

Getting Control Of Your Life!
Pt. 2: Getting Control of Your Schedule
Ephesians 5:15

How many of you were born before 1967? You're going to find this interesting!

In 1967 the U.S. Senate heard "expert testimony" stating that the many time and labor saving technologies (computers, microwave ovens, etc) being introduced would revolutionize our society's work and leisure habits. These "experts" said that within 20 years the average person:

- would work only 22 hours a week
- would work only 32 weeks a year
- would retire at the age of 40.

These experts also said, in 1967, that the number one challenge Americans would face in the 1990's would be "what to do with our excess time."

Well, here we are, forty three years later.

Do you know ANYONE who is living this life of ease?!

I don't know anyone who is trying to get control of their excess time. Rather, it's about trying to find any excess time as we try to get control of our busy, crazy, hectic schedules.

In spite of all the technological advances and discoveries and inventions that have occurred, we still live almost every day pressed for time.

A recent Time/CNN poll reports that

- 66% of Americans would like to "slow down and live a more relaxed life,"

Does that sound familiar? Can you relate?

Ephesians 5:15 "Be very careful how you use your time, be wise in how you live."
In other words, get control of your schedule!

When I was a kid we used to watch the Ed Sullivan show. Occasionally, there would be a man on the show who could spin dozens of plates on top of a bunch of narrow sticks. In some ways, our schedules are a lot like that man's act! (Show video)

We spin our job, our marriage, our children, our children's school activities, our fitness requirements, the laundry, the bills, and the housecleaning, the yard work, vehicle upkeep, little league, church, hobbies, family, friends, and the list goes on and on. Some times our lives are reduced to running frantically from place to place trying to keep it all going. In the end, we pay the price-emotionally, physically, relationally, and spiritually.

Do you ever feel that all your "plates" are about to come falling down?!
Do you ever feel that your schedule has gotten out of control?!

Let me suggest four Biblical guidelines which can help you get control of your schedule.

1. Be willing to evaluate your schedule.

This first step is critical. Sometimes we make assumptions that are simply erroneous.

Where IS your time really going? What ARE you doing with your time?
Why DON'T you have time to do the things you really want to do?

Is your schedule reflective of the priorities in your life that Pastor Gary spoke about last week?

Take stock, take inventory, evaluate your schedule.

Are you controlling your schedule or is your schedule controlling you?

Proverbs 14:8, "The wise give thought to their ways."

Have you heard about the experiment involving a frog and a pan of water. The frog was placed in the pan of cool water and then set on a Bunsen burner. The heat of the burner was then increased very slightly--about 1 degree every two minutes. Just a little bit at a time. The changes were so subtle, so slow, that the frog never even noticed the changes that were taking place. Eventually, after several hours, the frog literally boiled to death, without any effort to escape the pan or even so much as a kick in protest.

Some of you have experienced a very similar thing in regards to your schedule. You ask yourself, "When did it happen?" How did your schedule get so full? How did you get so over committed?

Just a little bit at a time. Slowly, subtly, almost imperceptibly, you wake up one morning and you realize you have far more things to do than you have time to do them in.

So, the question is: What are you going to do about it? For change to occur, evaluation must first take place. Are you willing to take a good, hard, honest look at your schedule?

Did you know that most people give more time to planning their vacation than they do to planning their life!?

If you want to get control of your life, if you want to get control of your schedule, you need to take time and do some evaluating and some intentional planning.

Most people's lives are nothing more than a series of reactions and responses to other things rather than a controlled, intentional, directed life.

Taking control of your schedule begins with evaluation!

2. Be willing to make some changes in your schedule.

It doesn't do any good to evaluate if the evaluation doesn't lead to improved changes in your schedule. Evaluation without subsequent changes is pointless.

The whole purpose of evaluation is to identify what changes need to be made, and then to make those changes!

Evaluation should lead to modification.

In other words, be willing to make the necessary changes!

The key word is change! Stop doing the wrong things! Start doing the right things! It all begins with a willingness to change!

Isaiah 1:16-17

16 "...Stop doing wrong,

17 learn to do right!..."

Leo Tolstoy said, "Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself."

Is it time to make some changes in your life?

If so, what are the changes you need to make.

And just as importantly, WHEN are you going to make those changes?

Here's four changes you can make that will help you improve your schedule:

A. Rise Early

Most people are either a morning person or a night person. How many of you would consider yourself a morning person?

You can improve your schedule by getting up earlier in the morning. If you get up half an hour earlier every day, you would have three and a half hours more every week and approximately 15 more hours every month! What could you do with 15 more hours per month?!

Proverbs 6:9-11

9 "How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep?

10 A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest--

11 and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man."

Proverbs 26:14 "As a door turns on its hinges, so a sluggard turns on his bed."

