

TIME MANAGEMENT

I once purchased a course on time management but never had time to take it. Actually, more correctly, I never was able to make time for it because I was so unorganized.

You see, if you don't supervise your time, you will be serving it rather than making it serve you and your purposes.

Now, we're not talking about a compulsive need to account for every minute. What we will be learning is that we can schedule our lives in a way that creates space to breath and structure to grow. We also want to provide an extra grace of time within which we function.

If I have an appointment at 10:30 am, for example, and it takes me 15 minutes to get there, when should I leave? If you said, 10:15, I bet your life is pretty hectic at times. You see, you didn't leave a space, a margin, for traffic problems, or weather or any other issue that can effect your schedule.

If you left at 10:10 instead, you can reroute if necessary, drive less hurriedly, have more time to think before you get there, time to look over paperwork or just spend a few minutes with Father before your appointment.

By leaving just a few minutes earlier you gave yourself not just the gift of time but the gift of less stress.

Now, let's apply the same idea to our days.

In the pages to come, you will find sample schedules and how to make them. There are a few "margin" ideas that can really help. For example, if you are married with children who attend school each morning, how often is their a rushed looking for clothes or shoes, or a quickly packed lunch, etc. in the morning? Creating margin would be setting out clothes the night before and packing that lunch in the evening will lessen stress and make the morning with kids more enjoyable.

What we are shooting for is not a just a well thought out schedule but, also one that provides margin, gets everything done and takes stress off the calendar as much as possible.

Ready to get started?

Take a few minutes now and we will work on prioritizing your week. If you were to take just 30 minutes at the beginning of every week to prioritize the coming week you would find that your life would already become more organized and more restful. Not only that, but you would also find that you are getting more done in less time. It's called "sharpening the ax." You can chop more wood with a sharp blade. You just have to take

a few minutes to ensure that it is ready. Dull blades take more work to accomplish the same tasks. So, let's sharpen your ax.

First, what are your goals for the week? What do you want to accomplish? Do you have projects currently in the works or about to start? All of this will need to be scheduled. I know that sounds daunting already but hang in there with me.

See the Goal Planner that I sent you for help with organizing projects and plans at work, for now we are thinking of what needs to be organized with home and family.

You will start by making a listing of all the demands on your time and energy. Keep an eye out for those things that might be good but aren't best and steal time away. In Make My Christian Life Balance, we talked about decluttering those things that take your energy and add in what gives energy. You might want to refer to this now.

Whether you are married, married with kids, or single, we all start the same way. We make a list of all the tasks we have to accomplish each week. Then we prioritize by placing them within a calendar. Now we can "see" time and tasks and manage them better.

I will put together a couple of sample schedules for you and then show you mine so you can get an idea of how to manage your time efficiently.

Make a list of your regular tasks

Every day tasks:

Rise and get ready for day (shower, eat, get dressed)
Time with Lord in morning (15-30 minutes)
Get kids ready for school
Pack lunches
Drive to work (organize work projects separately – see Goal Planner)
Drive home
Cook dinner
Clean house
Kids do homework
Kids need baths
Laundry
Pay bills
Play with kids
Yard work
Errands – groceries, shopping of other kinds

Extracurricular activities

Sports
Hobbies
Groups you attend
Recreation
Children's activities
Etc.

Make a complete list of everything that needs your time, all your tasks and interests and whatever needs to get done each week. Now, we take a schedule and start to place them inside. **Start with the absolute essentials** and place them on the calendar.

As you schedule those, you will see how much time you really have or don't have for other activities. Add in what you feel is most key to a good life. Say "yes" to what is best and "no" to what is just okay. Now is the time to "declutter" life.

Cramming everything in deletes whatever breathing room you might have had, adds stress and in the end makes life less pleasant, not more. Focus on what is the most enjoyable or beneficial extra activity rather than taking away the fun of it by having too many activities.

Let's look at our sample calendar.

What must you do every day? Schedule it the most efficient and restful way.

