Fall, my favourite time of the year, is here. A time of change! Leaves change colour; the temperature falls, signaling winter is nearing; birds start migrating; and I remember I need to take my annual check-ups: medical, financial (see Fall 2004 Quarterly Letter) and effectiveness. Fall is when I look in the mirror to describe to me what I see: a flustered, hurried, harried, tired person? Or someone relaxed, peaceful, joyful, hopeful, excited? Always, the result of these three check-ups is the same: change! I need to change my behaviour.

In this letter, I look at the effectiveness checkup. I pray you will see practical ways you might change behaviour to move closer to God’s schedule.

Each of us is busy doing bits and pieces with little eternal value, but which use much time. Yet we continue because we think if we get off the treadmill to plan, we will fall behind further! So we rush around doing church, ministry, and other stuff. So alert are we miss opportunities to minister to hurting people around us! Have you noticed? We forget people, not programs, need attention. People have needs, programs don’t! Programs must nudge people closer to God. Sometimes we forget that when we look after people’s needs, “healing” results, joy appears, productivity soars! When last did you question rules driving your programs?

In the next 24 hours, take a few moments, go to a quiet place, and ponder how you are doing with God’s time? Reflect on the following comments and suggestions, and then answer these questions: Do you need to change? How? When?

How Are You Doing With Time
To start, you need to know where you are; how you are doing today. Look in the mirror, detail what you see. Can you say, honestly, you are happy with how you use time God allots to you? Suppose you knew God would call you home this week, how would you change what you do?

Take an inventory of how you spend your time: look at what you do in the average 24-hour day. Select a weekday and weekend day and record all you do—time spent under broad headings such as work, sleep, God, family, meals, TV, Internet, leisure, and other group you wish to track.

You will notice two crucial points. First, you do not get through a day as you planned. Second, there is no typical day! Either, people—wife, husband, children, boss, friends, advertisers; events—meetings, projects, telephone calls; or stuff—emails, Internet, other gadgets, decide what you do. The irony is we allow gadgets designed to improve effectiveness to consume time they should have freed up!

Reflection: What does your daily time use analysis tell you? Ask God to show you how to reorder priorities in line with His, and then do it! The Bible tells us clearly what we need to do to obey God and live fulfilled lives. As well, it tells us the effects of obeying and disobeying Him. But daily, often unconscious, we choose to disobey! What’s your experience?

1 On page 37 of Managing God’s Time — http://www.managinggodsmoney.com/mgtbooks.shtml — I define effectiveness as “employing your full potential to glorify God”

2 Refer appendix 3, page 201, Managing God’s Time
Surrender Every Area of Your Live
To Christ
The sure way to prevent stuff and events from directing your path is to surrender every area of your live to Christ and follow His directions. Daily, you need to ask God to show you how to release to Him different areas of your life: work, children, finances.

Believers in Christ must trust Jesus to do what He says, and stop listening to those who prey on weaknesses such as greed, pride, and selfishness. You must look away from you and look to Him. Understand, Jesus is not a cosmic slot machine who gives you what you want, though that’s the popular unbiblical teaching. Jesus has called us to follow Him, not money, wealth, possessions, or people. So, let Him lead!

Remember God’s words through his prophet Jeremiah to the children of Israel, when they exiled in Babylon? To paraphrase: Stay where you are, live in your circumstances, because God has a plan “for your welfare”, and a plan to return you home (Jeremiah 29:1-20). These words are true today as they were then.

Jesus has promised eternal life for believers. So, stay in your circumstances, they are what they are: Accept where you are, what you have, and what you are. Jesus is in control, knows what’s happening, and wants your attention. Accept each 24-hour day He gives you; it’s the maximum time available daily, so you don’t need more. Do the best with what you have!

When you choose to believe and follow Jesus, you will be able to do everything you need to do in each 24-hour day. Just let Him work in and through you.

Reflection: Do you have a personal relationship with Christ? If you don’t, read this page http://www.managinggodsmoney.com/invitation.shtml Jesus died so we might live full lives. He will never leave us. He is available to us 24 hours daily. All we need to do is call on Him. Jesus wants you to accept Him as your perfect Father right where you are. He will give you what you need. He will help you to change to the person He knows you can be.

Believers, are you ready to trust Jesus to do as He says? You have all the faith you need; after all, you accepted what Jesus did for you—He died on the cross. You accepted Him as the only one who can save you from sin, so start to “walk” your faith by obeying his commands! Just do it!

Know and Do Your Role
The challenge we believers face is this: intellectually we know our roles—managers who will account for time, talent, and possessions’ usage—but we don’t model it daily. We need to practice “show and tell” and do what we know. Sadly, a growing number of churches have stopped preaching the full Gospel. They exclude Bible teachings about right male, female, husband, wife roles; proper attitudes to money, time, talents; effects of sin, and other keys Jesus taught. They present a “soft Gospel” so people who come to church will be comfortable. Yet, Jesus commands us “…to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

To know what to do and where to be, we need to invest time daily to learn Jesus’ priorities. Then we will be able to see and do His will. Still, you might be thinking, how do you stop stuff from dragging you along and using big time-blocks? Recall Apostle Paul’s dilemma in Romans 7:15-25: we know what to do; we hate to do wrong; but wrong attracts us because of our sinful nature. That’s why it is essential we lean on Jesus and be alert to His direction, before we act. One practical approach that works for me is to ask why and why now before acting, and then to be open to not doing what I want to do. Rather, seeking always to do what God prompts me to do.

