



Truth Matters

A Publication Discussing Matters Related To Truth Because Truth Matters

Scripture Reading

Week of

July 17th - July 23rd



Monday

- ❖ 2 Chronicles 21, 22
- ❖ Psalm 120
- ❖ 1 Corinthians 8

Tuesday

- ❖ 2 Chronicles 23, 24
- ❖ Psalm 121
- ❖ 1 Corinthians 9

Wednesday

- ❖ 2 Chronicles 25, 26
- ❖ Psalm 122
- ❖ 1 Corinthians 10

Thursday

- ❖ 2 Chronicles 27, 28
- ❖ Psalm 123
- ❖ 1 Corinthians 11

Friday

- ❖ 2 Chronicles 29, 30
- ❖ Psalm 124
- ❖ 1 Corinthians 12

Saturday

- ❖ 2 Chronicles 31, 32

Sunday

- ❖ 2 Chronicles 33, 34

The Tyranny of the Urgent

My Struggle with Deadlines in Ministry

I am finding out more and more about myself; and I do not like what I see. In the past six months, I have been coming to grips with an area in my heart known as *procrastination*. Wow! How I never thought that was an issue I struggled with.

What is procrastination?

Procrastination is popularly defined as putting off requirements until the last minute. It most usually conjures up images of a college student typing away at 2 o'clock in the morning on a paper due at 8:15 that same morning. Or perhaps you think of an individual driving feverishly to the post office at 11:30 p.m. April 15th so as to get his taxes post marked on time. While these are fitting illustrations of procrastination, do not be lulled into thinking they are the sum total of the problem. Procrastination is far more than simply waiting until the 11th hour to get something done.

How I Saw

I was challenged about six months ago to enter into a study entitled *How People Change*. In this study we were encouraged to pick out one area of our life to use as a model for how people change. It was to be our working project throughout

the study. As we would read the lessons and apply certain passages, we would apply them to this one area of our life that we had picked. Theoretically, we would see how the Holy Spirit could produce change. My participation in this study was self-guided and it had a predetermined deadline. I had to have the lessons completed before I could go to a one-day training seminar on the material. Because I was skimming through the lesson in order to meet the deadline, I decided to pick a relatively minor fault of mine. DO NOT EVER ASSIGN THE LABEL MINOR TO A FAULT! I decided to use my struggle with pride in the area of preaching. In those days I had come to see my own tendency to relegate my Sunday preaching as performance. And let me tell you - I do not like what I uncovered. I am a procrastinator with a capital "P."

But be careful! If you are tempted to think that I am a procrastinator with a capital "P" due to the fact that I put off until Saturday the study and preparation for a Sunday morning sermon, you would be seriously mistaken. Remember that I said earlier I never thought I was a procrastinator? I would have

never labeled myself a procrastinator because I am and have always been extremely diligent about deadlines. You can ask my wife, if I am not prepared for Sunday by Thursday night, I get really nervous! I mean really nervous! Even in college, there was only one time that I did not have a paper written or project completed at least two weeks before its due date and that was owing to the fact that at the last minute, my teacher wanted me to choose a different topic. I do not wait until the last minute to get things done! Yet I am a terrible procrastinator.

What I Saw

What I came to see was pure and simple: Procrastination is not in putting off to the last minute; it is in putting off all together! What do I mean? It is true. I want more than anything to stand up in the pulpit each and every Sunday morning prepared to deliver God's Word to God's sheep. This is more than my job; it is my calling and it is a calling I take seriously! What would happen if I stood up in the pulpit ill-prepared?

Think of it. What would happen if I stood up in the pulpit ill-prepared? People

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come to church expecting to hear a sermon from God's Word and I could not begin to think of preaching a sermon that was fluffy and void of substance. More than that, I shudder to think of what would happen if I said something misguided and not thought-through. How easily I could lead astray and speak amiss. How easily I fall into a performance trap!

There is nothing wrong with wanting to deliver a well prepared sermon. There is nothing wrong with wanting to preach a sermon with substance that will actually provide nourishment for God's sheep. There is nothing wrong with wanting to thoroughly think through a sermon. There is nothing wrong with scripting out a sermon for clarity of speech. In fact, every preaching pastor should want these good things and every church should hold these as expectations of their preaching pastors. But...But...the problem comes in wanting these good things too much. I stated earlier, "*I want more than anything* to stand up in the pulpit each and every Sunday morning prepared to deliver God's Word to God's sheep." More than anything? Yes, more than anything!

Procrastination is not about putting off to the last minute as much as it is about putting off some things in order to accomplish what really matters to you.

Procrastination is about putting off all together. Procrastination speaks volumes about an individual's values - about his priorities. For me, I started to see all the things I did not do in a given week so that I could serve my heart's idol each and every week.

I am a pastor expected to preach. So there have been numerous weeks where nothing could invade my study time and yet weeks where there was no time for my wife. There have been numerous weeks where I have rigidly kept to my schedule and yet had no time to change the oil in my van or vacuum it out.

I could go on and on! All the things that get put off because of my desire to preach a well-planned and well-prepared sermon are relegated as things of lesser importance. Is my wife more important than my preaching ministry? Technically, yes! But in reality, no! At least, that is what was communicated to *her*. She is so patient and so gracious to me. There have been times when she has subtly said to me, "If I called the church and scheduled a meeting with you, would you give me an hour?"

Idol Justification

Why did it take me twelve years to come to see this heart trap? The answer to this question is equally pure and simple! I am really good at justifying my idolatry (and so are you!): Who can fault a pastor for wanting to be prepared for preaching? No one! But below the surface of things - in an area seen only to God's Spirit - lies the truth. Who can fault a pastor for wanting to be prepared for preaching *above all else*? Anyone! Preaching is neither the ultimate nor is it the sole value in my life. I must wisely balance all things. Is my preaching to succeed at the demise of my family? Certainly not! Is my preaching to succeed while my house and cars crumble around me? No! So my preaching cannot take on a life of its own.

Procrastination is all about priorities.

We *take time* for what matters to us! What does not matter gets put off. It is the putting off that becomes the problem. Putting off things that should matter but don't means that we now have to *make time* for them. Procrastinators live under the oppressive rule known as the tyranny of the urgent. There is a big difference between *taking time* for what matters and *making time* for what does not but should. *Taking time* versus *making time* is the pressure squeeze that shapes a procrastinator. Procrastinators move from one alarm to the next. They move from squeezing in a date with a

neglected wife to scheduling maintenance on a vehicle only after the oil light appears illuminated on the dash. They address the issues at work only after someone starts whining and complaining, etc. Better to live in the land of *taking time* for priorities rather than to become a slave under the tyranny of the urgent.

Does seeing to it that my vehicles and home are kept in working order have a biblical mandate in my life? The answer is "Yes." Are they as high on my priorities as my family or my preaching? The answer is, "No." But they are to be a value. Wisdom and discernment are needed in finding the balance.

Thus, I am convinced that the key to overcoming procrastination is NOT simply better time management, but, rather, better priority assessment.