

## BASIC FACTORS FOR PRODUCTIVE LIVING

There are many "formulas" for victorious Christian living and many books written to enable Christians to balance the Christian life or get a handle on it. But for me there are five words that have really put the Christian life into a practical perspective. They are: Objectives (goals), Priorities (values), Schedule (time), Discipline (perseverance), and Motives (motivation). These are more than just words. They are concepts that reflect our lifestyle! We need to understand them biblically and then use them as practical guidelines for our lives. I'm not trying to oversimplify the whole thing, but I am seeking to make the Christian's daily walk a less complicated one and refine it to what I believe are the key factors that every Christian needs to keep in focus. (This paper is meant to be used as a study. That means, in order for you to get the maximum benefit out of it, it will be necessary for you to look up the Scripture and write - in a few statements - what the verse says and how it relates to the given concept).

### OBJECTIVES (OR GOALS)

- What are you striving to achieve or accomplish?
- What do you want to aim for?
- What do you want to see happen in your life?

These three questions are ones you need to ask yourself in order to be able to specifically write down and define what it is you're trying to do. Remember, if you aim for nothing, you'll hit it every time! Now to learn from Scripture, look at Paul. He knew what he was directing his energies for, both long range and short range. (Note also at the end of his letters, his plans). Write out some specific things that Paul wanted to do.

Phil.3:7-14

Rom.15:20-32

Look at the goals Christ expects His church to achieve.

Matt.28:19-20

Acts 1:8

A goal is something toward which our energies are directed. If you have not clearly defined specific "goals" then much of your energy is wasted. You might never achieve anything and you will probably just drift aimlessly along. So start by:

#### 1. Crystalizing your thinking.

- What is it you want to do? Achieve? Improve in? Become?
- Boil it down, streamline it, be specific, realistic, and purposefully creative!
- Write it down and put it somewhere visible in order to remind yourself of the course you want to keep your resources channelled toward.
- Divide those "specific" goals into high priority, or low priority, according to Scriptural order of importance (see next section).

2. Develop a plan of action for achieving your goals and a deadline for attainment.
  - We don't ever plan to fail - we just fail to plan!
  - Prepare by evaluating the resources needed (time, people, energy, money, education...).
  - Note in Joshua 6 the conquest of Jericho revealed constructive, detailed action.
  - "A plan of action" bridges the gulf between "wish" and fulfillment.
  - God expects us to plan (Lk.14:28,31), but not presumptuously, Js.4:13-16, "if the Lord wills ..." (see other study "Planning and Setting Goals in a Biblical Perspective").
  - Anticipate and identify any potential obstacles and devise solutions (read Nehemiah).
  - Keep a "notebook" to chart your course of action in order to evaluate progress.
  - Your deadline then serves as an accountability structure that others can hold you to supportively.
3. Develop a sincere desire to attain your goals.
  - Listing the beneficial, advantageous, results and by-products will increase motivation.
  - Romans 10:1 - Paul had "great desires."
  - "Whatever you vividly imagine, ardently desire, sincerely believe, and enthusiastically act upon ... must inevitably come to pass." - Paul J. Meyer
  - Visualize your goals in your imagination or put them in actual pictures.
4. - Develop a Biblical balanced perspective regarding confidence in God & yourself.

<u>GOD</u>	<u>YOURSELF</u>
Jer.32:17,27	Phil.4:13
Luke 1:37	1 Tim.4:7
Phil.1:6	2 Tim.2:1-15
1 Thess.5:24	Js.1:22-25
2 Cor.3:5	Phil.2:12-13
Jn.15:5	1 Cor.9:24-27

(See study "Who Actually Lives the Christian Life?")

5. Discipline yourself and your schedule to work out the plan of action (see next section in this study).
  - Follow through regardless of obstacles, criticism, circumstances, or people.
  - The power comes in the doing.
  - Each step you take to do the right thing ... the easier it becomes.

#### Examples

- Long range goals - to conform to the image of Christ.  
- to improve as a \_\_\_\_\_.
- Short range goals - to attend church \_\_\_\_\_ times a week.  
- to start a Home Bible Study this fall.  
- to witness to at least one person each week.  
- to read through the Bible every year.  
- to spend 45 minutes a day with \_\_\_\_\_.  
- to "express love " 3 times a day to \_\_\_\_\_.  
- to disciple one person every 2 - 3 months.

PRIORITIES (or values)

Now, how badly do you want to achieve this goal? Certainly not at the expense of other God-given priorities! That's why this area is such a vital factor to understand in order to maintain a balanced perspective on our lives!

