

# MINISTRY: DILIGENCE

## A KEY TO ORDER

Decision-making is a daily responsibility for every leader. The Latin root of the word *decision* means “to cut.” As we consider various options and make selections, we cut or reject the alternatives. The same is true when we decide how to use the time God gives us on earth. Because many responsibilities vie for our time and attention, we must summon the discipline of elimination to say “yes” to God’s essential few commands and “no” to the many trivial obligations of the world.



Today’s leaders are expected to don the cape of a mythical superhero, simultaneously serving as a topflight leader, spouse, homemaker, team coach, and volunteer. Although this expectation has become a badge of honor in today’s culture, we are not capable of managing such an expansive, multi-tasking lifestyle without severely neglecting **essential priorities**, such as:

**relational joy with the Lord and others**

**investment in the health of our mind, body, and soul**

**intentional development of our organization and market presence**

**downtime for deep reflection, creative thought, and hearing God**

Peter Drucker said, “Effective executives, in my observation, do not start with their tasks, they start with their time.”<sup>1</sup> God provides us with 24 hours every day. How we invest that time directly influences our eternal fruitfulness and the final evaluation of our service to the Lord. The question isn’t whether we *should* allocate our time more effectively, but whether we *will*.



*“Time appears to be so plentiful that losing much of it seems inconsequential... If people threw away their money as thoughtlessly as they throw away their time, we would think them insane. Yet time is infinitely more precious than money because money can’t buy time. Time would not be so precious if we never died. But since we are never more than a breath away from eternity, the way we use our time has eternal significance.”<sup>2</sup>*

**- DONALD WHITNEY**

<sup>1</sup> Peter Drucker, *The Effective Executive: The Definitive Guide to Getting the Right Things Done* (New York: HarperCollins, 1967), 25.

<sup>2</sup> Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1991), 137-138.

An undisciplined pursuit of “success” can be a catalyst for failure.<sup>3</sup> The myth that we can “do it all” creates stressful work environments that may advocate work/life balance but don’t allow it.<sup>4</sup> We need to change how we approach the allocation of our time reserves by pursuing and abiding in Christ's perfect order. Our families, businesses, testimonies, and eternal legacies depend on it.

## Diligence Defined



***Jesus is Our Model*** - Buck Jacobs shares how we can maintain balance and intimacy in the midst of legitimate demands.

Let’s define *diligence* for our discussion. In God’s Kingdom, diligence is:

*dil·i·gence* (noun)

*The constant and motivated effort to do what God wants by viewing every responsibility as an assignment from and unto the Lord.*



**What is your reaction to this definition of diligence?**

Word variants of diligence and its related attributes of discipline, perseverance, zeal, and obedience appear more than 350 times in Scripture, including:

*“The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty.”*

**Proverbs 21:5**

&

*“Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.”*

**2 Peter 1:10**

Although it’s tempting to feel overwhelmed by this assignment to work diligently when we face many conflicting demands for our time, **remember that diligence means working as unto the Lord, not achieving perfection.**

## If You Don’t Prioritize Your Life, Someone Else Will

A strong structure is built on a firm foundation with the priorities God reveals through Scripture. God tells us to love Him with all of our heart, soul, and mind (Matt. 22:37), to seek His Kingdom first (Matt. 6:33), and to put no other gods before Him (Exod. 20:3).

God’s next priority for our lives is our human relationships. God commands husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church and wives to respect and submit to their husbands (Eph. 5:22-28). To the unmarried, He says to devote their extra time to the things of the Lord (1 Cor. 7:32-34). Concerning work, He says we are to work as if working for Him (Col. 3:23). **Diligence requires prioritizing God first, and then our families, before our work.**

<sup>3</sup> Greg McKeown, *Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less* (New York: Random House, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Author Shaunti Feldhahn declares, while speaking at a conference, the enemy is wreaking havoc for many leaders today by advancing the lie that we can have it all independent from the power of God without losing anything (Gen. 3).

