

Time Management

LEADERS & STAFF



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This Assessment Pack from BuildingChurchLeaders.com is a collection of tools to use with your leadership team. Each tool has been designed to help you and your team determine where your time is going and how you can use it more wisely.

Here's how to use your Building Church Leaders assessments with your board, staff, or small group leaders:

- ◆ Print and photocopy the assessment tool you'd like to use (you have permission to photocopy for church or educational use).
- ◆ Hand it to your team to complete.
- ◆ Lead a discussion based on the team's answers.

For more assessment packs, complete training themes, or other training tools for church leadership, see our website at www.BuildingChurchLeaders.com.

The Discipline of Time Management

Time is saved by personal discipline.

Psalm 90:12

“Time is the scarcest resource, and unless it is managed, nothing else can be managed,” says management consultant Peter Drucker in The Effective Executive. As Christian leaders, your time is not really yours, but God’s, and you have been appointed to be good stewards of it. The following steps, developed by Drucker to assist business leaders, can also help church leaders be disciplined in time management.

	I've done this	I need to do more of this.
1. Take inventory of your time. Management of time begins with knowing how it is expended, and the only way to know is to keep a written record. Tests have shown that most people don't realize how their time is spent. Chart your schedule over the course of a week, paying attention to the total time expended, the classification of how it was spent, and the frequency and nature of interruptions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Consolidate discretionary time. <i>Discretionary</i> means time used for activities other than specific commitments. Many of these scattered bits of time can be grouped at a specific hour each day to free other activities from interruption.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Prune timewasters. After you've taken your inventory, prune away those activities that waste your time. Delegate activities you specifically don't need to do. If you struggle determining which activities are truly important, ask yourself, “What would happen to the work God has called me to do if I stopped doing this altogether?” If the answer is “nothing,” stop doing it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Use timesaving methods. Both devices and disciplines can save you time. Consider the following: - Use a dictating machine to save you and your secretary time. - Make communication more efficient with an inner-church mailbox. - Listen to books, sermons, or seminars on tape or CD while driving. - Learn when and how to terminate an interview, phone call, or meeting. - Make notes, read, or memorize Scripture while waiting in line.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Build a flexible schedule. A schedule is a pathway, not a prison. There are good reasons to deviate from a schedule, but without one, you will be unable to manage time efficiently. Learn to budget your time. The first step is to plan a weekly schedule, deciding where to invest your time based on your priorities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

—DON BUBNA

Discuss

1. Which of the above suggestions have been helpful in the past? How?
2. Which do I need to implement now?
3. Why is making a schedule so important?

Examining Time Spent

5 questions to ask when you look at your “done” list.

Genesis 1:31

Many discussions of time management begin with planning work more efficiently. This sounds eminently plausible. The only thing wrong with it is that it rarely works. Plans seldom turn into achievements. The first step toward effective time management is to record how you actually spend your time. Once you’ve made a log of your time spent, ask these five questions to begin a time management plan that will actually change your life.

1. What would happen if this were not done at all? Look at each item on your time log and honestly ask this question. If the answer is, “Nothing significant,” stop doing it. It’s amazing how many things busy leaders do that would never be missed.

2. Which of the activities in my time log could be done by somebody else just as well, if not better? Few people know how to delegate. Most think delegation means turning something over to somebody else. That’s not delegation; that’s abdication. In order to delegate, we decide, “What is the job? What are the objectives? What are the minimal standards? What are the needed results?” Then we seek someone who can do it. That’s managing.

3. Am I wasting others’ time? There is no one symptom for leaders wasting their coworkers’ time, but there is a simple way to discover if this indeed is occurring: ask other people. Effective leaders have learned to ask systematically and without coyness, “What do I do that wastes your time without contributing to your effectiveness?” To ask this question—without being afraid of the truth—is a mark of an effective leader.

4. Which timewasters result from a lack of a system and which from a lack of foresight? The symptom to look for is the crisis that keeps coming back. Once a crisis happens a second time, it must not occur again. A recurrent crisis should always be foreseen. It can therefore either be prevented or dealt with by a routine that staff members or church workers can manage.

5. Am I attending an excess of meetings? Meetings are by definition a concession to deficient organization, for one either meets or one works. One cannot do both at the same time. In an ideally designed structure there would be no meetings, for everybody would already know what he or she needs to know to do the job. Since this is only a dream, there will always be more than enough meetings. Nonetheless, if leaders in an organization spend a large amount of their time in meetings, it is a sure sign of disorganization.

—PETER F. DRUCKER.

