

When I was a child, there used to be a game show on called Beat the Clock. The contestants had to accomplish a specific task in a specific period of time. If they beat the clock, they won the prize. I seem to remember a constant ticking – tick, tock, tick, tock – as the contestant tried to accomplish their task. I think that ticking is one of the reasons the show is not on anymore – that ticking would probably cause more heart attacks today than most desserts! One of the ways Hollywood creates tension in the movies is by using the same concept of time. They set up a character with a task to accomplish and a time period to do it in and then we watch the character work while the clock ticks away.

Are we contestants in “Beat the Clock”? Or maybe we are in a movie? If not, we sure act like it. It seems that as we go through our day, there is this constant ticking of a clock that tells us we need to go faster, we need to move, we need to do the next thing.

How many of us have been driving down the road and seen someone in need and yet pass right by? I know we all have done it. Usually we have the best reasons too. “I was already late to pick up the kids.” “My boss/my husband/my wife/my friend/someone was meeting me somewhere.” “I was on my way to church.” Ironically, if we’re the ones who need help, the first thing we’re thinking is, “I can’t believe there isn’t one person who will stop to help.” And sadly, when we do get stuck and need help, our thoughts are usually about how this problem is going to set us back and how we aren’t going to be able to do THAT thing that we were supposed to do.

We are soooo busy these days. The prophet Daniel had said thousands of years ago that in the end days, people would be so busy and so smart – “Many would go here and there and increase knowledge.” I think that’s a great comment of where we are today. We’re so busy that we don’t have enough time for our friends, our families, our church, our God, our reading, our entertainment, our work, our school, ourselves. We’ve come to the point that when someone asks us who we are, we usually tell them what we do – “Hi. I’m David. I’m a pastor at a church.” We’ve blurred the line between who we are and what we do that we can’t distinguish the difference ourselves anymore.

So here are some questions we need to ask ourselves; Do we want to be who we are or do we want to be what we do? Is that how we want to be known? Is that how we want to see ourselves? And how we want others to see us? I can only assume that the answers to these questions are “No” and that we really want to find a way to cure our busyness.

The first thing we need to do is determine what we are doing that leaves us with no time left in the day? Some of it is important stuff and some of it isn’t.

For example, if one lives to be 70 years of age and is an average person, s/he spends:

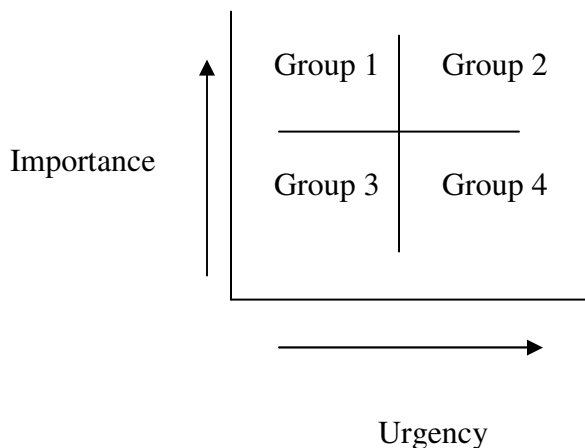
- six months sitting at stoplights
- eight months opening junk mail
- one year looking for misplaced objects
- 2 years unsuccessfully returning phone calls
- 4 years doing housework
- 5 years waiting in line
- 20 years sleeping

- 6 years eating
- 7 years playing

We thought that technology would make our lives easier and give us more time. Back in 1967, experts predicted that by 1985 technology would have taken over so much of the work we do that the average North-American work week would be only 22 hours long and that we would work only 27 weeks a year. As a result, one of our biggest problems would be in deciding what to do with all our leisure time. That obviously didn't happen.

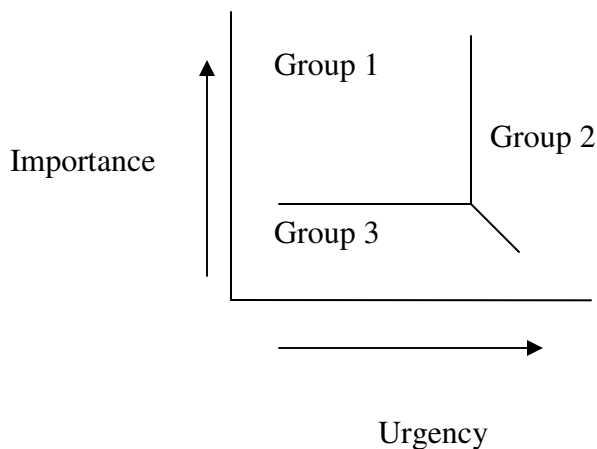
Just talking about all the things we do is making me itch! And we haven't even started talking about taking care of our families, our animals, our friends, our work, our school! There is no way there is going to be enough time for me to do all the things I need to do! And there is the first point – what are those things we NEED to do? That's a hard question, because we can think of enough things we need to do that would take more than 24 hours. So what is our definition of NEED? Eating and sleeping are obviously NEEDS. How about work? How about school? How about family? In the end, we need to recognize that there is a difference between what we NEED to do today and what we can do at some other time. Just because we *think* it, doesn't mean we have to *do* it. And just because we have to do it, doesn't mean we have to do it *now*. And some things are important, but we don't necessarily have to do it ourselves.