Monday - Friday	
Up at 6:30, shower, eat, get ready for day with clothes laid out night before	6
Kids ready for school by 7:30 with clothes laid out night before, time with Lord	7
Work – leave by 8:15	8
	9
	10
	11
Lunch time – schedule appts, run a quick errand, pay bills online and definitely eat	12
	1
	2
Kids do homework and finish before you come home	3
Home by 5:45	5
Cook dinner, eat and clean up – do this as a family so you spend time together	6
15 minute full family pick up house. Kids bath and pick out clothes for morning,	7
Lunches are made and homework reviewed.	8
Parent time to rest, renew, read, and relax.	9
Bed by 10:30 – You need to sleep!	10
	11

Here, with limited time for family, we combine as much as possible during the week. Everybody pitches in on cooking. The family eats together (no television!!), and talks about their day and reconnects after being apart. And then everybody cleans up. This gives you opportunity to spend time together as you do tasks. It also means that you are teaching your children valuable skills for their future and teaching teamwork.

Now, we set the timer and do a 15 minute clean. You can even make this fun by assigning each person a room and see who can beat the clock. The goal here is not deep cleaning, but a general pick up and organize. Here, again, the kids are learning valuable skills as well as the truth that the entire family is responsible for the family home. It is very quick and if you do this daily then you really can pick up the mess in 15 minutes. The bonus is that a clean home is more peaceful.

With the house quickly organized you follow with picking out clothes for tomorrow. No exceptions, this includes parents. By doing this at night it relieves that hectic morning feeling. Lunches are also made now for tomorrow. Let the kids do this with supervision.

You have spent the most time possible with the kids and completed all tasks. And you still have time for you now. Let's look at the weekend and then talk about the extras that didn't make the schedule yet.

The Weekend

We start with our list again. What tasks need to be done on the weekend that can't be accomplished during the week or that you'd rather do on the weekends?

Laundry
Grocery shopping
Clean house and yard
Play
Errands
Etc.

Sports
Recreation
Hobbies

We start with tasks because we do what we need to do first and the reward is getting to do what we want later. This builds responsibility and a good work ethic.

Every person in the household gets an area that they are in charge of and that is age appropriate. For example, even a 4 year old can clean up their room if you have organized their rooms ahead of time. They will also need some supervision and a bit of help at times but they can do an age appropriate amount themselves. An 11 year old can clean a bathroom by themselves. They can also be enlisted to oversee a younger sibling's task.

You have either listed the chores to be done for that Saturday or have a listed weekly routine. Either way, everyone knows what they are assigned to do.

How do you get your kids to do chores?

First, **chores are not considered optional** and you start children participating in them when young. It becomes the family paradigm. We all work together to care for what God provides for us. We work as a team and we each have a valuable role in the family.

Second, there is no television, no going out to play, there are **no privileges until the work is done**. If you give in here, you can expect to be the household slave for your children. You do them a lifelong favor by teaching them to take care of their possessions and to be responsible. Don't teach them that the world revolves around them and is there to serve them. A good work ethic will last them for life.

After the chores, **SCHEDULE PLAY**. Everybody, including you, needs time to unwind.

Play is different for each age and interest and is the reward for having worked well and responsibly.

Organize the weekend

Saturday		Sunday
	6	
Sleep in a bit – it’s Saturday	7	
	8	
Household chores – Have list ready and everybody helps	9	Worship – this is an absolute priority and sets the tone and foundation for the entire
	10	Week.
	11	
Play and have fun – enjoy life	12	
	1	Rest all day if possible
	2	(Even God rested on the 7 th day.)
	3	
	5	
Cook dinner, eat and clean up together	6	Cook dinner, eat and clean up together
Kids bath, pick out clothes for morning,	7	Kids bath, pick out clothes for morning,
	8	
Parent time to rest, renew, read, and relax.	9	Parent time to rest, renew, read, and relax.
Bed by 10:30 – You need to sleep!	10	Bed by 10:30 – You need to sleep!
	11	

Saturday’s goal is to get the chores and errands done, then play and relax afterwards. If you do the chores early, you have the rest of the day to enjoy. You may have a bit more laundry to do or a few odds and ends but the majority will be done in the morning.

If you have children, keep evenings pretty much the same on the weekends, if possible. It provides stability and continues family time. However, if you want an evening cooking alone you can certainly give the kids more time to play. I’m sure they won’t mind.

Married without kids, or single?