Discuss

1. Why is taking an inventory of how you actually spend time more effective than just trying to develop new plans for spending time better?
2. What concrete steps can you take to cut waste from your schedule?
3. How can we work together to trim the waste from one another’s schedules?

Make the Most of Your Minutes

10 ways to take control of the clock.

Ephesians 5:15–16

In ministry, minutes carry multiple demands; you can easily think of 20 tasks to fill each hour. Too many misspent minutes mean too much to do in the few minutes you have left. The following 10 tips can help you take command of the time you have to spend.

	I am doing this	I need to do this
1. Organize your space. Keeping your office or workspace clutter-free and well organized can help you save time with each task you do.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Make to-do lists. Many people leave post-it notes or piles to remind them what they need to do. Making a list not only keeps you on task, it prevents forgetting what needs to be done and gives you the satisfaction of crossing off items.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Do the most important tasks in primetime. Schedule two uninterrupted hours a day to work during the time when your energy and concentration are highest. You'll be able to get twice as much done in half the time, with half the effort.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Multitask. Determine which tasks don't require your total attention and plan to do them with other tasks. Running copies or downloading e-mail, for example, can easily be done at the same time you're reading mail or on the phone.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Make the most of down time. Instead of chafing while on hold or waiting for a late appointment, break some work into simple tasks you can do in 5 or 10 minutes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Minimize interruptions. Don't let phone calls and e-mail interrupt you more than needed. Schedule a time each day to handle both.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Delegate. Not every task requires your particular talents. Make notes over the course of a week every time you find yourself doing something someone else could do, and then review the list. Assign regularly repeated tasks to someone else.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Use timesaving equipment. Answering machines, cell phones, fax machines, and e-mail access should no longer be considered optional for an efficient office.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Keep office hours sacred. Scheduling household responsibilities for work hours only makes work more pressing and more likely to invade personal time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Give yourself a break. Taking a break lets you see your work with fresh eyes and helps you recharge, so you are once again up to the task ahead.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

—CAROLYN CAMPBELL

Discuss

1. How could a more efficient use of time be helpful for you?
2. Which of these tips do you need to incorporate into your time management? Why?
3. What other tips or strategies help you make efficient use of time?

Arresting the Time Bandits

These ornery villains will steal your time if you let them.

1 Corinthians 7:29,31

Getting control of your wasted time means getting control of yourself. Whether we realize it or not, our own bad habits often turn into the very bandits that rob us of our time. Ask yourself if the following time bandits are safely locked up or running amok in your life:

	In jail	Still on the loose
1. Disorganization. As Jim sorted through the papers on his desk, he found an invitation he had forgotten to accept, a check he had forgotten to deposit, and several bills he had forgotten to pay. If Jim would clear his desk, use an appointment book, develop a filing system, and keep records, he would see a many-fold return on time saved. When we take time now to get organized, we save time and hassle in the future.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Chasing bunny trails. I go to the bookcase for a commentary and rearrange the biblical studies section. I go to the files for the church blueprints and read the minutes of the last building committee meeting. I call the church treasurer and get so involved talking about our golf games, I never get around to asking about the bill that prompted my call. Focus on the job and ignore the bunnies, no matter how tempting.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Perfectionism. The secretary had gone home for the day, and the bulletin had left out someone's name. I called home: "The bulletin is all wrong, and I'll have to stay to do it over again." Wrong on both accounts. One phone call of apology could have saved me wasted time of trying to make everything just right.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Underutilizing a secretary. My secretary saves my time not only by handling administrative duties, but also by shielding me from salespeople, redirecting questions and problems to the appropriate people, protecting my appointment schedule, and safeguarding my closed door study time. Not utilizing her would be a crime.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Forgetting the phone. Especially in contemporary culture, phone first. Hospital stays are shorter than they used to be, most adults work outside the home, and even shut-ins can prove to be busy people. Call ahead to avoid wasting the trip.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Neglecting boundaries. "Do you have a few minutes?" can turn into a few hours if you don't form boundaries. When someone asks for your time, tell him or her up front how much you're willing to give. Limit phone conversations. Small talk is necessary—it's the mortar of relationships—but it can be overdone.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Junk mail fascination. Conquering the mail addiction, which insists we read every piece that crosses our desks, will add minutes to each day, minutes that add up to hours.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

—STEVEN MCKINLEY

Discuss

1. Which of these bandits are sapping your time?
2. What can you do differently to prevent that wasted time?
3. What tips or disciplines have you used effectively in the past to curb wasted time?

The Roots of Busyness

How being busy grows from necessity to compulsion.

Ecclesiastes 2:22–23; Galatians 1:10

Why do ministry and work so easily crowd out other priorities in our lives? Why are we so busy we miss out on family life? This exercise will probe three common reasons for busyness.

