

My 'To-Do' List By Eva Julison

IT ARRIVED! I FINALLY received the new leather-bound organizer I wanted. Its zippered case provided separate sections to neatly categorize each area of my life. My brother knew I was a list-maker, and he sent money for my birthday so I could pick out my own organizer. Now my life could be neatly planned. I could even carry my organizer with me so each moment could be used effectively.

I began each day filling out my daily "to-do" page. I felt such control as I made a list, then neatly crossed out each accomplished task. I prioritized jobs by placing numbers next to each item so my tasks would be done in the best possible order. Now my days would be productive.

Following My Agenda

One morning my phone rang. My mother-in-law wanted to know how the kids were doing

in school. I cut the conversation short because my to-do list was long. She sounded despondent. It had been quite a while since I'd visited with her, but talking on the phone wasn't on my agenda. I did promise to bring everyone over soon.

I quickly moved on to the next item on my list for the day, glancing at my organizer to see how much I still had to do. The doorbell rang. I thought about not answering, but my van was in the driveway. My visitor would know I was home. I opened the door, secretly hoping it

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was a salesman I could quickly send away. But it wasn't. It was my friend Shelly. She had a problem.

I couldn't turn her away. Tears streamed down her face as she talked about her marriage. I tried not to look at the clock—or my organizer. Finally she left.

I had to rush through the remainder of the



day to complete my list. I encountered two more delays. My neighbor stopped by to ask us to feed her cats. She was leaving town to help her sister who had cancer. We finished our conversation and I turned around to see my devastated daughter in tears. Her best friend had told her they weren't friends anymore.

After supper I was really feeling the pressure to finish my list. The last item was prayer. As I bowed my head, I thanked God for letting me complete my list. Then I thought of all the hurting people I had encountered. "Lord, please send someone to help comfort these people."

"I did," came the thought. "I sent you."

□ First Priority

Since then, I have made prayer the first priority of my day. How can I know what God wants to do in and through me unless I stop and communicate with him as the day begins? Asking God to help me plan my list reminds me that my time belongs to the Lord. His plans are not my plans. His ways are not my ways. Every day I need to choose his will if I am to be a willing servant.

Something wonderful happens as we spend time in prayer. Mother Teresa described it this way: "Have you begun to pray yet? You must learn to pray. Feel often during the day the need for prayer and take the trouble to pray. Prayer enlarges the heart until it is capable of containing God's gift of himself. Ask and seek and your heart will grow big enough to receive him and keep him as your own. Once you have learned to seek God it will become the means of great sanctity to you, your family, and to those around you."

□ God's Plan

The more time we spend with God, the more we become like him. Our plans and projects are meaningless unless we are in him. Apart from him we may be busy, but we can do nothing of true, eternal value. Yet when we dwell in him, we can do all things through him who strengthens us (Philippians 4:13).

Spending time in prayer with our heavenly Father is a great privilege. Jesus paved the way

for us to enter the throne room of our holy God. When we accept Jesus as Savior and Lord, we have admittance any time of the day or night before God Almighty. Sadly, we don't always use that right or responsibility as often as we should. The honor is often taken for granted, treated flippantly as we rattle off a quick prayer here and there. Let's make prayer our first priority.

□ God's List

Not only do I need to consult him as I make my daily list of things to do; I also need to be sensitive to the "divine interruptions" God sends my way. Each one can be an opportunity to comfort, encourage, and point someone to the Lord. Perhaps it might be a learning experience for me—a truth I could learn no other way. Sometimes God interrupts my day to bless me or minister to me in some special way. I need to stop and enjoy that time with him.

Sometimes I get so busy trying to get my own list accomplished, I leave God behind. If I truly want to dwell with the Lord, it will be an all-day, every-day decision. Never again do I want my list to be different from God's. He holds the master plan. He knows what needs to be done. I need to make sure my plans line up with his, rather than asking him to bless my plans.

Jesus said there are two things on God's list that are above all. If we do those two things, everything else will follow. "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself'" (Matthew 22:37-39).

As we place these at the top of our daily to-do lists, we will be ready when others need our love and attention. We don't need to worry about a shortage of time. God will give us the time and opportunity we need to accomplish his plans.

I no longer look at my daily schedule as my to-do list. It is God's list. It has been his from the start. He was just waiting for me to discover it. ■

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