

“Disciplined for Godliness”

Edwards: “Resolved, that I will live so, as I shall wish I had done when I come to die.”

Introduction¹

For most of us, there is a vast wilderness between “wanting to” and “getting it done”.

The question is how do you structure your life so that you don’t kill yourself, and yet get stuff done.

Theological Affirmations about Time

1. There is a direct connection between godliness and discipline.

1 Timothy 4:7 – “Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness, of while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the savior of all people, especially of those who believe.” 1 Timothy 4:7

Notice the point – Discipline leads to godliness....therefore, lack of discipline leads to ungodliness.
In order to pursue godliness a person must develop a disciplined life.

2. While physical discipline is beneficial, discipline in your walk with Jesus must take precedence.

“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others, I myself should be disqualified.” 1 Cor. 9:24-27

3. Time is short; therefore, precious.

“You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.” James 4:14

4. You are accountable for how you invest your time.

Romans 14:12 – “so then, each one of us will give an account of himself to God.”

5. Time is manageable

Never complain about having too much to do

See Jesus

“And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.”
Mark 1:35

6. Discipline is first a mental activity

“Set your minds on things above.” Col. 3:2

Without the conscious, active, disciplined setting of the direction of our thoughts, they will be unproductive at best, evil at worst.

Os Guinness – we often have fit bodies and fat minds.

¹ The content of this teaching is developed from a talk given by Mark Driscoll with the Acts 29 network entitled “Reverse Engineering Your Life”. Driscoll’s talk is particularly related to church planters, so I have augmented some of his thoughts and added a lot of my own content in order to make it applicable to a more general audience. Driscoll’s original talk can be found here: <http://www.acts29network.org/sermon/reverse-engineering-your-life--seattle-2007/>

7. Effective time use requires sharpening the ax.

“If the iron is blunt and one does not sharpen the edge, he must use more strength, but wisdom helps one succeed.”
Ecc. 10:10

8. The nature of this world fights against the disciplined use of time.

“Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.” Eph. 5:15-16

9. Time can be redeemed.

Eph. 5:16 – “redeem the time”

10. Discipline is not an end, in and of itself, but it is a means to the end of glorifying God in all things.

Cultural Appraisal

1. Time wasted in idleness

Doing nothing for their benefit or the benefit of their neighbor

Prov. 19:15 – “The idle should suffer hunger.”

Prov. 23:21 – “Drowsiness shall consume a man with rags.”

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

Illustration: Interpreted every 11 seconds

2. Time wasted in worldliness

Pursuit of the American dream

Major concern for eating, drinking, clothes, and being merry

3. Time wasted in sloppiness.

Undisciplined and waste time because of lack of intentionality and focus

4. Time wasted in sinfulness

Not just not doing anything profitable, but doing things sinful either by omission or commission

Time wasted in idleness ---- leads to time wasted in sinfulness.

Practical Suggestions

1. Develop a strategic plan for your life.

Illustration: Reverse Engineering your life.

Pick a date...what do I want? (Health, marriage, devotional life, prayer, ministry, job)

Now backtrack...what would it take to get there?

How do I want to be living, etc?

Kierkegaard – “Define life forward, life it backward.”

Often using the contemplative disciplines (prayer, fasting, spiritual retreat, etc. are helpful in developing such a plan.

2. Work on your life and not just in it.

Work at the “macro” level and not just the “micro.”

See your life like a MapQuest map and take some time to click zoom in and zoom out. Zoom out enough to get the big picture of your life so you can monitor and adjust.

Do not get caught up in the tyranny of the urgent.
 Seven Priorities that will define your life at a “macro” level
 Life mission statement

Illustration: [Take a quick Google search for Jonathan Edwards Resolutions.](#)
 Notice how he worked his life at a “macro” level.

3. Dream towards something worth getting out of bed for.

If you are going to dream, dream big.
 Put something in front of you that is bigger than you so you can see God show up.
 Unless you have big dreams, you will waste time.

