

# Ten Tips for MAKING the MOST of YOUR TIME

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This is the time of year when all the things we have to do can overwhelm us. Chapter leaders often struggle with busyness, sometimes to the point of discouragement. This busyness can result in both physical and spiritual fatigue. Is there a way to get on top of all you have to do? Managing your time better won't cure every ailment that you face as a busy leader, but some of the suggestions that follow might help:

**Recognize that time management is really self management.** Many people complain that they don't have enough time, and yet one fruit of the Spirit is self-control. This doesn't mean that Spirit-filled Christians are the ones who are always looking at their watches, but rather that we can boldly ask the Lord to manifest this fruit in our lives to help us manage our time.

**Concentrate on effectiveness rather than efficiency.** Peter Drucker has said, "Efficiency is doing things right. Effectiveness is doing the right things." We may be very efficient in our planning, list-making and getting chapter members to help organize and pull off events, but if we never take time to thank people and show genuine care for them, we really have missed out on the importance of gratefulness and love in human relationships.

**Establish priorities.** If you know your major objectives for your particular job responsibility, it's helpful to identify your priorities for certain time frames. For instance, what are your top priorities for this semester? This month? This week? How about today? What we do each day becomes a joy when we see that it fits right in with long-range priorities.

One method that has helped some people is to list all the things you need to do in a given time frame by categories. Use A, B or C to denote the level of priority. Category A items are those that need to be done no matter what. Category B items are those that are important, but can either be postponed or adapted as needed. Category C items are those that can be postponed, delegated or perhaps forgotten all together. Then get going on the Category A items.

These category labels will change as time passes. For instance, an item like writing a paper or a report could be in Category B until we come to the week or day set aside to do it. It then becomes a Category A item.

**Structure your time appropriately for the tasks that need to be done.** If you really need two hours to do effective studying, plan to make that two hours free from other distracting tasks or interruptions. You'll need quality blocks of time for quality tasks. Use other times, like right before a meal or between classes, for less demanding types of responsibilities.

**Be realistic in planning your time.** Murphy's Law, "If anything can go wrong, it will," is very applicable to many of our situations. In fact, I appreciate O'Toole's commentary of Murphy's Law when he says, "Murphy was an optimist." One of the greatest contributors to burnout is trying to do too much because of wrong expectations.

When you have a lot of people to meet on a given day, don't plan a full series of half-hour appointments with no breaks. You'll just get worn out. Try a smaller set of appointments with fifteen minutes in between, and if your business or prayer time only needs to run five or ten minutes, that's fine. Long appointments aren't necessarily more spiritual.

**Have a large wastebasket.** Work hard at throwing things away, and don't use your desk or file cabinet for storage, only for retrieval.

**Make a decision on every piece of paper you handle.** Don't keep reorganizing the piles on your desk. As you open mail or sift through class notes and handouts, decide immediately what can be done with each piece of information, even if it means identifying a later time to think about that piece of paper. It's demoralizing to shuffle paper continually without ever taking action.

**Separate work into categories.** Keep all material relevant to a particular topic or event in one place. Then you can decide when to handle that topic as a whole, rather than trying to handle everything piecemeal as it comes along.

**Use a tickler file.** Let a diary or some type of file system carry the emotional weight of all that you have to do. I have found the use of a weekly summary of responsibilities to be extremely helpful. I list in the left hand column everything I need to do and then have five columns to the right of those items. The first four columns are identified by date representing the next four weeks. The last column is labeled "sometime." So, as I come across something else that needs to be done, I jot it down and determine in a preliminary fashion what week I should look at that particular item. Then each week I just go down the column and see what I need to do in that week, confident that I am not dropping any balls in the meantime.

**Remember the sabbath.** If you get overly tired, you will probably lose perspective on God and your role in serving him and others. It's easy for busy leaders to become overly concerned with their own self-importance. This can lead to an inflated ego or self-pity. We can't earn points with God by being overly busy. Working beyond our limits and neglecting to strengthen our relationship with the Lord and those around us isn't so much an expression of commitment as it is idolatry. Remember to take time to rest.

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