

POSTPONING YOUR PROCRASTINATION

Proverbs 27:1

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Do you ever find yourself putting things off?
 - “Never put off 'til tomorrow what you can do the day after tomorrow.”
- Mark Twain
- B. Procrastination is a common problem:
 - 1. There is a National Procrastinators Week in March each year.
 - 2. I even found a National Procrastinator’s Club.
 - 3. There is a “National Fight Procrastination Day” in August.
- C. USA Today reported the top five things people put off until the last minute:
 - House chores/yard work: 47%
 - Holiday gift shopping: 43%
 - Making doctor/dentist appointments: 35%
 - Calling relatives: 31%
 - Changing oil in the car: 29% (Leadership, Vol. 19, no. 3)
- D. I think we could add some to that list like:
 - Balancing the checkbook
 - Doing your taxes
 - _____ ?
- E. Someone once said that “Hard work is easy work that has been put off.”
- F. Abraham Lincoln is credited with saying “Good things may come to those who wait, but only the things left by those who hustle.”
- G. Someone once said, “Procrastination is a universal problem. Most of us know what we need to do, we just put it off. The problem with procrastination is that it becomes a way of life, a lifestyle. The more you do it the better you become at it. Some people are professional procrastinators.”
- H. Procrastination will cost us greatly in opportunities and accomplishments.
- I. Tonight let’s see how we can stop procrastination and get started:

I. RECOGNIZING THE PROBLEM.

- A. We often substitute minor things for major things.
 - 1. We get so busy doing good things that we often neglect doing the best things.
 - 2. Sometimes, before you know it, you’ve spent *YEARS* doing good things and doing little that has *ETERNAL VALUE*.
- B. Things with eternal value that we tend to put off:
 - 1. Get started being faithful in worship.
 - 2. Get started growing in knowledge of God’s Word.
 - 3. Get started being involved in your child’s spiritual education.
 - 4. Get started in a life changing prayer life.

5. Get started being involved in the work of the church.
 6. Get started being involved in bringing someone to Jesus.
 7. Get started being a better husband, wife, mother or father.
 8. Get started being a more obedient, more respectful child - this is also called maturity.
- C. This list is by no means complete but it shows how many things we need to get started doing.
- D. Most of these things have an eternal consequence.

II. WHY DO WE PROCRASTINATE?

- A. INDECISION. We can't make up our minds about what to do.
1. We are not good at making a clear cut decision and sticking with it.
 2. We are so indecisive. It takes most of us 15 minutes to decide what we want to eat at a restaurant - Once we decide which restaurant where we want to eat...
 3. We are not sure what to do so we do nothing.
 4. While we make up our minds the opportunity passes and we then change our intentions to the future - again.
- B. Another reason we procrastinate is PERFECTIONISM.
1. Mike Breaux says, "Some of the greatest procrastinators are closet perfectionists. They figure if I can't do it with perfection then I just won't even bother."
 2. If you wait for perfect conditions, you will never get anything done.
Ecclesiastes 11:4 says, "He who observes the wind will not sow, And he who regards the clouds will not reap."
 3. My father-in-law says if you wait for a perfect weather forecast you will never fish.
 4. Many of us are waiting for the perfect opportunity to tackle our problems.
 5. But there are some problems we face that are so urgent we can't wait for the perfect time.
 6. "I'm a perfectionist. Everything has to be just right *BEFORE I CAN GET DOWN TO WORK*. No distractions, not too much noise, no telephone calls interrupting me, and of course I have to be feeling well physically, too. I can't work when I have a headache."
 7. The other end of procrastination "I'm just never satisfied. I'm my own harshest critic. If all the i's aren't dotted and all the t's aren't crossed, I just can't consider that I'm done. *SO IT'S HARD FOR ME TO EVEN START ANYTHING IF I CAN'T DO IT PERFECTLY.*"
 8. The perfect time or the perfect way to do a thing may never come; get started anyway.
- C. We also procrastinate because of FEAR.
1. Fear of FAILURE; Fear of RIDICULE; Fear of COMMITMENT.
 2. We love to play the "WHAT IF" game.
 - What if I try to open up to my mate and she makes fun of me?