Now, I know what some of you are thinking, "Why can't we just stay up half an hour later and accomplish the same thing?" Studies show that those who stay up later typically don't use their time in a "productive fashion." They mostly watch T.V. or they are on the internet or they are playing video games.

Conversely, those who rise early either read, exercise, or get to work earlier. Simply stated, early risers are more productive. So, rise early!

B. React Less

General Eisenhower is quoted as saying, "The urgent is seldom important, and the important is seldom urgent." Too often life is controlled by the "tyranny of the urgent". We put aside higher and more worthy goals to put out fires.

Let's evaluate the importance of all of our daily activities to be sure we're not victims of the "Tyranny of the Urgent".

Be less reactive and more intentional in how you spend your time.

Proverbs 14:15 "A simple man believes anything, but a prudent man gives thought to his steps."

Give some thought before committing your time, your schedule to different things.

Proverbs 14:8 "The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways, but the folly of fools is deception."

Let's be less reactive and more intentional in how we spend our time.

C. Rush Less

Slow down! You miss an awful lot when you rush through life. Sometimes we get so focused on tomorrow that we don't enjoy today. Slow down. Rush less.

Psalms 46:10 "Be still, and know that I am God..."

Someone wrote:

This is the age of the half-read page
The quick hash and the mad dash,
The bright night with the nerves tight
The plane hop with the brief stop
The lamp tan in a short span
The big shot in a good spot
The brain strain and the heart pain
The catnaps until the spring snaps
And the fun's gone.

Slow down. Rush less. Enjoy life more.

D. Rest More

A study was done a few years ago by the army where they observed soldiers in various conditions to determine at what stage these individuals achieved the maximum level of output. The army discovered that after 7 consecutive days of hard work the soldier's performance dropped.

But the most interesting discovery the army made was that even though the soldier's performance level dropped, the soldiers themselves were unaware of it. They thought they were still operating at a maximum level.

You need a day of rest. You will be more effective at whatever you are doing, if you take a day of rest every week.

God knew that. After all, He's the one who created you.

Exodus 20:8-10

8 "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work,

10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work.."

Why did God say that? He said it for our own good. We need a break. We need to rest.

Mark 2:27, Jesus said, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."

God created the Sabbath for our benefit.

Because He cares for us. Because He loves us. And He knows that we need that day of rest.

Don't waste your time arguing over whether it's an Old or New Testament concept. It transcends that. It's a love concept. God loves you. He cares for you. He wants you to take care of yourself. God says, "Hey, you need a day of rest. Take it!"

In order to get control of your schedule:

1. Be willing to evaluate your schedule.
2. Be willing to make some changes in your schedule.
3. Be willing to do without some things.

Best-selling business author Tom Peters has said that "Being a 'real success' in the business world is costly. A star in that arena will miss a lot of little league games and birthday parties. He or she will go on vacations with a portable phone, a modem, and a fax. Quiet nights with family or friends will be distant memories. In all probability, the business superstar will go through a marriage or two on the way to the top because few spouses will be able to sympathize with or endure the kinds of sacrifices required to succeed."

You can't do it all. You can't have it all.

You can't have everything. Satan will tempt you with everything, but you can't have everything. You've simply got to learn to do without some things.

And I wish, specifically, that young couples would learn this truth: you can't have everything.

Matthew 16:26 "What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet loses his soul?"

John Maxwell writes, "We can do anything, but we can't do everything."

The sky is the limit. You can do ANYTHING you set your mind on.

You CAN do anything, but you can't do everything.

There simply isn't enough time in your lifetime to do everything.

So set your priorities, and then let go of some things.
Choose wisely!

Russ Martin wrote, "There are a lot of different things that can "sideline" Christians;... one of the most sinister and subtle threats you face as a believer is BUSYNESS. Because of the nature of our culture and the pace in which we live, busyness may well be the number one hazard for Christians."

Learn to say no to some things!

4. Be willing to focus on your priorities.

Life is short. It goes by quickly.
How will you spend your time during this life?
Focus on your priorities in life and let your schedule reflect those priorities.
Invest your time in the things that are most important.

James 4:14, "What is your life? It is like a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes."

Remember the story Alice in Wonderland. At one point in the story she meets a Cheshire cat. She is standing at a fork in the road and she asks the cat, "Which road should I take?" The cat replies, "Were are you going?" Alice says, "I don't know."
And so the cat says, "Then it doesn't really matter which road you take."

Where are you going in life? What are your priorities in life?
If you are going to get control of your schedule, align it with your priorities.
Once you have determined your priorities in life, the direction of your life is much easier to determine. Be willing to focus on your priorities.

Matthew 6:31-33

- 31 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'
- 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.
- 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Seek first his kingdom. That's a statement of priority, isn't it?
Is your schedule reflective of that priority?