

# **TIME MANAGEMENT FOR CATHOLICS BY DAVID DURAND COMPILED BY FR. BILL MCCARTHY MSA**

## **Introduction**

David Durand has written a very meaningful and well needed book on how to use our time more effectively in 27 excellent chapters and 4 appendixes, he gives us practical principles to prioritize and make better use of our time. He says in his introduction there are enough hours in the day for God gives to us all the seconds and the minutes, all the minutes of the hours, all the hours of the day are ours to fill with those things that God will inspire us to do.

If you employ the simple techniques in this book, you'll find yourself with plenty of time to spend with your family, advance your career, manage your finances, exercise, and eat right. You'll have time to buy groceries, change the baby (and the oil in your car), return your voicemail messages, read your e-mail, call your mother, take a shower, buy new socks, fix the screen door, and go to that birthday party.

You'll be able to do whatever you have to do - and whatever you want to do - without feeling overwhelmed or burned out. Above all, you'll have time for the most important thing you can do in this world: strengthen your relationship with Almighty God.

It won't even take a lot of work, or cause you more stress, to learn to manage all your daily duties and responsibilities with ease.

And I won't teach you merely to cope with your frenzied existence: I'll teach you how to end the frenzy. To restore some peace to your life. To do what you love. And to get to know God, who is Love.

Ask yourself the following question: What am I hoping to do with my life that I haven't been able to do so far?

Don't limit yourself: dare to dream now, because I'm going to show how you can finally find the time to do all those things you've put off until "someday."

Imagine what you would gain from freeing up just one additional hour each day. That's 365 hours a year - more than nine extra work weeks!

Imagine how much better your life would be with those nine extra weeks at your disposal. Think of all the projects you could finish, the leisure time you'd have. Think of the attention you could give to your spouse and your children, and to your physical, mental, and spiritual fitness.

I'll show you effective techniques that I've refined, tested, and proven in my years of work as a trainer and motivator. I'll help you identify and defuse common "time bombs" that waste your precious time. You'll learn how to design and implement simple systems, suited to your own lifestyle, that will enable you to stay on top of things. Applying my time-management solutions will make you life easier at home and more successful at work, reduce your stress, and enhance your relationships - especially your relationship with God.

Of course, other time-management experts could help you do some of these things, but I'll take you further. Consider this: if your computer goes haywire or your car breaks down, you can try to figure out the problem yourself, but you'd be better off consulting the manufacturer.

In the same way, if you have a problem managing your time, your best bet is to consult the manufacturer of time, God Himself. Only by discovering the plan that the Maker of time has for you can you truly and fully master the use of your time.

God uses many means to tell you how to spend your time: the Bible, the Ten Commandments, the teachings of the Church, and the examples of the saints. You're not used to going to these sources for "time management" guidance, but that's exactly what you'll find in all of them: principles about how you should be using your time.

Following these divine principles will show you how to be efficient and successful in the world (in the way and to the extent that God wants you to be) and will do something more: they'll show you how to be truly happy, in this life and in the next.

That's why I'm going to teach you the most effective techniques of professional time management, but in a way that will help you understand what God wants you to know about managing time. Time is the raw material God has given you for you to make something of your life. Managing your time well will make you more truly human, more truly yourself, and more truly what God created you to be.

### **Evaluate how you use your time now**

If we are honest we will admit that we waste a lot of time. All of us do. We do not prioritize. We do not put the greatest emphasis on those things that are most important. If you were to make a seven day calendar and write in quality time for God, quality time for your family, your designated work time, you would see how many hours you still have to do so many other things, including time for hobbies and relaxation. There are 168 hours in a week. This book will help you to use them wisely.

### **Discover how much time you could save**

Think about the jobs, commitments, and obligations that fight for your attention and consume your time. Some of these responsibilities really do obligate you: attending a mandatory business meeting, for example, or helping your children brush their teeth before bed. These are duties that stem from your state in life - you don't choose them as such; they result from larger choices you have made.

Other things that take up your time may look like responsibilities and obligations, but they're really not obligatory or even necessary. You choose to take up hobbies, play sports, and go to parties. These choices create responsibilities. But they're not duties that bind you and require your time, even though it can seem as if they do.

