

# Rhythm of Reduction

## Leaders Lead Themselves First

*This devotion is based upon the books:*

- *“At Your Best” by Carey Nieuwhof*
- *“Ruthless Elimination of Hurry” by John Mark Comer*

***“Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.” - Ephesians 5:15-16***

Paul emphasizes the importance of wisdom in how we live our lives, specifically in how we use our time. In a culture that often celebrates busyness as a virtue, it's easy for our schedules to become cluttered with activities and commitments that, while good, may not be the best use of the most precious resource God has given us: time.

According to [timeular.com](https://timeular.com), 51% of our typical workday is devoted to low to no-value tasks like commuting, unnecessary meetings, unnecessary emails, and excessive social media use.

(<https://timeular.com/blog/time-management-statistics>)

- 10hrs of social media use on the job
- 2.5 hrs a day on email related activities
- 16% of their time in unproductive meetings

Consider places where your own valuable time is consumed by unproductive activities.

As a minister, I feel the responsibility and rebuke in Paul's statement to manage our time wisely. After all, our work has eternal significance yet we only have a finite amount of time to accomplish it. Truly the harvest is great, but the workers are few!

Because of reality, I have watched many leaders and volunteers burn themselves out working to build the Kingdom of God. Yet Jesus calls us to walk with Him in the “unforced rhythms of His grace”. He promised that He would not place anything heavy or ill fitting on us and called His burden easy and light.

So what is the secret to making the best use of our time and multiply our efforts without taking up an ill fitting burden?

The answer is in one of the healthy rhythms we learn from Jesus's life — the **rhythm of reduction**.

The rhythm of reduction is **the intentional pursuit of your divine passions while pruning away all the earthly distractions.** It is the purposeful elevation of what matters the most and the elimination of everything that keeps us from giving those priorities our all.

This is what Jesus modeled when He called his disciples, “take nothing for the journey” (Luke 9:3).

How can we put that into practice when it comes to our time?

Start by cleaning up and clarifying your calendar so that we give the best of our time to the most important priorities. Cleaning up our schedule isn't just about removing activities but about making intentional choices that align with God's plan for our lives.

This process is not about achieving more productivity in a worldly sense but about making space for what God is calling us to do.

## **Put it into Practice: (You're going to need a journal)**

### **1. Start With Your Divine Purpose Statement.**

What is the mission statement over your life? Write it on the first page of the journal. If you haven't written one, I'd encourage you to pull up Draw Yourself A Circle and prayerfully craft one for yourself. Before you move on, pray and ask the Holy Spirit if there is anything that needs to be clarified or changed since the last time you looked at this statement. Does it still ring true? Is it still burning white hot in your heart?

### **2. Define Your MVPs**

On the next page make a list of your MVPs. These are your Most Valuable Priorities in your life right now. To help you categorize them, it is important to remember we live life in five different spheres: Personal, Home, Vocation, Church, and Community. You should have 3-5 MVPs in each of these areas. List them in order of importance. Number one should be the most important thing.

### **3. Audit Your Time**

Next you'll want to keep a detailed log of how you spend your time during an entire week. You may find it helpful to use the calendar on your smartphone. Include everything, from work and ministry activities to leisure and family time. Everything you do requires time to do it, so it should fill up a day in your calendar or planner.

At the end of each day and the week, review your log and categorize your time usage. Every event will fall into one of four categories.

- **Critical & Impactful (CI):**

These are things that are both important and productive. These tasks have a significant impact on your goals and are critical for immediate focus.

- **Required Maintenance (RM):**

These are the obligations and responsibilities that maintain the status quo but don't necessarily drive you toward your goals. These are your must-dos that keep things running.

- **Enrichment Activities (EA):**

This category includes growth, learning, and restorative activities. It's for tasks that enrich your life and well-being, contribute to your personal and professional growth, or restore your energy, even if they don't directly impact your immediate productivity or goals.

- **Discretionary Diversions (DD):**

This category is for activities that are neither urgent nor important and do not contribute to your goals or well-being in a meaningful way.

#### **4. Identify Time-Wasters:**

Look for patterns of activities that consume your time but do not contribute to your spiritual, personal, or professional growth. These will be found in the Required Maintenance (RM) and Discretionary Diversions (DD). These could be habits, non-essential commitments, or even inefficient ways of performing necessary tasks.

#### **5. Pray for Wisdom and Courage:**

Ask God to give you the wisdom to discern the activities that truly matter and the courage to eliminate the ones that don't. This might mean stepping back from certain commitments, delegating tasks, or finding more efficient ways to accomplish necessary activities.

#### **6. Design a More Effective Week:**

Take out your calendar and schedule a better week ahead. Give your best time to your most important categories. Your Critically Important (CI) tasks should be scheduled first. Next, schedule your Enrichment Activities (EA). Place these in times that you know you need to be replenished. Pay special attention to your morning and evening routines. Lastly, place your Required Maintenance (RM). Place these in your less critical times. For instance, following up on emails or writing a report can be done in the last minutes of your workday. If done properly, you should have little margin left for those time wasters.

#### **7. Live by your calendar.**

When we budget our money, we plan ahead for how each dollar will be spent before it is in our hands. The same is true for time management. Plan ahead for how each hour and minute will be spent. Give your best time to your most important activities. Make a goal to live the next week strictly by your calendar.

As a note: you'll find it helpful to do this exercise with a colleague.

Proverbs 27:17 says, "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another."

I encourage you to discuss this with a peer and challenge one another on your schedule. This will provide greater clarity and accountability.