1. Has your free spirit flown too far? Many creative people prefer wide-open schedules, working out of the office, and the freedom to follow their creative inspirations. While the creative spirit is a blessing, it can also make a person hopelessly busy if it isn't checked by wisdom and priority. Even a creative spirit needs to manage his or her time to keep the important things in life from being crowded out. If the following statements sound like you, it's an indication that undisciplined scheduling is contributing to your busyness.

_____ "I resist structure for structure's sake."

_____ "Half of what I end up doing on a given day I hadn't planned to do when I got up."

_____ "When brainstorming comes, I usually drop what I've planned, get blown away, and don't return."

_____ "I lose my weekends because all of my must-do's are still left over at the end of the week."

2. Who are you trying to please? For many in Christian leadership, the things we want to do, must do, or feel called to do get crowded out by the things we feel we should do. There are always more should-do's being shouted in our direction. The process of adding should-do's to your workweek, however, means you end up continually busy, with an emotional tank near empty. Why do we allow others to "should" all over us? For many, it's because our sense of worth is too fragile to handle disappointing others. We find solace in knowing others approve but guilt when we don't meet others' expectations. If the following statements sound like you, it's an indication your busyness may come from a fragile sense of worth.

_____ "I lie awake at night sometimes, worrying about someone I couldn't visit or perfecting my sermon."

_____ "As the church grows, I get overwhelmed with everything everyone needs me to do."

_____ "I'm so busy doing everything that's expected of me, I forget sometimes what God called me to do."

3. Is busy good for you? For many of us, doubts about our inherent value or fear of failure have taught us to earn acceptance by doing applaudable tasks. We began to equate busyness with worth. In Diane Fassel's book on workaholicism, *Working Ourselves to Death*, she connects the workaholic's addiction to busyness with low self-esteem: "Because they judge themselves by their accomplishments, they have the illusion they must always be doing something worthwhile in order to feel good about themselves... [Their] sense of self is not separated from their achievements; rather it depends on achievements. Much of [their] frantic activity is symptomatic, an attempt to suppress or deny low self-esteem." Perhaps the following sound familiar:

_____ "When I fail at things (which I rarely do), I question my competency at anything."

_____ "I would be a better person if I could just figure out how to get more done."

_____ "I feel especially good when I take on and accomplish what others don't think can happen."

—GREG ASIMAKOPOULOS

Discuss

1. Which of the sample statements above sound like something you might say to yourself?
2. How do these attitudes contribute to making you overly busy?
3. What are some constructive steps or biblical truths that could free you from these busy-making attitudes?

Winning the War for Family Time

8 ways to give family their rightful place.

Ephesians 6:4; 1 Timothy 3:4–5

The skills required for being a loving parent and spouse—cheerful leadership, attentive listening, nourishing words, caring—are the same skills demanded by ministry. For many in church leadership, the end of the day means the end of our ability to give any more, and our families suffer through our leftovers. Consider the following eight strategies for improving the quality of the time you give to your family:

	I am doing this	I need to incorporate this
1. Bring home a healthy attitude. At the end of the day, or even on the way home, find something—music, a brisk walk—that relieves tension before you walk in the door.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Make a mental switch on the way home. If that’s not possible, give your family a signal when you’ve shaken off the day and are home at last. Take a shower, change your clothes, or even wait to drop the tie until you’re ready to be mentally present with your family.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Let the family know you were thinking of them when you were away. Be ready to tell them a story you saved from the day for them, or tell them of a conversation in which you mentioned them, or even bring home a small gift—every day.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Control the telephone. Protect your family’s time and privacy by limiting when people can call. Don’t be afraid disconnect the phone during important family times.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Include family in your ministry. Minister together at church socials, camps, missions trips, worship, even visitation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Give your family at least the same care any other parishioner would get. When you’re together as a couple or as a family, be as sharp and alert as possible in your mental attitude, dress, and common courtesies. Treat your family <i>at least</i> as well as you would treat someone else in the church.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Maximize your day off. Take your day off on a day that you’re fresh and energized. Don’t be afraid to take the kids out of school now and then to spend time with them. Wise use of the day off is one of the easiest ways to acquire both quality and quantity time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Take care in vacation planning. For many pastors’ children, vacations are the most important family-building event of their childhoods. Do not take work along. Do not fill your recreation time with pursuits separate from your family. Learn to enjoy each other.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

—MARSHALL SHELLEY

Discuss

1. Why is it important to examine the ways you demonstrate your care or indifference toward your family?
2. How could one or more of these ideas make a difference in your family?
3. What is one concrete step you could take to demonstrate to your family their significance in your life?

