

Chapter 2: Tips & Tools for Efficiency

"Through wisdom is a house builded; and by understanding it is established"
Proverbs 24:3

Saving Time

Every day counts for eternity. Jesus will reward even the least acts of service (Matthew 10:42), and we can impact others for eternity, as well as grow closer to God through our time with Him. With that in mind, it's important to consider how we can make the most of our time, so that nothing is lost.

- Have go-to prayer points for certain days of the week, or for certain times of the day; that way, when you have extra time, you'll be able to use it for what matters.
- Listen to the Bible at night: Make use of your time falling asleep by listening to the Bible on audio, so you can set your mind on the right things. It can also help as you work on memorizing Scripture, by having a single chapter on repeat. To prevent overusing your computer or phone, look into getting an mp3 player (personal) or a speaker (family).
- Find the best ways to multitask: While one form of multi-tasking is simply alternating tasks, another way is literally doing more than one thing at a time, for example talking on the phone while walking for exercise, listening to a podcast while cooking, repairing clothes while on video calls, and talking with your spouse while cleaning. Look over your routine and to-do list, and plan tasks that can be done at the same time.
- Limit your time on social media: Shortcut to messages on fb: to prevent getting drawn into the news feed and wasting time. You can still check on friends regularly by searching for their names, and that is more intentional.

Being prepared for interruptions

A phone call or spontaneous conversation with your spouse can set you off schedule, so be prepared by having ways to multitask ahead of time that don't require much attention. Find something that you have to do that day that you can do while talking.

For interruptions that take all your attention, keep low-priority tasks at the end of the day, so you can skip them if necessary, and allow time for catching up with higher priority tasks.

If you have children, be proactive about preventing interruptions by finding activities to keep them occupied (if your responsibilities are tasks they cannot be involved in). Plan your day with them in mind.

Motivation

Find what works for you. Some people do well by accomplishing their hardest tasks first, while others find it more encouraging to get on a roll and work up to harder tasks. If there is a project that could likely run into complications (for example, your sewing machine needs maintenance), you might like to first accomplish tasks that are simple.

Try 5 minutes a day. Challenge yourself to short tasks to work on every day- for example 5 minutes of music practice, 5 minutes of Bible memorization, 5 minutes of language practice, 5 minutes of organizing your notes, or 5 minutes of intense exercise. It may be more practical to aim for 30 minutes a week for each kind of task, but if the idea of a longer time sounds unmotivating, aiming for 5 minutes is a good way to accomplish what you've been hoping to find the time and motivation to do.

Ask yourself questions. If there are times when you struggle with laziness or you avoid difficult tasks, ask yourself questions in order to make wise choices. For example, "Will I serve God or myself?" and "Will I be loving or unloving?"

Organization

Make a list of everywhere you keep notes; for example, notebooks, paper files, phone app, computer documents, terabyte, and flash drives.

Make a list of your online accounts (facebook, etc.).

Tools

Planner:

For a planner, you could use either a printed book, an app like Google Tasks, or one that you create for yourself. The advantage of an app is that you can schedule recurring reminders as well as one-time tasks, so it can be the perfect mix of your routine and to-do list. If you prefer something physical rather than digital, but still want to have a mix of your routine and one-time tasks, make printed copies of your routine, while leaving blank spaces for other tasks. Whatever form, It can be motivating to have your tasks listed in checklist format, to visually see how much you are accomplishing.

Bookmarks folders and sub-folders online:

In your browser, create bookmark folders for convenience in finding links you use frequently.

- Keep links for online meetings as bookmarks. If you attend a weekly prayer meeting or other video call that is recurring, it helps to save the link as a bookmark, to prevent having to search for it.
- Only use them for things that need to be easy access; if something doesn't have to be easy access, store the links elsewhere (see the next point).

Google Keep:

While bookmark folders are convenient for quick access, Google Keep is a good place to store links that you may or may not ever need, and the notes can be labeled and organized in different categories.

Alarms:

Consider using alarms, not only for waking up, but for reminders at other times, for example if you agreed to call someone at a certain time.

Interval timer:

An interval timer is different from a regular timer in that it has multiple alerts spaced out, so you can maintain focus. Search on Youtube for interval timers at 30, 60, 90 seconds, or more.

- When you are studying and need to concentrate
- When your young kids are playing in another room and you need to check on them frequently
- When you're holding a newborn in a carrier and you need to check his breathing
- When your mind is foggy and you are trying to focus on prayer

But: (1) don't overuse it since you would get too used to hearing it, and (2) it shouldn't be too much of a crutch while praying or a substitute for passionate prayer.

Trello:

Trello is an excellent site and app for making lists of projects that you plan to accomplish, especially if you write many articles or create videos.