To manage your time well, remember that you have choices in life. You really can control many of the tasks that make each of your days so harried, no matter how tyrannical their grip on your life may seem to be.

### **Discern your own mission in life**

Companies and organizations create a mission statement to help them keep all their activities in line with their highest priorities. Businesses call this "big-picture" thinking. You have a mission, too. Identifying it can help you bring your life into line with your "big picture." Just as a mission statement can help prevent an organization from straying from its purpose, so your personal mission statement can help keep your daily life on track. Which activities will help you achieve your long-term goals and which won't? Your mission statement will serve as a succinct reminder of your larger priorities and make it easier for you to commit yourself to them amid the details of your life.

### **Revise your own mission in life of Christ**

First, pray. God has a plan for you personally. Ask Him to tell you what it is. Pray for the wisdom to understand what He reveals, and the grace to order your mission according to His calling. Prayer will help you understand your state in life and the right way to live it out.

The teachings of Christ contained in the Bible, and handed down by the Church, will also guide you. Educate yourself in authentic Christian values, and conform your mission to them. To help you get started, I've selected five basic Catholic "big picture principles" you can use to fine-tune your mission. Examine your original mission statement in light of these principles; rewrite it as necessary.

"Seek first His kingdom and His Righteousness"

Matthew 6:33

Jesus speaks these words directly to those who are worried about things of this world. Rather than becoming anxious about what to eat, what to drink, and what to wear, as a disciple of Christ you should put God first.

### **Establish priorities to fulfill your mission**

Once you have a clear picture of your mission, think about how you're going to accomplish it. The ways you live out your mission are called priorities. Knowing how to order and organize your priorities will help you get the most out of them - and help you accomplish your mission more perfectly.

To help organize your priorities divide them into basic categories, all of which are important (although not equally important) to your mission. Here are six priority categories listed alphabetically: Faith, Family, Finances, Health, Social Contributions and Vocational/Education. Yours may be different.

### **Set goals for yourself**

A goal is a specific way you try to live out your priorities. It's a concrete course of action intended to improve those areas of your life you've identified as important.

It's also a gauge of your progress in fulfilling your mission. Although accomplishing a goal is an end in itself, the way you set goals and follow through on them also shows how serious you are about the priorities you claim to have and whether you're doing all you can to address them. Setting goals can also help you continue a process that began when you set your priorities: weeding out specific tasks that may seem important, but really won't get you where you want to go in life.

Your goals develop out of your priorities (and can be organized according to the same six categories you used for priorities), and so should be more specific than priorities. Take a look at the priorities you just came up with. For each priority there will be many specific means of application. These are your goals.

1. Set goals that are specific and objective.
2. Set goals that are measurable.
3. Set a deadline for achieving each goal.

### **Take charge of your time now**

Maybe you've been waiting for the "next stage" in life to spend more time in prayer, to be with your family, or to get into shape. Maybe you think that things are just too busy right now. Single people think life will settle down when they find Mr. or Mrs. Right; married people look forward to the calm they think will come when their kids get older. The reality is that every stage in life is busy. Waiting for the next one never results in finding more time. Attend to the important things in life now - your only one good planning system away from finding the time you need. That goes for everyone. Whether you're a teacher or a salesman, a mom or a dad, a construction worker or a lawyer, a student or a priest, a good planning system will help you manage your time better. That's because a planning system is the bones of good time management. Just as the bones of your skeleton protect and support you organs, a planning system provides the structure that lets you reach you goals, fulfill your priorities, and accomplish your mission.

Use the system that works best for you

I've seen all kinds of bad planning systems. Some people think it's enough to scratch out a to-do list on a napkin or an old envelope. Others fool themselves into believing that they have a good enough memory to keep all of their obligations straight. Some even think that their system is no system - as if being free from the "constraints" of a calendar somehow makes their lives easier. And then there a millions of people who go out and buy a good planning system, but never use it - or use it incorrectly. None of these

approaches works.

If your planning system is poor, your priorities will become cloudy and your commitments weak. But one minute of planning will save you hours of effort: and a good system makes it easy to do.

Let's look at some elements of a good system.

