

FOCUSED LIFE

BY ANTONIO BALDOVINOS

"I don't care how much power, brilliance or energy you have, if you don't harness it and focus it on a specific target, and hold it there you're never going to accomplish as much as your ability warrants."

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At one of the Reverend Billy Graham's last television interviews he was asked, *"If you were to do things over again, would you do things differently?"* Without any hesitation and full of emotion, Mr. Graham responded by saying; *"Yes, I would study more, pray more, travel less, take less speaking engagements. I took too many of them and too many places around the world. If I were to do all over again, I would spend more time in meditation and prayer and just telling the Lord how much I love Him and adore Him and I'm looking forward to our time were going to spend together for eternity."* (1)

This is such a fascinating response. At the end of such an amazing career and life, if Billy Graham could do things differently, he would spend more time in prayer...telling the Lord how much He loved Him and adored Him. He would meditate on the Word and take less speaking engagements, if he could do it over again. Wow!

Would that be our response? Do we look back at the time here on earth with the same perspective, of wishing we had more time with God; studying His Word, speaking to Him in prayer and getting to know the creator of the universe? I would challenge us to take heed to these important thoughts of how we spend our time here on earth. Billy Graham lived what most people would have dreamt about, speaking to millions, building a large organization, connecting with the highest profile figures of his time and Billy Graham responds by saying that he would have spent more time with God. Let's learn from this great man's personal experience.

DAVIDS FOCUS

David is another great example of focus. David was king over one of the largest nations of his time, commander and chief of the strongest military on the earth. He defeated countless cities and nations, yet the final thing he wanted to be described as was; *"...the sweet psalmist of Israel."* (2 Sam 23:1- NLT). Why? Why would a man that was such a great warrior and such a great king want to be known as the sweet psalmist of Israel? He didn't want to be known as highly favored of the Lord, or a great giant killer, who defeated the impossible giant Goliath with one throw of a sling. David didn't want to be known as a warrior, king or a giant killer. It's astounding that above all, David wanted to be known as the great psalmist of Israel, a lover of God; a man after God's own heart. David not only knew how to prioritize while being king and commander of the armies, but he was driven by the romance and passion he had with the Lord. David wrote in Psalm 27:4 *"One thing I have desired of the Lord one thing I seek, to behold the beauty of the Lord and inquire in his temple"*.

FIRST FRUITS

God is not looking for mandatory, duty driven relationship, but voluntary love from men and women who want to be with Him above all. God gave commands of separating the first day of the week, first fruits of our finances; loving God with all of our heart, mind, soul and strength not because He needs our money, day or anything else. He is looking for dedicated hearts that want Him first and foremost in everything and every part of our lives.

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REDEEMING TIME

“See then that you walk wisely, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”
Ephesians 5:15-16

Scripture makes it clear that time is valuable in our relationship with God. Therefore, how we spend our time is an important part of our lives. Without an intentional, organized approach to time management, the gift of time can be easily squandered, leaving us with regret and a lack of fruit in our lives. This short section aims to practically help those desiring to manage their time more successfully.

SETTING GOALS

“Where there is no vision, the people perish or live without restraint,” (Proverbs 29:18).

In other words, without a clear purpose for our life, we will most likely become distracted and live without necessary restraints. We should seek to have long-term goals (over the next ten years) and short-term goals (three months to three years) in each area of our life. This is a proven way to maximize fruitfulness in our lives. There are several areas to consider when setting goals. Our spiritual life, relationships, work life, ministry, finances, health, and leisure activities are all important spheres of our lives that call for clear goals and time allotments.

“I have so much to do that I spend several hours in prayer before I am able to do it.” John Wesley

No one gets more time. There are 1,440 minutes in a day. No matter what you do you won't get more time. Author Myers Barnes said; *“Time management has nothing to do with the clock, but everything to do with organizing and controlling your participation in certain events that coordinate with the clock. Einstein understood time management is an oxy moron. It cannot be managed. You can't save time, lose time, turn back the hands of time or have more time tomorrow than today. Time is unemotional, uncontrolled, unencumbered. It moves forward regardless of circumstances and, in the game of life, creates a level playing field for everyone.”*
(2)

According to a survey taken by Day-Timers, Inc., *only one third of American workers plan their daily schedules. And only 9 percent follow through and complete what they planned.* (3) In order for us to be effective in our daily lives, we must plan and put in time with God and follow through with that plan. In other words if we do not plan we will not do.

COMPONENTS OF A FOCUSED LIFE

- A. **OVERALL VISION** – primary purpose in life. What would you desire to be known by or for?
- B. **LIFE GOALS** – applying my life vision to each specific area of my life (7 areas of life).
 - Long-term goals** (over 10 years) and **short-term goals** (3 months–3 years)
 - 1. **Spiritually** (prayer time, fasting days, Bible study, etc.)
 - 2. **Relationally** (family, friends, etc.)

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3. **Vocation** (marketplace calling, etc.)
4. **Ministry** (in the church, outside the church, etc.)
5. **Economically** (spending, giving, saving, investing, etc.)
6. **Physically** (exercise, health, diet, etc.)
7. **Rest** (recreation, vacation, play, entertainment, sports, etc.)

C. **ACTION PLAN** – for each long and short-term goal in each area of your life.

D. **SCHEDULE** – for each action plan, i.e. focuses us to prioritize. This is where our life vision most easily is derailed.

HELPFUL TOOLS FOR KEEPING A SCHEDULE

Once goals have been set for our lives, we must not lose focus, or some goals may become unattainable. One effective way to stay on task with our goals is by keeping a schedule. A schedule helps us to increase our focus and our level of productivity. Without a daily schedule it is easy to lose our focus and, thus, to needlessly waste time. Here are some tips for keeping a schedule effectively: Schedule your day in time increments. First, begin with large increments (two to four hours). As you learn to follow a schedule, gradually lessen the time increments. The smaller the increment, the more precise you'll be with your time management.

1. If you become distracted by something pressing (e.g. a bill to pay, an errand to run, an email to send, etc.) while in the middle of a scheduled activity, make note of it and proceed.
2. Aim to remain on schedule for at least 75 percent of your day. This is a reasonable goal that will yield great accomplishment over time.
3. Do your best to avoid playing “catch-up” all day, even if you skip a non-pressing scheduled event.
4. If you fail with keeping your schedule, make some adjustments and continue to experiment with different time arrangements until you're able to remain on schedule for 75 percent of your day.