



# Time Management for Divinity Students

## Relationship Between Seminary and Ministry

If you are going into active ministry you will need to establish boundaries, by taking charge of your time, your schedule, so that you can allocate and organize your commitments. Involvement in a church or para-church contexts will entail organizing and managing your time effectively. Seminary serves as an introduction to the life of ministry in more senses than might appear at first sight. Both have a roster of required and repetitive tasks. The very full schedule you have in seminary is going to be similar to the one you will have in ministry. In both there will always be more to be done than there are hours in the week. You may spend a lot of time alone as a student and in ministry. So it is important that you stay focused and organized. Otherwise you will not be able to achieve what needs to be done. While instructors assign readings, papers, and exams, you are the one ultimately in charge of whether you get things done and meet deadlines.

## Prayer

What we do with our time determines the quality of our lives in a spiritual sense. Personal devotional time has to be a regular part of your life. Habits of life formed or continued here will be foundational to your ministry later on. The challenge will be to maintain the integrity of this spiritual life in the face of all the demands on your time and, in particular, how the academic study of theology may in some sense have the potential to undermine that integrity. Prayer time can be integrated into your exercise time (like morning walks), or it can be a separate activity for which you plan, preferably early in the morning. This will help you to recognize God's presence and position you to deal with the challenges of the day, whether in the form of people, academics, or different situations.

## Community

As much as the academic life of the college is important and has to be your central focus, there is the communal element. Much of what you experience and learn here will derive from that context. Your relationships, the issues and questions you face will have a context in terms of the community of people around you here. You are going to learn much from others who are experiencing the same struggles and satisfactions. Make it your goal to establish and nurture these relationships early on. So when you are planning your week factor in the time you will need to nurture that communal element, formal and informal. Don't leave the college or go to your room as soon as the class is done. Invest some time in the people and activities around you. This will be good for you and will be formative in terms of your future ministry.

## Strategies

You may be prevented from getting things done if you:

### **Work without a daily, weekly, monthly, semester-long, and long-range plan**

- Solution: Set aside time to think, plan, and pray on a daily basis.

### **Work on low priority assignments while deferring higher priority assignments**

- Solution: Do the highest priority items first. Leave the lesser ones until an appropriate time

**Set unrealistic goals and attempt to do everything equally well by applying a perfectionist attitude to each task you have been given**

- Solution: If you are late submitting assignments that may suggest that as a procrastinator you are a perfectionist who did not want to commit your ideas to paper because you felt that they would not be good enough

**Are unable to distinguish between the urgent and the important**

- Solution: Tackle those tasks which you dread the most - avoid the temptation to procrastinate

**Fail to control interruptions**

- Solution: Be keenly aware of the internal and external distractions which are most likely to divert your attention from the priorities at hand

**Are unwilling to delegate responsibilities which others can do**

- Solution: Delegate those tasks which someone else can do

**Have difficulty saying "No"**

- Solution: Learn to say "No" without feeling guilty. Jesus said: "Let your Yes be Yes, and your No, No." (Matt. 5: 37).

**Are generally inefficient with your time**

- Solution: Allow time for relaxation so that you are refreshed when you return to your studies
- Find a quiet, comfortable place to work
- Make sure your workplace is organized: filing cabinet, shelving etc.

**Select Additional Resources**

Calian, Carnegie Samuel. *The ideal seminary: pursuing excellence in theological education*. Louisville, KY.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002. [UTL Call# BV4020.C35 KNOX/EMM/REG/TRIN]

Cetuk, Virginia Samuel. *What to Expect in Seminary: Theological Education as Spiritual Formation*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998. [UTL Call# BV 4020.C4 KNOX/REG/EMM/STAS/TRIN].

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