### **Create you own to-do-tomorrow list**

Many people are familiar with the concept of a to-do list, but few recognize how to get the most out of this simple tool. A to-do list works best if it's uniform and consistent. In other words, it shouldn't be on a napkin one day and on an envelope the next. Store your to-do list in the same place (I call mine the "planning place") so that you can make an easy routine of consulting it as you plant tomorrow.

You'll notice that in the heading I refer to a to-do list as a "to-do-tomorrow" list and not a "to-do-today" list. This is an essential aspect sound time management. If you plan your day in advance, you'll be better prepared to handle the distractions that can (and will) come your way. As a general rule, look at tasks that come your way today as less urgent than items that are already on your list. All things being equal, the tasks that come up today can usually wait until tomorrow, just as today's tasks did yesterday.

Holding to this will keep you from getting distracted and jumping from one hot issue to the next. As you go through each day discovering new tasks, write them down on your to-do-tomorrow list (which I'll give you some tips for developing momentarily). You'll be pleasantly surprised at how much this will simplify your day and lower your stress about tomorrow. And since you'll be adding to your to-do-tomorrow list throughout your day, you won't need to spend too much time planning for tomorrow.

### **Let priorities and goals shape your list**

How many items on your to-do-tomorrow list are things that you meant to do today? You can prevent items from carrying over from one to-do list to the next by making better lists. You can create a list of things you really will do tomorrow by focusing on your priorities and your goals.

Here's how:

Examine the items on your to-do-tomorrow list in light of the priorities and goals you listed according to the six categories in Chapter Five (Faith, Family, Finances, Health, Social Contributions, and Vocation/Education).

Classify each of the activities on your to-do-tomorrow list, as well as those on your obligatory/optional list, in one of the six categories.

How do your activities stack up against your priorities and goals? Too often, to-do lists, whether for today or for tomorrow, get cluttered with nonessential, even trivial matters.

If you're not careful, you'll find yourself being busy (with tasks unrelated to your priorities) but not productive.

Be sure that your to-do-tomorrow list includes all six priority categories. You should have done that already for your general priorities and goals; now do it for your particular day's activities. Which of your priorities isn't getting enough attention (or any at all) on your list? Add to-do items that will fill in the gaps.

### **Decide what must be done first**

At this point, you have a list of things you need to do tomorrow. Now decide what to do first.

You probably spend too much time doing unessential tasks. Sometimes they provide much-needed recreation, but often they're simply a way to avoid tasks you would rather not do or are afraid you won't do well. Some people blame unessential tasks for their failure to complete essential ones. They then justify these failures by claiming to be too busy. They are indeed too busy - doing unimportant things.

### **Create a calendar to anchor your system**

Once you've completed your to-do-tomorrow list (listing tasks, labeling them essential or unessential, and ranking them), assign a time slot to each item on it. That's where your calendar comes in. The calendar's job is to keep you on track throughout the day. There are all sorts of calendars (also called planners). Different styles can be equally effective, so just find the one that works best for you. In my experience, though, all really good calendars share certain key elements.

For starters, you need a full page for each day, so you'll have plenty of room to work in. A good day planner lists not only business hours, but also the hours preceding and following your regular work schedule. If you work outside the home, this allows you to include your non-business priorities. Homemakers (especially those with children) are well aware that their workday is twenty-four hours long. A calendar that lets you plan all of your time will be most useful.

### **Avoid a duplicate-entry system**

Some people think it's a good idea to have a calendar to carry around and a separate one in the office or at home. This is called a "duplicate-entry system," and it's not as efficient as it may seem at first glance. In fact, it's the first thing you should eliminate. Entering your responsibilities in one calendar, only to transfer to them another, is a recipe for missed appointments and wasted time.

Duplicate-entry snafus can occur even when you keep only one planner. Most of us have experienced that sinking feeling when someone asks, "Where were you yesterday?" How many board meetings, parish events, and other non-routine commitments have you missed because you wrote them on a Post-It note or scrap of paper with the intention of putting them in your calendar, but never got around to it?

### **Use your to-do list effectively**

It's not enough to create a to-do list. You've also got to know how to use it efficiently; otherwise you'll find the list growing longer by the day. Here's how to make it shrink:

#### **1. Do the hardest thing first.**

If your essential tasks are equal in importance, schedule the most difficult (or least desirable) task as E-1. Finishing it will give you a sense of accomplishment, and knowing the task is completed will remove a burden from your mind.