- What if I try to get out of debt and it doesn't work?
 - What if I become a Christian and I mess up again?
 - What if I become a Christian and my friends reject me?
3. Fear feeds procrastination.
 4. Fear forces us to try to predict all the obstacles ahead of us which in turn overwhelms us and makes us too gun-shy to try anything.
 5. God has not given us a spirit of fear - (**2 Timothy 1:7**) So let's get started overcoming our fears and get busy doing the things that need doing.

D. Unfortunately, we also procrastinate out of LAZINESS.

1. It takes hard work, time and discipline to change and if we are honest many of us don't want to put forth the effort to change.
2. If we want to improve our marriage, we know it will take work, maybe going to a counselor and talking through some tough issues.
3. If we want to conquer debt, we know it is going to take thought and planning and monthly evaluations.
4. If we want to become more spiritual, we know it is going to take time to come to worship and to pray and to read scripture.
5. It is about time the Lord's people overcame laziness and got busy.

E. It is about time we recognize the dangers of wasted time and opportunities by those who have not and will not get started.

III. THAT ELUSIVE DAY . . . TOMORROW.

A. The Story of Pharaoh and the plague of frogs, **Exodus 8:8-10.**

1. The second plague was frogs throughout the land.
2. There were frogs everywhere and Pharaoh had apparently seen enough.
3. So he summoned Moses and Aaron and begged for them to remove the frogs and if they would do so, he would agree to let the people go, **v.8.**
4. And Moses said to Pharaoh, "Accept the honor of *saying when I shall intercede for you*, for your servants, and for your people, to destroy the frogs from you and your houses, that they may remain in the river only." **v.9.**
5. Look at Pharaoh's answer: **TOMORROW! v.10.**
6. Frogs were EVERYWHERE – yet he chose **ONE MORE NIGHT WITH THE FROGS.**

B. How often has that one word got us into trouble...tomorrow.

Tomorrow, I'll start working on my *drinking problem*. Tomorrow I'll tackle my *debt*. Tomorrow I'll start my *diet*. Tomorrow I'll quit *smoking*. Tomorrow I'll stop *NAGGING* my husband. Tomorrow I'll start *treating my wife better*. Tomorrow I'll get to that *school assignment*. Tomorrow I'll go look for that *job*. Tomorrow I'll make that *phone call*. Tomorrow I'll *give my life to God*.

POEM: TOMORROW

He was going to be all that a man should be

Tomorrow

No one would be better than he

Tomorrow

Each morning he stacked up
the letters he'd write

Tomorrow

It was too bad indeed he was too busy to see
Bill, but he promised to do it

Tomorrow

The greatest of workers
this man would have been

Tomorrow

But the fact is he died and faded from view,
and all that was left when living was through
was a mountain of things he intended to do

Tomorrow

- C. You need to start now! Now is all you have. No one the promise of tomorrow!
- D. "Do not boast about tomorrow, For you do not know what a day may bring forth."
Proverbs 27:1.

IV. AN EXAMPLE OF PROCRASTINATION – FELIX, Acts 24.

- A. And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. 25 Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you." Acts 24:24-25.
- B. Paul's sermon outline was very simple. (v:25)
 - 1. *Righteousness*: how to be right with God.
 - 2. *Self-Control*: Made Felix and Drusilla squirm because of their lifestyles.
 - 3. *Judgement to Come*: there will be a payday someday.
- C. Felix was convicted by what Paul said, for the Bible says "*FELIX TREMBLED...*"
- D. But what did he do? "Go away for now; when I have a *convenient* time I will call for you." *verse 25.*
- E. Paul appeared at least one more time before Felix, (*verse 26*), but we never see where Felix said, "Yes."