How do you do this when you work for a boss who does not believe as you do?
In the Bible’s Old Testament, Daniel, and Joshua, and in the New Testament, Apostle Paul, whom I quoted earlier, are good examples. They committed to do God’s will, and did it under difficult conditions! “Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king’s choice food or with the wine which he drank…” He didn’t [Daniel 1:8]. Joshua too decided to follow the Lord. He said: “…but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” (Joshua 24:15). Apostle Paul committed “…to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becom-

1 Matthew 28:18-20 (I emphasized “everything”)
ing like him in his death\). Shouldn’t we do likewise?

**Reflection:** These three men didn’t have supernatural abilities. They were men like you and me. They committed to serve God at any cost. Are you ready to commit to follow Christ and bear the effects of that decision? We need to do this if we want to know His will and follow His path. Today, what baby step can you take to start this journey? Often, we think we need to do great big stuff like going to “Africa” on the “mission field.” Beloved, your mission field is where you are. Don’t try to “expand your territory,” rather, allow God to show His power through your life, right where you are.

**Accept Trials are Normal and Needed**

“Relaxed, peaceful, joyful, hopeful, excited” are conditions we aspire to get. Often Christians forget we can get these feelings even when we go through difficulties. Your personal relationship with Christ doesn’t depend on your circumstance or your feelings. **Jesus never changes.** The Bible teaches, contrary to popular prosperity and health and wealth doctrines, trials are normal and needed. The Book of James (James 1:2) tells us to consider it all joy when we face trials. Just remember, God has promised to see us through trials, not to lift them because we ask.

Have you noticed how your faith grows when you lean on Jesus during a difficult period? So, the next time you meet a challenge, you can turn to Him quicker! Each believer has the “abundant life” Jesus promised—the Holy Spirit allows us to lean on Him to get His peace and see His path always.

**Reflection:** How can you count it all joy when you lose your job, get ill, fall deep in debt? Stay close to Jesus, accept trials as normal and needed; listen and grow from them.

**Accept work as a gift from God**

**Trust Jesus to be who He is and to do what He wants you to do.** Have you noticed Jesus calls His children, not His adults! More than we do. Have you noticed how your faith grows when you lean on Jesus during a difficult period? So, the next time you meet a challenge, you can turn to Him quicker!

**Reflection:** Are you doing what God wants you to do? Are you where He wants you to be? Ask Him to guide you and lead you there. Meantime, rejoice always; in everything give thanks (Philippians 4:4). Are you showing God’s love to those around you? Are you working with the attitude that you are serving the Lord. (Colossians 3:23)

**Is Your To Do List Your Enemy**

I think the tool designed to help our effectiveness but which distracts us most is the typical To-do list. Look at your formal or informal To-do list. How often do you wonder why it doesn’t get shorter? Do you combine it with your daily agenda? Indeed, do you work with a daily agenda? If you don’t, you will have difficulty setting and controlling priorities! List “To-do” tasks on a daily timeline (see right column) with meeting and other events.

**Reflection:** Will you set aside 10-15 minutes daily to plan your timeline under Jesus’ direction? Are you caught up in the latest “fad” put out by the latest Christian best-seller? Stay with the Bible, it doesn’t change. Let’s avoid fads that point to people. Ensure we do what God wants us to do; model Jesus’ teaching.

**Practical Ways To Move To God’s Schedule**

1. **Surrender every area of your life to Jesus**
2. **Reorder priorities to His**
3. **Know and do your role**
4. **Accept trials as normal and needed; learn and grow from them**
5. **Accept work as a gift from God**
6. **Work with a daily timeline showing all God wants you to do**
7. **Meet only when needed; make meetings meaningful**

**Daily Timeline**

9:00 Meeting
9:30 Phone calls (usually on To-do list with no time allotted)
10:00 Clear E-mails
12:00 Collect package (usually on To-do list with no time allotted)
12:30 Lunch and “midday prescription”
13:30 Conference call
15:00 Prepare for meeting
16:00 Draft report
18:00 Review day
18:15 Leave office

Daily, invest 10-15 minutes in the morning to develop your realistic timeline for the day: show a start and end time for each task and include meetings, errands, phone calls, time on the Internet, time with family. Leave gaps for stuff others will ask you to do. Accept you can’t do everything others and you want done. Under God’s guidance, practice “selectively neglecting” tasks, and “disappointing” people, to stay focused on God’s priorities—pray about this.

**Reflection:** As well, learn to say no, when no is the right answer. But, be alert daily. Listen for a person crying out for another to talk to, for a person needing a “glass of water;” for your wife, husband, child, friend, colleague, boss, or other person needing a listening ear.

**Today is God’s present to you, open it and use it because there might not be another.** Nothing you can do will allow you to re-live your daughter’s fifth birthday. Take a few moments this week to write your epitaph. Ask the Lord to help you change your lifestyle to follow His path!