- What does God say regarding the importance of what we want to achieve?
- Just how does it fit into the priorities God has established for my life?
- How valuable are my goals to my spouse, family, and others? (self-serving or other-serving?)

You must study these Scriptures in order to know where these things fit into the God-given order of importance:

Matt.6:33	Eph.5:15-16:4
Matt.22:37-40	1 Tim.3:5
Luke 10:38-42	1 Tim.5:8
Rom.13:1-6	Luke 12:15-34
1 Cor.12:4-13:13	

Note God's divine design for the Christian family (1 Cor.11:3; Eph.5:23; 1 Cor.11:8-9 Eph.6:1-2)

God's Word tells us that He is to take first place. Our marriage and family is next on the list. Then other areas of responsibility such as spiritual gifts, church, employment, school, other "commitments", all revolve around God being at the center or hub of our lives.

Only when I am the person God wants me to be will I be becoming the kind of husband/wife God wants me to be. It follows then that I'll be changing into the right kind of father/mother and then into a usable, effective servant to the church of Christ. All of this flows out of one's daily relationship to Jesus Christ, the continual application of His Word and a willingness to serve when needed. Let me paraphrase Matt.6:33: "When you put first as utmost importance God's will and His righteousness in your life, everything else will fit into place, everything else will fall into proper perspective." (Look at Matt. 6 context to see further what the "everything else" is). Proverbs 3:5-6.

SCHEDULE (or time)

The way you use your time will reflect your goals and priorities - our schedule is a commentary on our values and goals. Therefore, it's essential that we evaluate our management of time and develop a Biblical understanding about the "brevity of life"!

Gen.47:9	Prov.27:1
Ps.39:4	1 Cor.14:40
Prov.4:26	Eph.5:16
Prov.6:6-11	Col.4:3
Prov.14:15-16	Js.4:13-16
Prov.16:3	1 Chron.29:15 ff
Ps.89:47	Job 7:6-9
Ps.90:4-6	Job 8:9
Ps.90:9,12	Job 9:25
Ps.102:11	Job 14:1-2
Ps.103:14-16	Job 20:4-9
Prov.20:18	

These verses clearly express the seriousness of keeping control of our time and schedule. We all have schedules. It's either good or bad. It's either controlling us or we're controlling it. The most practical way to apply these verses is to write up a schedule of our time from when we wake up to the time we go to bed. We must place into our schedule the most important priorities and work from there. Remember your daily schedule reflects your priorities, values, goals and discipline.

TAKE A TIME INVENTORY. We all have:

- 168 hours in each week
- 56 hours average for sleep
- 112 hours remain
- 48 hours average for job
- 64 hours remain
- 12 hours for meals
- 52 hours average conscious, active life to devote to any purpose to which we're inclined!

- Time Spent in 70-Year Life  
If one lives to be 70 years of age and is the average person, he spends:
- 20 years sleeping
  - 20 years working
  - 13 years talking
  - 6 years eating
  - 7 years playing/amusement
  - 7 years dressing/grooming
  - 6 years traveling
  - 1 year on the telephone
  - 2½ years smoking or some other habit
  - 2½ years in bed
  - 3 years waiting for somebody
  - 5 months tying shoes
  - 2½ years for other things (incl. 1½ year in church)

Where is your time going? How much time is needed to achieve these goals? What needless "time wasters" are keeping me from achieving my goals? What needless "time wasters" are keeping me from maintaining my God-given priorities? Just how much time do we really have?

HOW TO BEGIN ORGANIZING YOUR TIME

1. Evaluate your time schedule into 4 lists or categories.
  - a. The things you must do.
  - b. The things you should do.
  - c. The things you are doing which are unnecessary.
  - d. The things you would like to do but don't have time.
2. Ask God for wisdom to sort through your Scriptural priorities and responsibilities in order to maintain a balanced perspective.
3. Take 30 minutes to actually fill out a weekly schedule. (one included on back).  
Start first by filling in your biblical priorities and responsibilities: your relationship to Christ, marriage (spouse), family, work/school, church/ministries, leisure, ... the things you must do.  
Then observe the excess free time (which you will begin to see) and block off sections for some other activities/miscellaneous tasks.
4. Stick to it, but be alert to God's sovereign control by daily committing it all to Him (Js.4:13-16).

If you don't have the time (for your priorities!) you're doing the wrong things, or you may be doing things the wrong way! You may be working harder but not smarter! It may not be the amount of time but HOW you use it! You will never find the time ... you must make the time!

- Remember what you do with your time reflects the kind of person you are!
- Only one life will soon be past ... Only what's done for Christ will last.

Now, what does it take to make all this work?