In contrast, many business leaders make every provision for business needs first. Then they address other needs with the time that is left, often resulting in financially successful but troubled families. When we consider our priorities as God has revealed them, however, we remember He *didn't* provide:



**A SPOUSE**  
to diminish relationship with Him



**CHILDREN**  
to distract us from Him or our spouse



**A MINISTRY**  
to replace our relationships with Him or our families



**A BUSINESS**  
to steal time from Him, our families, or our ministry



**ACTIVITIES**  
(social, civil, or recreational) to take time away from Him, our families, our ministry, or our business

If God gave us these responsibilities, and He doesn't work against Himself, then each carries a call to diligently reflect Scriptural discipline. As we seek to obey God's call, we must remember the enemy opposes us. **What if not every "great opportunity" is good or from God?** Who provides the opportunity if it comes at the cost of biblical priorities? If we have a price, the Devil will pay it, including disguising traps as blessings to lure us into compromising our relationships with God, our families, and our ministries.

## The ROI of Time

In a culture that embraces ungodly values and fuels confusion about virtuous time management, we often view how to invest our time by how the returns measure up to the expectations and standards of the world.<sup>5</sup> This behavior sets up a conflict between flesh and spirit. The flesh, because it doesn't pass into eternal life, focuses its attention on material success. The spirit, because it transcends this physical life, has an eternal focus.

If God defines vocational diligence for you as 45 hours per week, this is the amount of time He requires you to provide to your business. We tend to think that what we reap from our business depends on how much time and effort we put into it. This misconception is rooted in our prideful notion that we are our source of success and that we prosper because of our intelligence and strength. As the true Owner and Source, God is responsible for what results flow from His direction.

Let's assume, in contrast, you currently work 90 hours per week. What return do you suppose you earn from the extra 45 hours invested? Despite any financial gains, profit isn't the sole metric for success. (Even if it were, delegating the work performed in those extra hours might have produced the same, or better, results.) Because those 45 hours have taken away from other priorities, there's actually a net eternal loss.

Poor delegation<sup>6</sup> inhibits us from performing a leader's vital functions,<sup>7</sup> which should consume more than half of our working time. Unfortunately, most of us are too engaged in tasks like closing sales, ensuring deliveries, reacting to daily communication, or other tactics that satisfy us emotionally but occur at the expense of the critical matters entrusted to us.

<sup>5</sup> "Leadership Priorities," The C12 Group YouTube Channel, November 27, 2017.

<sup>6</sup> See the C12 segment *Are You The Bottleneck?* (June 2016).

<sup>7</sup> C12 e-book *7 Effective Roles of a Modern CEO* available on Barnabas within the Resources tab.

## Harvard Business School examined 27 CEOs' time allocation for a full quarter.

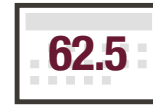
On average, a CEO's work week includes:



Hours of work per workday



Hours of work on weekend days



Hours of work per work week



37 Meetings



70% of vacation days spent working

Breakdown of how a CEO's time is spent:



36%

in reactive mode



24%

on electronic communications



15%

on the phone



3%

with customers



3%

with investors<sup>8</sup>

### Vital Signs

Just as we neglect priorities in business, we often neglect priorities in other areas of life. This is why we take a moment in our C12 meetings each month to recognize the condition of the various dimensions of our life and leadership through the Member Snapshot tool. It is a powerful instrument for sharing with our peers, identifying our gaps, and celebrating our progress. The design captures real-time information that becomes even more powerful when considered over a period of time.



Refer to *Appendix A* for your Six-Month Snapshot Reflection.



When you reflect on the past several months, what trends does your Member Snapshot reveal?

Perhaps one dimension of your wheel is suffering due to the flourishing of another, or you have quietly ignored mediocrity. The real test for whatever God has revealed to us is how we move from awareness to action.

<sup>8</sup> Michael E. Porter and Nitin Nohria, "The Leader's Calendar," *Harvard Business Review*, July-August 2018.