This gives you much more time and far fewer tasks, but, organization is still essential for a well lived life. Using the same work schedule as before, we see that mornings are less hectic. That means you can either grab a few more winks or have a more leisurely morning. It also gives you more time to invest in Bible study and time with Christ.

Monday - Friday	
Up at 6:30, shower, eat, get ready for day with clothes laid out night before	6
	7
Work – leave by 8:15	8
	9
	10
	11
Lunch time – schedule appts, run a quick errand, pay bills online and definitely eat	12
	1
	2
	3
Home by 5:45	5
Cook dinner, eat and clean up - 15 minute pick up house.	6
	7
	8
Time to rest, renew, read, and relax.	9
Bed by 10:30 – You need to sleep!	10
	11

On the nights you come straight home, you can still manage your time well. Your 15 minute pick up will have far fewer items involved but should still be done. Investing a few minutes each day, keeps you organized and far less stressed.

Married without children? I still suggest that you cook and clean up together. Or one cooks but the other hangs out and they have time to talk. Eat dinner together – not with the strangers on television. Enjoy the person you married by spending time together when it is available.

You have time each evening that those with children do not. There is much you can do with those hours, just keep in mind that all our hours, all our minutes belong to the Lord and are to bring Him glory. Don't waste them sitting in front of the television

Your Weekend as a single person or married without children

Saturday		Sunday
	6	
Sleep in a bit – it’s Saturday	7	
	8	
Household chores	9	Worship – this is an absolute priority and sets the tone and foundation for the entire Week.
	10	
	11	
	12	
	1	Rest all day if possible
	2	Even God rested on the 7 th day.
	3	
	5	
Cook dinner, eat and clean up together	6	Cook dinner, eat and clean up together
Pick out clothes for morning,	7	Pick out clothes for morning,
	8	
Time to rest, renew, read, and relax.	9	Time to rest, renew, read, and relax.
Bed by 10:30 – You need to sleep!	10	Bed by 10:30 – You need to sleep!
	11	

Weekends should hold more options for a single person or a married couple without children. Chores can be done much quicker and there is more time for play.

You also have more opportunities to serve the body of Christ as well as a very needy world. Use your time wisely.

Making time for you

You absolutely, positively need to schedule time for you and, if you are married with kids, it is essential you schedule time to be alone together.

Marriage needs tending and that means getting away from the routine to focus on one another. Children need to see their parents take time together. It helps them to have a model for their own marriages one day and to know that the world is not all about them.

Schedule a date every week. Okay, at least every other week.

Dates do not have to cost money. There are hundreds of free ways to spend time together. It is not what you do as much as the fact that you are making it a priority to be together that is important.

PUT IT ON YOUR CALENDAR! Or it won't happen.

Do you have a sport, craft, hobby or interest that you really enjoy? Once your basic schedule is done you will see where it fits well. Don't lose yourself; we need you to be you. That means that you honor how God has designed you and follow His lead.

Has He gifted you artistically – now is the time to further that gift and see how you can use it for Him.

Has He gifted you with your hands, with your mind, with your heart – pursue growing and maturing and preparing to be a tool in the Master's hands.

What passion has He placed in your heart? Pursue learning about it and praying about how He wants you to honor that passion.

We sometimes get so wrapped up in the task of living that we forget that life is a gift to be used well for Him and for the world He loves so very much.

What messes up your planned Time Management?

#1 = Lack of organization.

It takes time to set up a good schedule but if you don't schedule life, life will schedule for you. A schedule is not a prison but a guideline that brings peace to the days. It sets boundaries that make it possible for you to move freely without being crushed. Time management ensures that you live well on the earth, using your days wisely.

#2 = You don't set good boundaries and rules for yourself.

If you don't set them well, others will tell you what you can do and when. Without good boundaries others will be more than happy to schedule your life and your priorities for you. Instead, set your life with Christ, design rules for living that help you live that life and boundaries around it to protect it.

#3 = You don't set good boundaries and rules for your children.

Allow the kids to do what they want when they want and they will fight you all the way when you try to get something done. If they are allowed to run their lives then you have basically abdicated your God-given authority to them. You are not held accountable for the choices your children make but you are for whether you trained them in godliness and discipline.

Did you know that television is not a right? Neither is the computer or talking on the phone or pretty much anything else. Other than love, food, shelter and care the rest is all a privilege and a blessing.