- what does it take to achieve your goals?
- what does it take to maintain your priorities?
- what does it take to organize and keep a daily schedule?

DISCIPLINE (or perseverance)

- To what degree do I already discipline myself?
- Is it a matter of not caring? Indifference? Apathy?
- Where will I get in life if I don't exercise discipline?
- Have I ever tried to persevere and stick with it? What stopped me?
- Am I just plain lazy? (Prov.6:4-11; 12:24,27; 14:4; 15:19; 18:9; 21:25-26; 26:13-16) Why doesn't one like to work? Live responsibly?

Notice from Scripture the responsibility we have: Notice the "terms" Paul uses to define the "effort" needed to maintain victorious living.

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|----------------|-----------------|
| 1 Cor.9:24-29  | Phil.4:13       |
| 1 Tim.4:7b     | Luke 9:23       |
| 1 Thess.3:8-10 | Col.1:29        |
| Phil.2:12-13   | 1 Tim.6:11-12   |
| Gal.4:19       | II Tim.2:3-7,15 |
| II Chron.27:6  | Heb.5:14        |
| James 1:22-25  | Gal.6:7-9       |

Why is it that we rarely succeed in the determination in discipline and motivation to change? Rather than attempting to exhaust a list of reasons here, see the study on "Biblical Change."

One reason we give up so quickly is that in our "instant" society we expect instant results, instant change, success and follow 3 easy steps to instant godliness! So that "instant mentality" defeats many and "smoke screens" one to the reality of perseverance: sustained daily effort! Basically, however we rarely succeed because we're sinners, an obvious fact that must be prayerfully recognized continually before God ... that way of "humbling" ourselves guarantees God's grace (the desire and power to do His will) James 4:6,10.

But still most people do not fully comprehend what discipline really means! It means work, sustained daily effort. It doesn't mystically float in and zap us, nor is it a feeling we sit around and wait for! Since it doesn't happen automatically, we must then go against our feelings and begin to prayerfully depend on God and obey! Obedience is an act of the will and we always are responsible and accountable to God to do the right thing and respond the right way - whether we feel like it or not!

Discipline also means doing something over and over again without giving up. Persistently continuing to practice a certain skill or behavior (good or bad) will eventually become a part of your life. That's the way God made us - with a marvelous ability called the habit capacity. Think about all you do throughout the day by habit, getting dressed, driving ... it all becomes easier the more you do it! The key is to replace, refocus, and rechannel the "negatives" with the "positives".

- So stop looking for short cuts!
- You won't get anywhere unless you start somewhere.
- Begin where you are but don't stay where you are.
- The effort to persevere and endure comes from prayerfully depending on God.
- The power comes in the doing, so go against your feelings.
- The more you do the right thing the easier it becomes.
- Continually acknowledge that it's 100% of God and 100% of you! (Without Him I can do nothing, but in Him I can do everything (Jn.15:5; Phil.4:13).

Now there's one more concept that ties all this together and that is

MOTIVES (or motivations)

Why should I do all of this work? Why do we do what we do?

Why don't we do what we should do?

Who am I really living for?

Let's start with the Scripture for some insights into the solution.

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|------------------|---------------|
| Rom.14:12        | Col.3:17      |
| Prov.21:2; 24:12 | Col.3:22      |
| Eph.6:6          | Col.3:23      |
| 1 Cor.10:31      | Col.3:24 (25) |

Matt.6:1-18 - study this carefully. This idea is further expanded in a previous Bible Study "To Be Seen or Not To Be Seen - That Is the Motive"

A helpful application would be to daily, prayerfully evaluate: WHO am I really living and working for?

FURTHER THOUGHTS ABOUT M & M'S (Motives and Motivations)

Basically all of our M & M's boil down to two areas: God-centered or man-centered.

A. Man-centered m and m's are ultimately selfish in nature. For instance:

We treat others the way we've been treated most of the time (sometimes worse or sometimes better too).

But we usually do for others because:

- We want them to like us.
- We want them to do things for us.
- It makes us feel good, accepted, secure (loved), significant (worthwhile, important).
- It makes us look good (Matt.6).
- It covers over inadequacies and deficiencies - helps compensate for personal weakness.
- We may be protecting ourselves from fear of certain consequences such as: rejection, ridicule, being fired, embarrassment, being exposed or getting in trouble.

Obviously it can become very complicated due to the variety of reasons, issues, people, circumstances, influencing us at any given moment. Books have been written to try and deal with these matters in great detail. However, to some degree, we need to understand ourselves and what "makes us tick". Just what are our deep inner longings? What drives us? What perceived "needs" are we trying to meet? What are we getting out of whatever we're doing? Dr. Larry Crabb makes the following insightful propositions which may be helpful if you feel as though your progress is hindered in these areas of your goals, priorities, schedule and discipline.

