

Do the Main Thing

“During this time, as the disciples were increasing in numbers by leaps and bounds, hard feelings developed...So the Twelve called a meeting of the disciples. They said, ‘It wouldn’t be right for us to abandon our responsibilities for preaching and teaching the Word of God...choose seven men from among you...and we’ll assign them this task. Meanwhile, we’ll stick to our assigned tasks of prayer and speaking God’s Word’”
(Acts 6, *The Message*).

The early church experienced success, and a few things that go along with it: the need to re-evaluate, simplify, specialize, and delegate as the organization grows.

People were griping, “Our needs are not being met.” The twelve quickly realized they couldn’t do everything required to sustain the church. It was necessary to stop, reflect, and refocus on what God had called them to do. They did and came up with the best solution, “We’ll stick with the main thing.” They did and the church continued to grow. They unveiled an important leadership concept: to accomplish more, do less. What a contradiction. Want to accomplish more? Do less.

The *Daily Walk Bible* defines “specialization” as “the art of learning more and more about less and less.” If we want to accomplish more in life we must specialize. Those that do a little of everything end up accomplishing a whole lot of nothing.

“Besides the noble art of getting things done, there is the noble art of leaving things undone. The wisdom of life consists in the elimination of nonessentials.” (Lin Yutang as quoted in *Ready for Anything* by David Allen.)

Many are involved in making “to-do lists” but we also need to make “not-to-do lists.” This is also called “planned neglect.” We plan to neglect certain tasks so we can accomplish important ones.

The apostles knew if they focused on their “main thing” it would make a significant difference in advancing the church. Lesser goals make little difference in the health and growth of the ministry and can be delegated to others. What do you do when faced with the need to do more? Right, do less.

D. L. Moody once said, “The trouble with a great many men is that they spread themselves out over too much ground. They fail in everything. If they would only put their life into one channel, and keep in it, they would accomplish something.”

Someone has rightly said that if we try to do a little of everything, we will end up doing a whole lot of nothing.

Jesus often referred to His purpose. Jon Walker in “Did Jesus Rush through His Week?” explains, “It’s not about getting everything done; rather it’s about doing the most important things! . . .

“The eagle that chases two rabbits at one time will catch neither.”
Ancient Chinese Proverb

Timing is everything. It means saying ‘no’ to the urgent in order to stay focused on the important. Think about Olympic athletes. They have just as many hours in the day as you and me, but they sacrifice constantly to press toward their goal. They don’t allow their day to

be filled with busy-ness because they have a larger purpose in mind.”

God has equipped us with gifts, unique abilities, and a rich reservoir of experiences. There is no one just like you. He expects us to use these resources to advance His kingdom. However, we must understand we have limited resources.

To minimize pride and to maximize team ministry, not all perform the same function nor possess the same gifts. Working together, operating in our areas of strength, propels the church forward.

“Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us” (Romans 12:3-6, *NIV*).

Matthew 25:14-29 tells a story about investment. Three servants served their Master. Each was given a gift to invest based on his unique abilities, and delegated responsibilities. Two servants invested their talents; one played it safe and did nothing. The Master was not happy with the third servant and threw him out. We are servants. Our assets are limited but need to be invested wisely.

“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13). Exactly! We can do everything the Lord wants us to do, but He does not want us to do everything. He has a specific work in mind for us. Besides, the setting of this scripture refers to how God supplies the financial resources necessary to accomplish ministry. We are limited. He is unlimited.

H. Dale Burke’s excellent book, *Less is More Leadership* proved to be a priceless resource in the groundwork of this lesson. He said, “You have only a certain amount of time, energy, giftedness, resources, and money. You’ve got only so much to give, and when it’s gone, it’s gone.” He went on to say, “Leaders, as limited resources, must learn to simplify, reduce, and in fact ‘do less’ in order to accomplish more.”

When Burke asked leaders to describe their feelings about their lives they used three words: I am busy, buried, and behind.

Okay . . . It’s time for a word building exercise. Three new words:

- Overload
- Burnout
- Stress

You should avoid these three culprits in your life. They will rob your joy, creativity, and productivity if given half a chance.

Overload may be easier to describe than to define. Steve and Mary Farrar in *Overcoming Overload* explain, “Overload reminds us of the weight of everyday life. We are overwhelmed, overworked, overcommitted, overanxious, overmatched, and overextended. Our tanks are on empty and we are running on fumes.”

Burke feels we need to make choices to pursue our dreams. It is necessary to off-load (responsibilities not in line with our “main thing”) before we can reload (responsibilities in line with our main thing). Otherwise, we risk overloading. Do you know what happens when you overload electrical circuits? The lights will go out, and you will experience power failure.

Burnout comes from unrealistic expectations. According to Robert Trapani, “It occurs when well-intentioned people try to reach unrealistic goals.” We cannot accomplish everything, and need to focus on what God would have us accomplish.

Stress occurs when there are strong emotional demands made on your nervous system. It is when you have more problems than you can handle. Stress is a close cousin to “overload.” Do you ever feel “stressed”? It is a modern term. It is doubtful our forefathers ever went around saying, “Man! Am I stressed!”

How do we prevent overload, burnout, and uncontrollable stress in our lives? Find the main thing, the one thing you do best in life, and stick with it. Once you have found it, stay focused.

“But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal...All of us who are mature should take such a view of things” (Philippians 3:13-16, *NIV*).

Study Questions

1. Quote and explain a proverb used in this lesson. _____

2. What was the Apostles’ response to the Acts 6 problem? _____

3. What is specialization? _____

4. Why is specialization important? _____

5. According to this lesson, how do we propel the church forward? _____

6. Describe what is meant by "overload"? _____

7. Describe how we are like the servants in Matthew 25:14-29. _____

8. According to Dale Burke, what choice has to be made in order to pursue our dreams?

9. When does stress occur? When does burnout occur? _____

10. How do we prevent overload, burnout, and stress? _____
