities, this principle will work against you – 80% of your effort will gain you 20% of the results and fruit you desire.

“Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” (Psalm 90:12)



Examples of the 80/20 Principle

Time: 20% of our time produces 80% of the results.

Counseling: 20% of the people take up 80% of our time.

Work: 20% of our effort gives us 80% of our satisfaction.

Ministries: 20% of the ministries provide 80% of the fruit.

Leadership: 20% of the people make 80% of the decisions.

Workers: 20% of the members do 80% of the ministry.

Mentoring: 20% of the influencers are where you should invest your time.

Lessons Learned from the 80/20 Principle

KEY POINTS

1. _____ **DOES NOT EQUAL ACCOMPLISHMENT.**
Your goal should not be simply to stay busy. Look for the wisest people and places to invest your time.
2. **WORK** _____, **NOT** _____.
Working smarter means working on what you can do, and delegating things others can do. What good is it to work extremely hard when it accomplishes little?
3. _____ **OR AGONIZE.**
If you can learn to organize then you can become more efficient in getting things done. This in turn will save you a lot of time and frustration.
4. _____ **OR STAGNATE.**
Determining where you stand in relation to your goal is very important. To move to the next level of leadership you must evaluate your current situation.
5. _____ **YOUR PRIORITIES.**
Control your day or your day will control you! Don't fill your day filling the requests of others. The issue is not prioritizing your schedule, but scheduling your priorities.

6. _____ IS NOT LEADING.

When you lose control you are no longer acting as a leader, but instead reacting to the urgent. If you forget the ultimate, you will become a slave to the immediate.

7. SAY _____ TO LITTLE THINGS.

Leaders must say “no” to the little things so they can say “yes” to the big things. If someone else can do it, delegate it!

How To Say “No” Gracefully...

When we know who we are, what our gifts are, and what our calling is, it’s much easier to determine the “yes’s” and “no’s” of life. When a task would not further your goal, you need to just say no. The way you say no is just as important as deciding to say it.

1. SAY “NO” TO THE _____ – NOT TO THE _____.

Make sure the person understands that you are not rejecting them. You’re simply saying no to what they want you to do. Give their idea affirmation, but explain that it doesn’t fit in with the things that you need to accomplish.

2. RESPOND IN TERMS OF THE _____ OF THE PERSON ASKING.

Make sure the person knows that you’re not just choosing the easy response, but that you want to genuinely help them. Communicate that your time constraints would actually prevent you from doing the kind of work they deserve.

3. DEFER _____. COME UP WITH AN _____.

Think of a way that helps them complete their task. Give them confidence that they can do it, or maybe help them find someone who will. This will aid them in solving their problem.

On Making the Most of Your Time . . .

1. Make _____ lists.

Write out what you want to accomplish.

2. Set your _____.

Put the most important items at the top of the list.

3. Avoid _____.

Do things with excellence, but perfectionism may be an extreme that you need to avoid if it takes too much time.

4. _____ everything.

Don’t allow habits or emotion to keep you from eliminating items from your calendar and “to do” lists. If it doesn’t work get rid of it.

5. Welcome _____.

Don’t let stress paralyze you. Let it move you to your goal. Many times tension can help improve your focus and enable you to do the job more effectively.

6. Avoid _____.

Clutter will get in the way of what you are doing. By putting everything in its proper place, you won’t waste time searching for things.

7. Avoid _____.

First things are first. Easy things and fun things come afterwards.

8. Control _____ and _____.

Minimize the amount of time that people take away from your main objective.

ACTION PLAN

9. Staff your _____.

Know your strengths, as a leader, and employ staff members or volunteers who are gifted in the areas of your weaknesses. This is the beauty of the Body of Christ.

10. Use a _____.

Organizing your days will help save time and prioritize tasks.

Self Evaluation: Three Wise Questions...

Requirement: WHAT IS _____ OF ME?

When you feel overwhelmed by obligations, stop and sort out your “must do’s” from your “choose to do’s.” Our obligations in life are the biggest priorities we have, but more often than not, you will find that you really do not have to do many things; you choose to do them. Simply ask: What must I do? What is truly required of me?

Results: WHAT GIVES THE GREATEST _____?

When sorting out priorities, ask the question: What gives me the greatest results? You should spend most of your time working in the area of your greatest strength. A wise man wastes no energy on pursuits for which he is not fitted. Find your gift and capitalize your time using it. What activities achieve the most results when you do them?

Reward: WHAT GIVES ME THE GREATEST _____?

Finally, as you sort through personal priorities, look for the element of personal fulfillment. God provides deep satisfaction when you do what He has gifted and called you to do. Nothing is easier than neglecting the things you don’t want to do. As you draw closer to your God-given mission, you will experience deeper fulfillment. Where do you find your greatest rewards?

Write Down Your Top 20%.

Think back to the 80/20 Rule. Remember: activity does not equal accomplishment. Answer the following questions based on your own leadership strengths and priorities:

Who are the top 20% influential people into whom you should pour your life?

What activities result in the greatest amount of fruit for you as a leader?

Which of your leadership roles produce the deepest amount of personal fulfillment?

Who are the potential leaders around you that you can equip for ministry or leadership?

What are other priorities you should pursue as you endeavor to lead people?