Spend Time Like You Spend Money

The same advice that saves your pocketbook can save your schedule.

Isaiah 55:2

Just as time is money, so good time management resembles good money management. This exercise walks you through five lessons that will not only save you money, but will also save you time. Ask yourself if you tend to follow this advice when it comes to spending your time.

	I do this: Usually	Sometimes	Rarely
1. Buy quality. Quality products will please us months and years after the purchase. Cheap goods often leave us with regrets. Buying quality time means investing our time in activities with the greatest long-term dividends and avoiding activities with passing value.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Minimize self-gratifying purchases. Your motives tell the story. Are you susceptible to pursuing praise, looking for jobs that will get you noticed? Are you laboring after your own glory? Time spent gratifying your own ego is like buying lavish status symbols—it may polish your image, but it can destroy your bank account.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Don't buy on credit. Buying on credit means glibly committing to something that we lack the cash flow—or the time flow—to fulfill. Too many of us treat calendars like spendthrifts treat credit cards. We charge them to the limit and deal with the consequences at the end of next month. The tragedy is that sometimes we end up borrowing time from the essentials to pay for the discretionary.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Avoid impulse buying. Spur-of-the-moment purchases often lead to wondering later why you parted with your hard-earned money (or time) for that useless item. Don't agree to a commitment right when asked, but say, "Thanks for the offer. Give me a day to think about it, and I'll get back to you."	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Don't buy a bargain for a bargain's sake. Some bargains seem hard to resist, but a bargain pair of shoes that doesn't fit are no bargain at all. Sometimes we make the same mistake with time. We jump at opportunities—just because they don't sound like major time commitments—that don't really fit our areas of giftedness. Consequently, we lose focus. We end up nicked and dimed to death, wasting small amounts of time and energy here and there that could be profitably spent elsewhere.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

—CARL RUBY

Discuss

1. How is time management like money management? How is it different?
2. How have you neglected to follow some of this advice in the past?
3. How can you amend your time-spending practices in the future to take this advice into account?

Goal-Oriented Time Management

Your time crunch can't be solved tomorrow, but it can be solved.

Jeremiah 29:11

It takes more than timesaving tricks to achieve long-term peace. This exercise will help you build a framework for achieving long-term time management goals.

1. Do you take the time to plan goals for the future? The most common time-management mistake Christian leaders make is not planning for tomorrow. Start by realizing that you can't get out of this mess in one year, but you can lay a foundation that can get you out in three to five years. Do you have measurable goals laid out for the future? Do you have the steps put down on a calendar to move you, step-by-step, toward those goals? Do you have a long-range calendar with time marked out and reserved, so you aren't suddenly maxed out by all those things you said yes to six or nine months ago, simply because today seemed so far away?

2. Have you taken stock of the people around you? You've heard that you need to delegate. In the church, delegation means discipling—training others to use the gifts they were given to accomplish God's purpose. Sometimes people know they have these gifts; sometimes they do not. Ask people, "What do you think our church is good at? What can we do well? Who are the gifted people in the church?" When you hear the same information from three or four people, you know you're discovering the strengths of the church. Then begin asking, "Who, when disciplined, could do this job better than I can?" Training people to use their gifts and then learning to rely on others to do so will not only save you time in the long run, it will also increase your church's impact and maturity.

3. Who holds you accountable to your goals? Distinguish between a purpose and a goal: preaching a good sermon is a purpose; writing a sermon outline by two o'clock tomorrow is a goal. When you know what your goals are, ask one or two individuals to hold you accountable in doing your best to achieve them. Too many leaders begin with all the capabilities to lead effectively, but they never develop a deep relationship with someone who can evaluate them honestly. They look back after ten years and realize that if they'd had counsel at certain points, they would have built a different life. Who do you know that has shown the maturity to advise and hold you accountable, long-term, to your time management and ministry goals?

4. Have you prayed into the future? Periodically, get away for a day to plan and pray. Bring yourself into God's presence and think about what kind of life you'd like to have 15 years from now. Picture a day in your life. What would it look like? How would you spend your time? Imagine getting up, greeting your family, and moving through your day. Though we often overestimate what we can change in one year, we underestimate what can be done in five. Almost anything is possible in 15. Then work back into the present. What would your day look like ten years from now if you were moving toward that 15-year future? What would it look like five years from now? Pray for wisdom in setting goals that will move you toward that future.

—TED ENGSTROM AND ED DAYTON

Discuss

1. Why are quick-fix time-management solutions often short-lived?
2. What specific goals do you have for improving your time management?
3. In what ways can you bring others in to help you accomplish those goals?