#### **2. Schedule similar tasks back to back.**

If you have phone calls to return, try to do them all in the same block of time.

3. Get into a routine. The more consistent your schedule, the better you'll be at planning ahead.

4. Know yourself.

This philosophical adage of the ancient Greeks is also good time-management advice. Are you a "morning person" or a "night person"? Are you more efficient in tackling your toughest jobs first thing in the morning or after the sun goes down? If you're not sure, monitor yourself: when do you feel most alert and ready to take on the world?

### **Keep important records handy**

Most people waste minutes (and sometimes hours) looking for things that they should have known they would need to find again. For this time-waster, there are easy solutions.

1. Use a phone number/address book

Keep important phone numbers and addresses - including e-mail addresses - in a central location within your planning system. Be sure to write down every number that you look up, even if you don't think you'll need it again. This takes an extra few seconds the first time around, but you won't have to track down the number again in the future.

2. Records and notes.

A notes section in your planner can be incredibly handy. Use it to record any significant conversations or thoughts that you have throughout the day.

### **Establish a planning place**

I mentioned earlier that it is important to have a consistent place to do your planning. Everyone's "planning place" will be different, but there are a few common elements they must have if they are to work.

### **Work in a quiet place**

An effective planning place should be in a quiet area. You need to think carefully about your mission and priorities, your long-range and short-term goals, and how you're going to implement them from day to day. You can't do this effectively amid racket and bustle.

### **Keep on hand the supplies you need**

One of the greatest distractions in planning comes from searching for supplies. Be sure that all of your pens, stamps, and everything else you need are on hand so that you don't have to look for them. Plan your planning area! Ask yourself, "What do I need in order to complete this task?"

Here are some of the supplies that your planning place should have:

#### ESSENTIAL

- Your calendar/planner
- Scratch paper
- Pens and pencils
- Calculator

- Tape
- Checkbook
- Envelopes of all sizes
- Stamps
- Post-It notes
- Stapler and staples
- Paper clips
- Wastebasket
- Filing system (drawers, cabinet, or file box)

#### UNESSENTIAL BUT USEFUL

- Phone book
- Highlighter
- Staple remover
- Personalized or office address stamp
- Glue stick
- Thank-you cards
- Birthday cards
- Colored markers
- Letter paper
- Overnight-delivery envelopes and forms
- Packaging tape
- Telephone (for planning, not for chit-chat)

Take this list with you the next time you go to the store, and stock up on the supplies you need.

#### **Organize all those papers**

Another simple way to save time is to eliminate that stack of files and papers that sprawls across the counter or over the top of your desk. Rooting through it to find that overdue doctor bill or the directions to the picnic just wastes time that you don't have. Resolve to organize all those files and papers now.

#### *File those files*

Avoid putting files on top of your desk. Keep them organized in a file box or cabinet, or get a few inexpensive plastic file holders and mount them on the wall near your desk. Store your most-used documents in the files closest to you.

#### *Put papers in their proper place*

The war on paper is endless. You've got to fight it one sheet at a time. The primary source of incoming paper is the mail. How to deal with it? Keep a large garbage can within tossing distance of your planning desk. Avoid small decorative models that you'll have to empty every day. Always open your mail with the can in sight. Chuck the junk, and move on from there.

Always open your mail at your planning desk. If you open it at the kitchen counter and

intend to put things in their proper places later, you'll likely lose important papers.

*Organize miscellaneous papers*

Divide the rest of your papers into two stacks: essential and unessential. In the essential stack, arrange items in the order of their importance, with the most urgent on top. Place this stack front and center on your desk so that you address it first.

Put your nonessential stack on the side of your desk. Every two weeks, review your nonessential stack to see if the items in it are still worth keeping on your desk. If they sit there for longer than two weeks, chances are they're not worth your attention and should be thrown away.

Now you have the building blocks for good time management in place, and are winning back big chunks of time.

But it's not all smooth sailing from here. Even after you've adopted a system to carry out your mission, priorities, and goals, you still face time-management pitfalls that can set you back to where you were before - or worse.