Review your Six-Month Snapshot Reflection together and discuss how you can support each other to achieve greater balance.

How do you use the balance wheel and alignment assessment with your teams and families? If your team performed the same exercise, what would you learn?



**Prepare Your Baskets - C12 Member Don Ventling embraces diligence and trusts God for the results.**



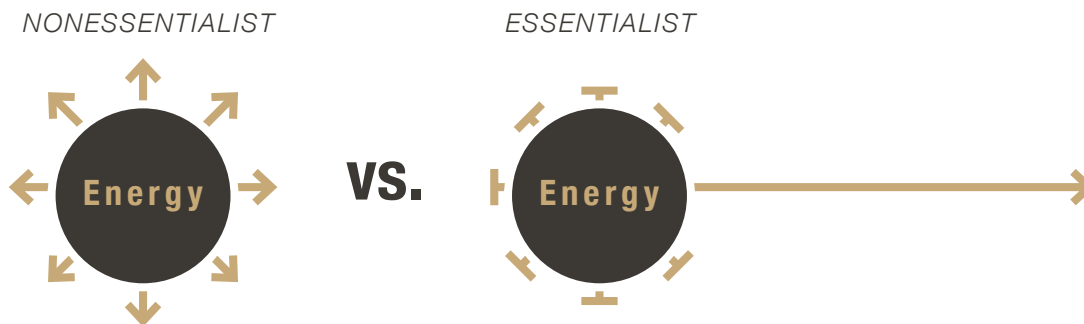
## Do Less, but Better

As you look at the Balance Wheel on your Member Snapshot and see areas of imbalance, it may seem impossible or unrealistic to change or correct. However, Christian leaders must ruthlessly prune the non-fruit bearing branches with discipline.<sup>9</sup> Greg McKeown advocates “essentialism” as a disciplined, systematic approach to make the wisest possible investment of our time and energy to operate at our highest point of contribution. “An Essentialist produces more by removing more instead of doing more,” McKeown writes.

### STEPS TO ESSENTIALISM

- Explore:** Evaluate which activities or efforts make the highest possible contribution toward your goals.  
Identify Your Life Accounts, Determine Their Condition, and Prioritize<sup>10</sup> (i.e., Faith, Marriage, Family, Self-Care, Friends, Career, Finances, Recreation)
- Eliminate:** Actively disengage from the nonessential activities.
- Execute:** Create a system that makes getting the essential things done as effortless as possible.<sup>11</sup>

Figure: The variance in output between a Nonessentialist and Essentialist.



<sup>9</sup> John 15:2

<sup>10</sup> Michael Hyatt and Daniel Harkavy, *Living Forward: A Proven Plan to Stop Drifting and Get the Life You Want* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016).

<sup>11</sup> McKeown, *Essentialism*.



"You cannot overestimate the unimportance of practically everything."

- JOHN MAXWELL



**Discuss the nonessential pursuits in your life that are robbing you of the essentials.**

### **Integrated Application**

Although God establishes distinctly different roles and priorities for us, they aren't independent of one another. For example, our relational time with God can occur while studying and worshiping with our church or work colleagues. Family time can be spent talking and thinking about our ministry and work. We don't live neatly compartmentalized lives. Synergy and integration of eternal priorities can still reflect God's order.

God wants us to have proper balance in our lives even more than we do. Gaining insight in this area of our lives requires one-on-one time with our Father, asking Him to reveal necessary adjustments.<sup>12</sup> David prayed, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139:23-24).

We all will be held accountable for our time when we appear before the judgment seat of Christ.<sup>13</sup> He defines diligence for us. The challenge is for us to accept and obey what He says, so we will hear those six words, "Well done, good and faithful servant."<sup>14</sup> Sometimes "margin" and "balance" can seem like elusive and infuriatingly abstract ideals, but what disciplined pursuit towards "essentialism" and diligence can you make a To-Do today?

