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Goodbye Anxiety

**Taking the Stress Out of Your
Schedule**

How to Find Time for Your Life



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Taking the Stress Out of Your Schedule: How to Find Time for Your Life

Busy-ness Psalm (Anonymous)

The clock is my dictator, I shall not rest.

It makes me lie down only when exhausted.

It leads me to deep depression. It hounds my soul.

It leads me in circles of frenzy for activity's sake.

Even though I run frantically from task to task, I never get it all done, for my ideal is with me.

Deadlines and my need for approval, they drive me.

They demand performance from me beyond the limits of my schedule.

They anoint my head with migraines, my inbasket overflows.

Surely fatigue and time pressure shall follow me all the days of my life,

And I will dwell in the bonds of frustration forever.

The Myth of Managing Time

You cannot really manage the flow of time. All you can manage is your activity – the setting and carrying out of priorities as time inevitably passes.

“Time management is really a misnomer – the challenge is not to manage time, but to manage ourselves.”
– Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*

You can eliminate time pressure by changing your focus:

“You have more to do than you can possibly do. You just need to feel good about your choices.” – David Allen, *Getting Things Done*

Peace = feeling good about how you spent your time at the end of each day.

Anxiety/stress = feeling upset about the things that you didn't have time for.

**Do you feel in control of how you spend your time?
Why or why not?**

How to Be a Good Steward of the Time You are Given

1) Clarify Your Reason for Living

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.” (Proverbs 29:18)

Your reason for living comes from God and is discovered by prayer. Time is a gift from God and we are responsible for how we use it. That is why anxiety or stress can come from not spending our time wisely.

“For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (Ephesians 2:10)

Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Church in Southern California, and author of *The Purpose-Driven Life* uses the acrostic S.H.A.P.E. to teach people how to find their God-given purpose in life:

S = Spiritual Gifts: What has God supernaturally gifted me to do?

- God gives us all of us different spiritual gifts (Romans 12:4-8, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4:8-15).
- Spiritual gifts are manifestations of the Spirit for the common good. (1 Cor. 12:7).
- To find out what your gifts are: 1) ask God, 2) ask other people, 3) try to do something and see if you are able. You might also take a Spiritual Gifts Inventory.

H = Heart: What do I have a passion and love for?

What God wants you to do, you will be motivated to do. Your heart will be in it.

- If you earnestly ask God what He wants you to do, God will put His will on your heart. The Bible also says that if we trust and delight ourselves in God, God will give us the desires of our heart. (Psalms 37:3-4). God's will for your life is something you look forward to doing and will want to do no matter what.
- The Bible also says your heart is the “wellspring of life” (Proverbs 4:23). When you are doing God's purpose for you will be enthusiastic and effective – it will not feel like an obligation or something you have to do. Doing God's will causes your heart to sing.
- The Bible uses the word Heart to describe your desires, hopes, interests, ambitions, dreams, and affections (from Rick Warren, *The Purpose Drive Life*).
- Many of us spend too much time doing things are heart is not into – out of obligation, out of fear of what might happen if we didn't do it.
- When heart is not into something, fear creeps in. Fear of what might happen if we didn't do it. Afraid of what others think.
- We are not anxious or afraid to do things our heart is really into. When operating within God's purpose –anxiety and fear melts away. (Example: Disciples too scared to stick around, then shared faith boldly, even at the cost of death).
- To find out what's really on your heart, or is important to you – ask “What would I do if I only had one year left?” Then list your answers. Whatever is on this list is probably on your heart.

A = Abilities: What natural talents and skills do I have?

What God wants you to do, you will be able to do.

- God gives us natural abilities, too. When God wanted a tabernacle built, he provided craftsmen whom he had given skill in cutting and setting stones, woodworking, making artistic designs with gold and silver, and all kinds of crafts. (Exodus 31:1-7).
- God equips us with everything we need to do His will and fulfill our purpose in life. (Hebrews 13:21).
- A purpose that we are not gifted for is probably our own purpose not God's purpose.
- Trying to fulfill a purpose we are not able to do leads to anxiety, fear, and insecurity.
- Fulfilling God's purpose leads to peace and confidence.

P = Personality: Where does my personality best suit me to serve?

"Your ministry (and your life) will be most effective and fulfilling when you are using your gifts and abilities in the area of your heart's desire in a way that best expresses your personality and experience." – Rick Warren

E = Experiences: What have my life experiences prepared me to do (spiritual, painful, educational, vocational, relational, etc.)?

What God wants you to do, God will prepare you for.

- God allows experiences in our lives to equip us to fulfill our purpose. Fear goes away when you are well-prepared for something.
- Biblical example: Paul was extremely well-schooled in the Hebrew Scriptures before writing the New Testament letters.
- The Bible says, He comforts us in our troubles so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. (2 Cor. 1:4).
- What has your life experience prepared you for? Family, education, job, ministries, pain.