4. Assess your current use of time.

How are you currently using your time?
 Here Steven Covey’s chart is very helpful

<p style="text-align: center;">Quadrant 1 Urgent/Important</p> <p>Emergencies, projects that you have put off, unexpected crisis conversations, evangelistic or service opportunities that appear quickly.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Quadrant 2 Not Urgent/Important</p> <p>Spiritual disciplines, school work, job tasks, daily family responsibilities, housework, encouragement, service, dating towards marriage, friends for the purpose of mutual edification or evangelism.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Quadrant 3 Urgent/Not Important</p> <p>Needs that you become aware of that are urgent to someone but not to you.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Quadrant 4 Not Urgent/Not Important</p> <p>Most mindless pastimes, hobbies, etc.</p>

The goal is to live most of your time in quadrant 2 (at least 60 percent of your time here)

Get stuff from quadrant 1 to quadrant 2 due to effective planning (don’t allow projects to become urgent due to lack of preparation and discipline). Some percentage of your time (15 percent) will, and should, be spent in quadrant 1.

This only leaves 25 percent of your time for quadrants 3 and 4, which is more than enough. The goal is to get out of quadrant 3 and 4 and get in 1 and 2.

5. Define your roles

Analyze your life and define six to seven roles you play. For me these include: child of God, father, son, husband, pastor, teacher, missionary, student, etc.
 Knowing what roles you play allows you to see the roles you are neglecting or overemphasizing.

6. Convert them to Goals

For each role, define three goals (Roles to Goals)

Goals have three properties: Measurable, dateable, attainable.

For each role, attempt to develop three specific goals.

Example: Role – Husband

- Date night with my wife twice a month
- Four dinners at home each week with my family.
- Pray daily for my wife

Notice that each of these is a specific goal. A goal is not – “I want to be a better husband.”

With seven roles and three goals with each one, you should have at least 21 goals per year.

Once you have these goals, post them in a prominent location that you will see each day.

These “roles to goals” serve as the organizing plan for your life.

7. Work your goals, not your tasks.

Make sure that your goals are what you are working on and not simply a task list. If your task list does not reflect your goal list, then something is wrong.

8. Work the quadrants

See your life as four blocks of time:

1. 7am-12noon
2. 12pm – 5pm
3. 5pm – 10pm
4. 10pm-7am

You should block out two of these chunks of time to devote purely to your “roles to goals.”

For example, some days I work blocks 1 and 2. If I do, I should not work block 3. However, some days my job requires me to work block 3; therefore I need to guard either block 1 or 2 for my family.

Block 4 should be reserved for sleep, except in emergencies. It is amazing to me, how much quality time and spiritual opportunity is wasted because people sleep, or sleep walk, through blocks 1-3 because of not sleeping in block 4. Often sleeping is a spiritual decision. We must think through the implications of the opportunities we have missed for spiritual good, due to lack of focus because of lack of sleep.

9. Redeem the gaps

Approach life as long hike, not short race

Do a little bit every chance you get.

For example, carry a solid book with you everywhere you go so when you get an unexpected 15 minutes, you can use those to work your ‘roles to goals’. Use a 15 minute chunk to encourage someone, send an email, etc.

10. Sabbath weekly and daily

Find an acceptable release valve.

If you do not find an acceptable one, you will adopt a sinful one.

Just make sure that your release valve does not become ultimate.

11. Count the cost of everything you do

At what cost is every commitment you make. Each new friend, each new leadership position, each new opportunity, comes with a cost. What do you invest in that will last past your life?

12. Drop Energy Drains

Energy drains may include tasks, people, technology, etc.

Notice that Jesus did not heal everyone or go everywhere.

Picture yourself on a deer hunt. Is the best approach to go to the edge of the woods with a machine-gun and spray bullets throughout the forest in hopes that you will hit something or should you take a riffle, stalk the deer...one bullet...dead deer? You are much more likely to kill the deer with the one bullet, riffle approach, than with the machine gun. However, most of us approach life with a machine gun. Simply do as much as you can, as often as you can, and hope that you get something done along the way. A much better approach would be to do a few things and do them well (and actually get something productive done)

13. Measure success by results, not busyness.

Many prize ineffectiveness. The fact that you are incredibly busy, tells me very little. It may be that you are ineffective and sloppy and therefore things pile up. The fact that you pull an all-nighter before every test is not impressive...and communicates a lack of discipline.