One good way of looking at our tasks is to break them down into four groups. If we recognize that we can label our activities depending on the urgency and the importance of the task, we can categorize them accordingly.



There are tasks that are high importance and high urgency – Group 2 – these are things that have to get done. There are tasks that are low importance and low urgency - Group 3– these are tasks that are completely unnecessary. However, much like the foods that are worst for you are usually the ones you enjoy the most, this group might contain activities such as watching a movie or television, reading that novel, doing a puzzle, etc. Then there are those activities that are low importance and high urgency - Group 4 – these are usually the real time killers. For whatever reason, the urgency to get these done is high, but they are not important in the big picture. These are the tasks that we need to look at and really determine how to deal with these. Finally there is the high importance

and low urgency tasks – Group 1. These are the tasks that we need to concentrate on. Since they are important, we really need to do them, but because they aren't urgent, we put them off, thinking we can get to them soon. But because we are so busy, we never get to them. These will at some point find its way into Group 2 because we've waited too long. The problem with Group 2 is that this is the high-stress group. Since it's high importance, we know we NEED to do them and since they are urgent, we need to do them NOW. If we want to release the stress we are feeling, we need to get to the Group 2 tasks while they are still Group 1 tasks and we will only get to the Group 1 tasks if we find time by eliminating Group 4 tasks and managing Group 3 tasks (BTW – God is a God of Balance. We don't have to get rid of all those things we like to do just because they aren't important. If there is something we enjoy, we simply need to manage how much time we spend doing it.)



So there's the quick view of how to manage our time better. So now we have to ask ourselves, what are those important tasks that we need to work on? Let's look at Jesus' example. In the Bible, we see the work of Jesus, but what is really amazing is how much he actually accomplished. After writing his gospel, John at the end says in 21:25 Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written. So all these things that we read Jesus did were only a portion of what he actually did AND he did all these things in 3 years. Of course, we can go through and analyze everything Jesus did, but for the sake of time...

Let's discuss some of the things he did that were obviously important to him. First and foremost, we see that he prayed. He prayed at his baptism, before choosing the twelve, at the cross. He prayed before raising Lazarus, before meals, in the Garden of Gethsemane. He prayed early in the morning and late in the evening. He prayed anywhere and anytime. Prayer was the most important thing to Jesus. It was through prayer that he was able to grow his relationship with the Father. If it is that important to Jesus, I think it should be that important to us. Prayer should be in our Group 1. (Scriptures on Jesus Praying)

The next thing we see is that Jesus cared for people. Love your neighbor as yourself. (Matt 22:39-40 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'^[a] 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.'"). I came to the world to serve. (Matt 20:28. just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.) He fed people. (Luke 9:12-17 – The five-thousand) He healed people. (Mark 2:1-12 – The paralytic) He comforted people. (Luke 19:1-10 – Zacchaeus) Much of his ministry is spent caring for people. Caring for people allows us to stop thinking about ourselves and begin recognizing that God calls us not to care for ourselves but to care for those around us. We see Jesus many times caring for people even when he had other plans. When we do this for one of the least of our brothers and sisters, we do it to Him. (Matt 25:40. And the King will answer them, 'I assure you: Whatever you did for one of the **least** of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me.)

We also know Jesus spent a lot of time in organized gatherings – in his day it was the temple and the synagogue; today it would be church. It started when he was young (Luke 2:49 And He said to them, "Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?"). He continued when he began his ministry (Mark 1:21 They went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath. He entered the synagogue and began to teach. Mark 1:39 And He went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out the demons.) In fact, it was his routine, his custom, to go to synagogue (Luke 4:16 He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read.) Jesus recognized that the gathering of his people was important and he joined in these gatherings on a consistent basis.

Jesus typically spent much of his time teaching his disciples. He had them follow him and stay with him so they could learn from him. They asked him questions and he answered them. They would get to hear the meaning of his parables and they were able to know him better because of it (Matt 16:13-20). Discipling people took up much of the time Jesus spent during his ministry.

Finally, we see Jesus preaching the Good News (Luke 4:16-21). He tells everyone that the Kingdom is near (Matt 4:17) and he teaches his disciples to do the same (Matt 10:7). He explains the path to salvation (John 11:25-26) and he asks us to do the same (Acts 1:8). God could have chosen many different ways to tell people of his plan, but he chose to use people. Jesus gave us the model and we are to follow it.

As we look at some of the things Jesus did which were of the utmost importance and urgency to himself, we need to ask ourselves, "Where do these things fall on my chart?" Prayer, caring for others, church, Discipling people, reaching out to people. Are these things unimportant to us? Do we think our priorities are different than Jesus'? Do we think we need to reprioritize our lives?

There is a book by Bill Hybels called "Too Busy *Not* to Pray". There is the thinking that if we keep with our busy schedules, we will somehow get to where we're supposed to be going. But if we're on the wrong track, we will not get to the right destination. Are you

going to the right destination? Do you think that if you continue on the current path you are traveling, you will end up where you should be? Or do you think that things are too crazy, too hectic and maybe you need to re-evaluate where you are going? If this is you, then take time to analyze where you are spending your time and, through prayer, determine where you should be spending your time. Reorganize your chart. Get rid of those activities that are taking you away from where God wants you to be. Set your mind on things above. Where your treasure is, there will be your heart also. Put God in the center of your life. Then you can see how wonderful life can be. And suddenly, you will have the time you need to do the things you need to do.