Proactively Ordering Your Life

Luke Hulley 22 December 2021



Have you ever come to the end of a week, a month, or even (gulp) a year and, as you reflected on how you spent your time, you wondered, 'How did I spend so much of my time doing that stuff?' It's scary how fast our lives fill up with...stuff, isn't it? It pains me, as a pastor, when I sit with people who sincerely love the Kingdom of Jesus, but all their good intentions never seem to actualise into a life invested in things with eternal value.

How can we prevent this?

Jesus' Perspective on Our Priorities

There is a very practical tool to which I would like to introduce (or re-introduce) you, which many have found helpful in proactively ordering their lives to reflect what they value most. But, before we get to that, let's begin with Jesus' perspective on this very typical 'human' problem. Jesus, knowing the nature of humans, tells the story of two sons who were asked by their father to go and work in his vineyard. The one said yes but didn't end up going (sound familiar?), the other declined but later changed his mind and went to work for his father anyway. Jesus ended the story with the rather searching question, "Which one of the two did the will of the father?" (Matthew 21:28-32) In summary, when it comes to a life of fruitfulness that brings glory to the Father, good intentions just don't cut it.

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Prioritising Your Tasks and Treasures

In order for every task and treasure, from the menial to the monumental, to find its proper place in our lives, it is helpful to imagine them as rocks and sand. First, there are the big rocks: these are the things that are most important to us. The kinds of things which, if we neglect them, we will regret for the rest of eternity! And then there is the sand: the sand represents the multitude of trivial things which so easily fill our lives to their capacity.



It is important to acknowledge that our time and resources are limited, which forces us to make choices every day. In order to be fruitful, we need to proactively choose those things to which we are going to give our attention.

Imagine that the glass jar in the picture represents your life and your capacity. This picture is a demonstration of what can so easily happen when we allow the 'sand' to fill up our 'jar' in a haphazard way, and realise too late that there are certain big rocks that we still need to squeeze in! Because our capacity has already been so used up, we find that many of our big rocks cannot fit in and therefore get neglected.

It is tragic when it comes to pass that, because of my passivity, I ‘accidentally’ dispose of the most important things in my life! As devoted Christ-followers, we dare not let all the things demanding our attention dictate the choices we make. So what should we be doing?

In order to make sure that our greatest treasures and passions get priority, we need to put these big rocks in the jar first. In the demonstration below, you can see that when we do this, all the other things demanding my attention find their proper place around the ‘big rocks’. Practically, what this means is that we need to sit down with our families and decide on which things are most important to us. Once we have done this, we can then plan our lives in such a way that these big rocks get the attention they deserve.



All of this became very evident to me again in December 2017 when I became a father to my first child. As any parent will know, a newborn completely shakes up your routines and seriously handicaps your capacity to get things done. My wife and I both quickly realised that if we allowed our life to follow its ‘natural’ course, we were going to find ourselves in big trouble in the not-too-distant future!

Whole days quickly filled up with cleaning, feeding, shopping and trying desperately to catch up on sleep! We needed to have the ‘big rocks chat’ again and began to proactively plan our days and weeks. We both identified four big rocks that we absolutely could not allow to fall by the wayside. For us they were:

1. Quality time with Jesus every day
2. Church life
3. Quality time for us as a couple
4. Exercise

We could have added many other things, I'm sure, but when you are in survival mode, you cannot be too generous with your priorities! This allowed us to better support each other and even to get help from others to make sure that our lives did not get so over-run with menial tasks that we neglected the precious entrustments God had put in our hands.

The Lion's Share

The things we truly value should be the things that get the lion's share of our time, money, energy, thought-life and passion. This is what it means to 'love God with all your heart, mind and strength'. If your resources are going to other things first and God gets what is left over, then all we have are good intentions, and good intentions do not truly glorify God. I would encourage you, at the beginning of this new year, to determine in your heart the things on which you want to focus, then chat about your intentions with friends and leaders and begin to proactively order your life so that you bear much fruit for your Heavenly Father.

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