IV. HOW CAN WE OVERCOME PROCRASTINATION?

A. DEVELOP A SENSE OF URGENCY.

1. It is amazing how *nonchalant* the Pharaoh was about all those frogs taking over his kingdom.
2. It is also amazing how so many of us can be so *unconcerned* about our problems.
 - a. We treat our sin and our habits so lightly, like they are no big deal.
 - b. I have heard people joke about how our bad their marriage is. It is no big deal.
3. We must develop a sense of urgency about the important stuff in life before it is too late.
4. If we don't do something today about our problems they will eventually get worse.
5. "Because of laziness the building decays, And through idleness of hands the house leaks." **Ecclesiastes 10:18**,
6. In other words, if we are too nonchalant about our problems for too long our lives begin to fall apart.

B. STOP MAKING EXCUSES.

1. Benjamin Franklin said, "People who are good at making excuses are rarely good at anything else."
2. Jesus told a parable of a man who made a great supper and invited many who began to make excuses, **Luke 14:16-24**.
 - a. Those originally invited did not come and missed a great opportunity.
 - b. The master of the house sent his servants out to bring in more guests.
3. Some of us are the way we are because we have an excuse for *EVERYTHING*.
4. It is time to quit making excuses, take responsibility and start getting things done.
5. I like **Proverbs 26:13** – The lazy man says, "There is a lion in the road! A fierce lion is in the streets!" (Making excuses not to go outside).

C. TAKE ADVANTAGE OF TODAY.

1. Stop thinking that tomorrow will be better.
 - Do not boast about tomorrow, For you do not know what a day may bring forth. **Proverbs 27:1**.
 - "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." **Matthew 6:34**.
2. Some say, "I've got all the time in the world to change." But we are not guaranteed that tomorrow – **James 4:14**.
3. Felix must have thought tomorrow would have brought some advantage.

CONCLUSION:

- A. We always think that tomorrow will be a better opportunity than today.
- B. ILLUSTRATION: 3 demons were graduating from their training in Hell University and they were taking their Final Exams. Satan asked each one of them, “What are you going to do to deceive people?”
 - o 1st Demon: “I’m going to tell people there isn’t a God.”
Satan said, “You’re not going to convince people of that.”
 - o 2nd Demon: “I’m going to tell people there is no heaven, there is no hell, this is all there is!”
Satan said, “You won’t have much luck with that everyone can sense there is more than just this life.”
 - o 3rd Demon: “Satan, I’m going to tell people there is no hurry...Yes, there is a God, but you can make that decision some other time.”
Satan said, “Congratulations, you have the winning strategy that is going to deceive millions of people!”
- C. So many times we put off today because we automatically assume there will be a tomorrow. We waste opportunities because we think we’ll get another shot.
- D. The truth is that the best time to get started working on our problems is *NOW*.
- E. It is time to get started living right, time to stop living in sin,
- F *NOW* is the time to get your life right with God. Felix never found a tomorrow - you may not either.
- G. “Behold, *NOW* is the accepted time ; behold, *NOW* is the day of salvation.”
2 Corinthians 6:2.
- H. Will you come to God *NOW*?

ILLUSTRATION: Our tendency to put things off will often cause those things become difficult or even possibly make the situation critical. I read the story from the American Revolution which illustrates what tragedy can result from procrastination. It is reported that Colonel Rahl, commander of the British troops at Trenton, New Jersey, was playing cards when a courier brought an urgent message stating that General George Washington was crossing the Delaware River. Rahl put the letter in his pocket and didn't bother to read it until the game finished. Then, realizing the seriousness of the situation, he hurriedly tried to rally his men to meet the coming attack, but his procrastination was his undoing. He and many of his men were killed, and the rest of the regiment were captured.

Nolbert Quayle said, "Only a few minutes' delay cost him his life, his honor, and the liberty of his soldiers. Earth's history is strewn with the wrecks of half-finished plans and unexecuted resolutions. 'Tomorrow' is the excuse of the lazy and the refuge of the incompetent."

C. ILLUSTRATION: A little girl was once asked what she thought were the biggest problems fathers have with kids. She said, "Dads have too many "tomorrows." You know, "I'll play with you tomorrow, I'll talk to you tomorrow." She was right. Dad, be there now for your children, building quality and quantity benchmarks of trust. Don't wait until tomorrow—or you'll end up wasting too many todays. Gary Ezzo, *Men of Action*, Summer, 1996, p. 11