Proposition 1: Motivation typically depends upon a need state, or in simpler language, we are motivated to meet our needs.

Proposition 2: Motivation is a word referring to the energy or force which results in a specific behavior. Before it becomes specific behavior, motivational energy is channeled through the mind. It is there that the energy assumes direction. I am motivated to meet a need by doing certain things which I believe in my mind will meet that need.

Proposition 3: Motivated behavior always is directed toward a goal. I believe that something will meet my need. That something becomes my goal.

Proposition 4: When the goal cannot be reached (or when the individual perceives it cannot be reached), a state of disequilibrium exists (subjectively felt as anxiety). The need which is denied satisfaction becomes a source of negative emotions. In simpler terms, when I cannot have what I think I need to be significant or secure, I feel worthless. I then am motivated to protect my need to feel worthwhile from further injury by minimizing feelings of insignificance or insecurity.

Proposition 5: All behavior is motivated. There is no such thing as an unmotivated person. Laziness, procrastination, withdrawal, often are motivated by a desire to protect the self from increased feelings of worthlessness. In analyzing behavior one must never say, "There is no reason for that. It is utterly senseless." All behavior makes sense. It may be sinful, ineffective, or bizarre, but it does make sense. In order to understand any unit of behavior, you must know what need is motivating the behavior, the person's ideas about what would meet the need, the goal which his thinking has determined as desirable, and the success or failure of the person in reaching the goal.

B. GOD - CENTERED (motives and motivation)

Ultimately, however, no matter how much detailed insight we gain into our inner m and m's, Jer.17:9 still says, "The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked! Who can know it?" Verse 10 says God does! Therefore, our starting point for all this (goals, priorities, schedule, discipline) is with God! "Man" is not the starting place in the sense that you just "pull up your bootstraps" and force yourself with raw energy and self determination to do something! If it were ... you wouldn't need the resource of the Holy Spirit (Eph.5:18) who is to empower us! We wouldn't need to "abide" (John 15). I believe that since it all boils down to a matter of "obedience" the issue of our m and m's behind it have to do with our love for God! Read:

Deut.6:5 ff  
John 14:21  
Col.3:17-25

Matt.22:37 ff  
John 14:23  
1 Cor.10:31

So our love for Christ is to be the motive and motivation in life! Paul said it in II Cor.5:14. Even John confirmed this as the starting point. The only reason we are able to "love" is because HE FIRST loved us (1 Jn.4:19)! And His commandment is that we "love one another JUST AS I have loved you" (Jn.15:12). So the cycle brings us back to our daily personal relationship to Christ where we "experience" who He is to us, so we can be the same way to others and have the right motives and motivations for living.

STARTING PRAYER

"Lord, I want to do what I'm supposed to do  
(Schedule my time, discipline my life, love \_\_\_\_\_,  
witness, serve my church, develop my gifts,  
disciple others, be the spouse, parent that's  
needed...) because I love You and want to please  
You and because of WHO YOU ARE to me."

CONCLUSION

I am convinced that one will constantly face frustration, failure, and defeat if one doesn't come to grips with a working perspective or an active, regular, conscious evaluation of these basic areas:

GOALS - Toward what are your energies being directed and why?

PRIORITIES - How does God want me to order my life in the line with spiritual values?

SCHEDULE - Is the use of my time consistently reflecting my God-given responsibilities and priorities?

DISCIPLINE - Am I persevering to practice right patterns of behavior?

MOTIVES - What's driving me to do what I do, selfish reasons or my love for Christ?

I'm also convinced that these concepts are preliminary and foundational to not only individual lives, but effective marriages and families! Your application of these concepts could easily become for you the starting place of a whole new life of productivity, fulfillment, purpose, satisfaction, contentment, and joy! It's up to you to start.. Find someone to hold you accountable (Heb.3:13; Eccl.4:9-12) or you may not make it on your own!

Don't be weary in well-doing ... we will reap the benefits!

OTHER RECOMMENDED READING:

Godliness Through Discipline - Dr. Jay Adams

Ordering Your Private World - Gordon  
Mac Donald

Effective Biblical Counseling - Dr. Larry Crabb

Managing Our Work - John Alexander

Leadership Materials - Dr. Howard Hendrix

The Disciplined Life - Dr. Richard Taylor

Strategy For Living - Edward R. Dayton and Ted W. Engstrom

(While there is much in the secular world that may be helpful, the success of applying "truth" is always in our motives and motivations).