God's purpose for you will benefit others.

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.....Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matthew 22:37, 39-40)

A purpose that benefits others will provide the motivation to move in the face of anxiety and fear.

Though as humans we have the tendency to focus on meeting our own needs, we weren't created to be self-serving organisms. We weren't created to live our lives focused on what we want and how we can get it. That is why life can feel unnatural and strained when we choose to live this way.

The importance of seeking God's purpose to reducing anxiety and fear:

- Focus on getting = fear of failure, anxiety over outcome.
- Focus on giving = peace in process, purpose fulfilled no matter what the outcome.

What is your main purpose for living? What percentage of your time do you spend on activities that contribute to this purpose?

2) Set Goals

Goal areas:

1. Personal or Spiritual Growth
2. Ministry/Making a Difference
3. Relationships
4. Health and Physical Fitness
5. Free Time/Family Time
6. Career
7. Financial

Make your goal statements SMART:

Specific Measurable Attainable Relevant Time Bound

Your goals are the measuring stick by which the value of all activities are measured. Goals help you determine what is truly important and what just feels urgent in the moment.

Write one SMART goal for your life.

3) Prioritize Your Activities

Priority for all believers: "Seek first God's kingdom and God's righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." – *Matthew 6:33*

Also see The [Activity Management Matrix on page 7](#) (from *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*).

Quadrant I: Important and Urgent: Things you need to do that require immediate action (crises, pressing problems, and deadline-driven projects).

Quadrant II: Important but Not Urgent: Things that make a tremendous, positive difference in your life but do not call for immediate action (prevention, building capacity or capability, relationship building, recognizing new opportunities, planning, and recreation).

Quadrant III: Not Important but Urgent: Things that call for immediate attention, but you don't need to do them right away (interruptions, some calls, some emails, some reports, and some meetings, proximate or pressing matters, popular activities).

Quadrant IV: Not Important and Not Urgent: Entertainment and timewasters (trivia, busy work, some email, some phone calls, pleasant activities).

What is one thing that would make a tremendous, positive difference in your life if you had time to do it?

The Activity Management Matrix
From The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	I. Things you need to do that require immediate action	II. Things that make a tremendous, positive difference in your life but do not call for immediate action
Not Important	III. Things that call for immediate attention but you don't need to do right away	IV. Entertainment and timewasters

- Goals:**
- 1) Minimize Quadrant III and IV activities
 - 2) Maximize Quadrant II activities

4) Be Proactive About Spending Time Within Each Day

There are three general ways in which you can spend your time:

- 1) Planning, organizing, or scheduling your time
- 2) Doing things that help you meet your goals
- 3) Responding to unexpected or unplanned demands on your time

Jesus was proactive with his time. He did not even hurry when his friend Lazarus was dying (John 11:6).

When making spending decisions about your time, pretend as if all potential activities are filed away in three drawers:

- **Top drawer:** The most essential activities that contribute to your purpose/goals. These are your priorities.
- **Middle Drawer:** Activities that would be nice to do. These might include activities that others expect you to do but are not directly related to your goals.
- **Bottom Drawer:** Activities unrelated to your goals and responsibilities. These activities do not add value to your life. It does not matter if you do these things or not.

Spend time working toward your major life goals every day.

“Things which matter most should never be at the mercy of things which matter least.” – Goethe

How much time did you spend working on a major life goal this past week?

If you could make one change in how you spend your time this week, what would it be?

5) Spend Time Doing the “One Thing That is Needed”

Read Luke 10:38-42. Jesus commends Mary for doing the one thing that is needed.

When God gave ten rules, one of them had to do with rest: *“Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all of your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work.”* – Exodus 20:8-10.

God knows we can’t work all the time.

Resting means changing your life’s pace and enjoying things you normally don’t have time for.

It also means taking time to let God renew and refresh you (quiet time with God).

“Be still and know that I am God.” – Psalm 46:10

“Come to me (Jesus) all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest...for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” – Matthew 11:28,30

How many hours per week do you spend being still before God? If you don’t feel like you are spending enough time still before God, what activities might you drop from your schedule to make more time for this?

What do you like to do the most to have fun? How much time do you spend doing this in an average week?

Prayer (Prayed by Sam Williams, BayMarin Community Church, 1997, after a message entitled *Simplifying My Schedule*):

“God, you never intended us to live life the way some of us are living it. You intended us to work – but not too many jobs. You intended us to have relationships – but we see more people in a day than King David saw in a week. We have lost the simplicity of living – but we have not lost the ability to make personal choices and decisions about how we will spend our time. I pray that we choose to spend more of it with you and allow you to become the priority of our lives. In doing this all other things will be added to us. I also pray that the things that we cannot do – that we wouldn’t worry about it. Amen.”