<sup>12</sup> See the C12 segment *Bringing It All Together*, Appendix A: "A Plan for Improvement," and Appendix B: "7 Habits Assessment" (June 2016).

<sup>13</sup> Pete Briscoe teaches about the Bema from 2 Corinthians 5 on Bent Tree Bible's YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w8Fgfj0olms&feature=youtu.be>.

<sup>14</sup> Matthew 25:23

# SIX-MONTH SNAPSHOT REFLECTION

# A

Looking back on your Member Snapshot from the last six months, transpose your scores to identify trends. **Where are you experiencing stagnation or declination?**

## BALANCE WHEEL

EXAMPLE:



Walk with God



Discipling Others



Marriage & Family



Personal Finance



Biblical Community



Fun & Recreation



Fitness & Nutrition



Rest & Retreat



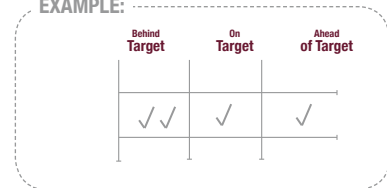
# SIX-MONTH SNAPSHOT REFLECTION

# A

Looking back on your Member Snapshot from the last six months, transpose your scores to identify trends. **Where are you experiencing stagnation or declination?**

## 5-POINT ALIGNMENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE:



		Behind Target	On Target	Ahead of Target
	<b>Ministry</b>			
On Target	<b>Operational Management</b>	Ahead of Target		
○	<b>Organizational Management</b>	○		
○	<b>Financial Management</b>	○		
○	<b>Revenue Generation</b>	○		
○		○		



# WORDS OF WISDOM

# B

“Here is the Son of God, who in less than three years achieved far more than kings and generals had ever achieved in a thousand years, taking time out. Why? Well, He knew His needs and limitations—even He couldn’t work twenty-four hours a day seven days a week—and neither can we. But also He could have the confidence to do this because of His quiet, serene knowledge that His time was in His Father’s hands, that He wasn’t going to change the world by one endless round of activity, but by doing things in God’s time in God’s way.”

— Melvin Tinker

“Doing more things faster is no substitute for doing the right things.”

— Stephen Covey

“We don’t drift in good directions. We discipline and prioritize ourselves there.”

— Andy Stanley

“To waste time is to squander a gift from God.”

— John Blanchard

“O spend your time as you would hear of it in the Judgment!”

— Richard Baxter

“We master our minutes or we become slaves to them; we use time, or time uses us.”

— William A. Ward

“Time in itself is really not the problem, but people who use it are. People who excuse their failures by saying ‘I don’t have time’ really are admitting to mismanagement of time.... How often we hear, ‘I wish I knew how to manage my time better.’ Rarely do we hear, ‘I wish I knew how to manage myself better,’ but that’s really what it comes down to.”

— Ted W. Engstrom

“Accept the cost of good deeds in time, thought, and effort. But remember that opportunities for doing good are not interruptions in God’s plan for us, but part of that plan. We always have time to do what God wants us to do.”

— Jerry Bridges

“How completely satisfying to turn from our limitations to a God who has none. Eternal years lie in His heart. For Him time does not pass, it remains; and those who are in Christ share with Him all the riches of limitless time and endless years. God never hurries. There are no deadlines against which He must work. Only to know this is to quiet our spirits and relax our nerves. For those out of Christ, time is a devouring beast.”

— A.W. Tozer

“Lord, teach me so to conceive time as an unrepeatable gift that I might live my life serenely with Your values in mind so that my life is lived to the full.”

— Melvin Tinker

# What does the bible say about time, priorities, and diligence?

**B**

Matthew 6:33

Psalms 90:12

Exodus 20:3

Matthew 6:24

Romans 12:2

Luke 12:22-34

Mark 8:36-37

Haggai 1:9-11

1 Timothy 4:8

Ephesians 5:15-17

James 1:5

2 Corinthians 5:6-10

James 4:13-14

Proverbs 21:5

Proverbs 6:6-8

John 16:13

Exodus 18:17-21