Time Management versus Self-Management

For many of us there are not enough hours in the day to do all that we feel called to do. Trying to balance career obligations with the rest of the demands on us can be stressful and even lead to health issues.

Many years ago lives were segmented into sleep, work, and personal time or as it used to be called “family time.” There was a time when most stores were not open on Sunday. Gradually some began opening on Sundays and one night a week. The trend kept continuing to the way it is today.

We began to see a major shift in our daily routines, as people could take care of errands and other tasks at night and on Sundays. As we were introduced to the rise of information technology, how we conducted our days shifted even more. It became possible to send messages to people

in the middle of the night without waking them. Contracts and other important documents were sent and signed in an instant. Dinner could be microwaved in minutes, and phone calls could be made as we drove.

Fast forward to today and we see how technological advancements are affecting our lives in so many more ways. I believe it can be helpful for us to reflect from time to time on how we are using that technology. It can be revealing when we honestly ask ourselves how these advances may be affecting us both physically and mentally.

Have these “conveniences” gradually become the source of some of the craziness and chaos in our world today? For example, we have all experienced, or at least been made aware of, the detriments of social media in our lives today. We know that these “advancements” as some may call them, are going to intensify quickly as time marches on.

If we want to protect our health, both physical and mental, and the health

of our children, there is a perspective on time management that, if we are willing to commit to it, can enable us to be proactive and know that we can have some semblance of control over this part of our lives. This perspective involves realizing that time management is all about

self-management. Self-management can produce the fruit of self-care that can keep us and our family members well.

If you think about it, can we really manage time, the thing that is most finite in our lives? That clock just keeps on ticking and there is no turning it back to make more of it.

As a counselor and life coach, many years ago I wrote an article on this topic. At that time, I did not know the Lord the way I do now. After following the steps that I describe in my course to grow in my relationship with Him, and now being led by the Him each day so I can rest in the fact that I am in alignment with His will, it becomes easier to allow Him to lead me as I follow the concept of self-management.

When I allow the Lord to lead me, being the amazing Waymaker and Shepherd that He is, He gives me the strength and support to accomplish what is important each day. I have experienced that taking the necessary steps to establish and maintain a close relationship with the Him enables me to discern His voice as He leads me. Then I can rest in the comfort that I am in alignment with His will. That can help let go of the perception of control that we so often think we have over our lives. We are able to relinquish that perception to the One who knows the rest of our story and how it will all play out. That, in turn, can reduce stress and anxiety and make life so much more joyful.

Please keep in mind that there is nothing special about me as far as practicing self-management and being led by the Lord. He is ready, willing, and able to support anyone who desires His support. God encourages us to seek Him as He tells us in Hebrews 11:6, “But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.”

An Internet search can provide us with a myriad of techniques and steps

to save time by better organizing our lives. I am going to address

self-management from the perspective of changing thought patterns and behaviors that may not be in our best interest. That can lead us to

self-management (with the help of the Lord working through us, of course).

*1. The most important first step is of course prayer, and making sure we are spending enough quality time with the Lord.* The amount of time we spend is personal between God and each one of us. He knows everyone’s responsibilities in life and how much time we realistically have available. He is well aware of how much time we invest in doing what He would consider wasting time. He also knows our hearts because He made them. That means He can sense our level of sincerity as far as our motivation to do what it takes to make the necessary changes in our lives. If we are honest with Him, He is more than fair and will give us the support and strength we need to move forward.

2. *Set boundaries.* Boundaries are critical when it comes to mitigating overwhelm. Please see my article entitled “Personal Boundaries.”

3. *Rid ourselves of nagging tolerations.* Tolerations are situations and sometimes things in our lives (many of which we can see daily) that annoy us and add to our stress levels, but we have yet to do anything about them. Tolerations may range from the more trivial to the more serious. For example, there may be areas in our home (a closet, the kitchen, etc.) that need our attention. We notice them day after day and yet we have not made an effort to do anything about them. They may seem trite, but often people notice that once they do take care of them, they feel so much better.

Another example could be our car that was due for service months ago. The service light is on and we feel annoyed about that and yet we ignore

it. That toleration could come back to haunt us with a hefty service bill.

A toleration here or there may be okay for some. However, often one

can lead to another and all of a sudden we find ourselves feeling very overwhelmed and disorganized.

4. *Change our perspective about our time by changing our thoughts.*

I was surprised to see how many people I have encountered who believe

that however their life is playing out, those are the cards they were dealt and that is how their lives have to be. They believe there is no choice. Many feel as though they are on a treadmill called life. That said, it is important to realize that treadmills have emergency stop switches.

If our thoughts are telling us we need to live our lives at the mercy of our children, our bosses, the traffic we encounter on the road, and whatever else we find repeatedly annoying us, it is important to keep in mind that *our thoughts are one thing in our lives we can control.* God encourages us in His Word to do just that. He calls it the renewing of our minds.

He tells us in Romans 12:2 “Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way

you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.” If we are committed to living our lives to glorify Him

and His kingdom, we are to abandon thought patterns and lifestyles of the world. The world would be the man-made world that is antagonistic to God.

It is possible, *if we choose* to do so, to look at some day-to-day annoyances in our lives as opportunities. For example, if we get stuck in a bad traffic jam rather than having thoughts of frustration or anger, we could have our worship music on and spend that time singing along and worshipping God. We can pray and talk with Him and then get quiet and hear what He has to say. If we have a longer than expected wait at an appointment, we can come prepared with our Bible or other faith-based reading material. These suggestions glorify God. When He sees our intentions, we often notice less of these frustrations occurring.

Another very important one is changing any stressful thoughts to thoughts of gratitude. Studies have shown that even though we believe we are thinking about many things at once (especially if we tend to have racing thoughts), technically our brains can only think of one thing at a time. It is impossible to have thoughts of gratitude at the exactly same time we may be having feelings such as anger or anxiety. God loves it when we express gratitude. He tells us that all throughout the Bible. Here is one example from 1 Thess. 5:16-18 “Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you who belong to

Christ Jesus.”

My challenge to you today is, with God’s help, to take that one first baby step heading in the direction of self-management. I will be the first to admit it takes some time, effort, and often just plain hard work. I will also tell you, having seen the positive changes in my own life and the lives of others over the years, it is well worth it.