Don't promote the sense of entitlement that kids these days tend to have. Show them that they can enjoy the fruit of their labor, not steal fruit from yours. Allow them to learn the concept of rewards and consequences and you will be equipping them to become healthy, responsible adults. How you teach them to live will transfer over to their relationship with God. If your kids take what you give them for granted, you are preparing them to do the same with God.

#4 = The Unexpected

The unexpected happens – expect it. It usually happens when you are least ready for it – so be as prepared as possible. Think through different scenarios (car breaks down, kids get sick, etc.) and plan as best as you can. Get an emergency fund put aside for that inevitable expense, plan for who picks up the kids from school if they are ill, work on your support group of friends and family for emergencies. Assume that something will happen and you won't be surprised or unprepared when it does.

My Schedule

I've included my weekly schedule to show you that I actually follow this plan and how it works for me.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6							
7							
8						Thorough	
9	Quiet	Time	with	Lord		house	Day
10	Quick,	light	house	keeping	Jaime	cleaning	
11		Check	email				of
12		Website	updates			Errands	
1		Appt	Appt	Appt	Appt		Rest
2	<i>Planning</i>					Play	
3	<i>Writing</i>						
4	<i>Research</i>	Appt	Appt	Appt	Appt	Projects	
5	<i>Study</i>						
6	<i>Projects</i>		Bible	Appt	Appt		
7			Study at			Worship	
8			Church				
9							
10							
11							

I am self-employed as a counselor and a life coach and if I don't set a good schedule then I will be very unorganized and get very little done well. Organizing my week keeps me accomplishing my goals and on task while still allowing flexibility.

After writing out my tasks, I planned my time so that I have one full day to write, research and study. Each of these projects has been itemized with goals, incremental steps and due dates on other pages but for the purpose of "seeing" my schedule, I have only placed the notation that this time is dedicated to this type of work. I absolutely need this and it is how I wrote this article, for example.

Monday starts my week with creativity and purpose and sets the tone for the days to come. I am very serious about guarding this time as it is incredibly productive, leads me in new directions and allows me time and focus to listen to the Spirit.

Mornings during the week are flexible, but still scheduled. I have time for being in the Bible and with the Lord to start my day.

I have given myself a rule – I cannot read ANYTHING until I've read the Word. No email, no morning paper, nothing. Why? Because being with my Father in His Word is my priority and so I put boundaries in place to ensure that I do what I really want to do.

After that I do light housekeeping and then move to my computer where I check my emails for the day and look in on my web sites.

Then, I schedule 10 appointments per week. I take only two evening appointments per week and decided to have them Thursday and Friday although if a client crisis occurred I still have Tuesday evening open. If I don't fill all appointments, then that time is used for writing. The time is still scheduled for work, whether an appointment or writing.

Wednesday evenings I have set aside for attending or teaching Bible study at my church.

I have a standing time with my friend, Jamie, every Friday morning. Sometimes we go a bit longer, but notice I built margin by leaving an hour in between meeting with her and my first appointment that day.

Saturday is time for caring for my home, weekend chores and errands. Because I do light housekeeping, maybe 30 minutes to one hour each morning, Saturday cleaning takes 1-2 hours only. I do any additional chores and errands and have the afternoon for whatever. This would be the day I could paint a room or plant flowers or other more time consuming projects without having to rearrange my weekly schedule.

Worship is Saturday evening for me, so I scheduled that in. However, if my husband and I wanted to go to dinner or meet with friends or had a project run long we could still go to worship Sunday morning, so this time is still flexible.

Sunday is a day of rest. Rest for me can mean sleeping in, reading, watching a movie, taking a nap, lunch with friends, just spending time enjoying my husband, all of the above or many other options. The goal is rest though, so no work. As always, that day starts with the Lord and His presence is there all day.

Once I put this structure in place, along with the other tools of balance, I find that my life is restful, purposeful and enjoyable.

Summing up

Time Management, structure, rules are not to constrain us but to set us free. They serve us so that we don't serve chaos. With organization comes opportunity to free up time for what is really important to us rather than let the tyranny of the urgent and the undone take over.

I hope this has been a helpful exercise for you. Think of what your life would be like if you managed your time well and then make it happen. You will absolutely love your new life.

In Christ,
Kim West