What I want to know is "Are you getting it done?" What are the results of your labor?

14. Discipline one area of your life.

Discipline is holistic in nature...it goes in bunches so if you assess one area the other will follow.

If one of your roles is student, work that role. Develop it, cultivate it, and see if other roles don't follow.

15. Use time to please God and serve people, not to please people.

"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell."

Matthew 10:28

"Fear of man will prove a snare."

Proverbs 29:25

Forget trying to please everyone. Learn how to say no because it does not fit within your roles to goals.

Pleasing God is of much greater priority.

16. Spend time swimming in the deep end.

"American evangelicals therefore characteristically display an impatience with the difficult, an intolerance of complexity, and a poor appreciation of the long-term and disciplined."

- Os Guinness, "Fit Bodies, Fat Minds"

Many will argue that, while America is one of the most technological advanced nations on the planet, we struggle with the complex. It could be argued that it is the result of technology that we no longer think. Nicholas Carr argues this exact point in his article “Is Google Making Us Stupid?”
<http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200807/google>

In order to wage war against this tendency, we must develop the habit of spending time wrestling with complexity and cultivating our mental disciplines. Remember Jesus comment about the greatest commandment included “loving God with our minds”.

17. Consistently Evaluate

Constantly ask yourself how you are doing at working your “roles to goals”

Some helpful steps include:

- ∂ Once a year spiritual retreat, before the next “role to goal” year begins. For me, this happens over the summer, when I take two months to evaluate and begin working my roles to goals over the course of the school year.
- ∂ Have a half-day evaluation with a mentor twice a year to assess progress
- ∂ Chart out your time on a regular basis using Covey’s chart and some type of daily time graph. The best practice I have seen of this is a thirty minute chart for your day that breaks down all of your time into thirty minute increments. Chart your time and see how you are investing it.

18. Remember to Write, Write to Remember

Think about the amount of time you waste trying to remember stuff you should have written down. There is nothing more frustrating than having a great thought or something you should do and forgetting it two hours later. Some things you can do to help

- Carry a pen with you everywhere you go
- Leave a pen and paper in prominent spots where you have good idea (i.e. near the bed)
- Always assume that you will forget

19. Get quick wins

Why do football teams always seem to play the cupcakes at the beginning of the year? Because they know that short term growth is a huge motivating force for long term and significant wins down the road. Measure your growth in small areas so that you are encouraged in larger ones. This is the same principle in retiring debt: pay off what you can, which fosters momentum and motivation to work for more in the future. Get some wins in areas that are easier, and go from there.

20. Form discipline in community.

Peer pressure can often be leveraged to be a very good thing. Find some guys or gals that want to get serious about personal discipline and get after it together.

21. Read old, disciplined, dead guys.

Biographies are great. Find some old, dead guys and read how they structured their lives. For example, CH Spurgeon and Jonathan Edwards are great case studies. But beware: You will be humbled.

22. Disciple and be Disciplined.

Find a guy or a girl that is a little bit further down the road than you and meet with them weekly. Watch how they structure their time and structure their family. You will pick up more than you know. Also, find someone a little bit behind you on the road and meet with them regular. You will be surprised at how much this will spur you on. You need to be able to say, as Paul did, “follow me as I follow Christ.”

23. Reject any forms of passivity.

Any time you have a chance to be disciplined and step up, do it. Never assume someone else is going to do it or that it can wait until tomorrow. Develop the habit of doing what you can every chance you get and watch the discipline snowball pick up speed.

24. Make Technology your servant.

Rather than submitting to the endless time waste of technology, use it for your good by finding ways to do more in less time.

25. Always move.

Never stop moving forward. Often the phrase “waiting for God’s will” is an excuse for idleness. I once heard Tommy Nelson say, “God does not steer parked cars.” Always be on the move towards godliness through a disciplined life.