



getting **ministry** done

the MINISTRY PAPERS

conference letdown

You know the feeling. It was a terrific ministry conference. So many excellent ideas and strategies to implement when you get home. So many notes you furiously took down throughout all the talks and the seminars. So many great discussions with colleagues over meals. You are feeling enthused about ministry again, and eager to implement all you can.

As the trip home reaches its half way point a familiar sinking feeling washes over you. The excitement and stimulation of the conference recedes as quickly as the road in the rear view mirror. Suddenly your head is filled with the fact that you have a sermon to write—in half the usual time. There’s a meeting to run tomorrow night that you haven’t prepared for. There’s that report you haven’t finished. There’s the bible studies you haven’t started. The answering machine will be full. And the email... the EMAIL.. how many... 40? 60? 100?

The enthusiasm from the conference has drained from you as quickly as the stress has risen. You walk in the door of your study and toss the bursting folder of conference notes on top of the pile of other such casualties. The body count really is rising across the years of all the dead in the water ideas that never see the light of day because you’re too dead busy.

The reality is, you already knew most of what was said and taught at the conference. You’ve written it down at dozens of conferences just like it. You’re not lacking the CONTENT of what ministry should be. You’re lacking the PROCESS to implement it. You ring a colleague for help. They tell you “to keep the main thing the main thing” ...thanks very much...

This ministry paper acts as a companion to the introductory papers ‘the ministry training church’ and ‘meeting one to one’. If pastor-teachers are going to get serious about training, it means learning how to say no to things, how to delegate things and how to plan things. It means learning to deal with the hundreds of things always coming at you. That’s what this paper is about. It’s about getting ministry done.

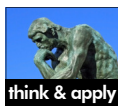


read **Acts 6:1-11**

1. What did the apostles say no to?

2. Did they say no because it didn't need doing? If not, why did they say no?

3. How did they ensure the situation was still dealt with?



4. *What requests have you said no to recently? On what basis?*

5. *What ministry have you delegated recently? How?*



Saying ‘no’ and delegating things is just the beginning of what it takes to ensure your core ministry of teaching and equipping is protected. You need to develop skills in dealing with the hundreds of things that come at you every day... what are some of the things that get in the way of the main thing for you?

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-
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training = time

It's a simple equation... if you're serious about the training and equipping ministry these MINISTRY PAPERS are all about, you're going to have to make time for it. Training is not genuinely a priority in your ministry until it's a priority in your diary. So read on and lock it in: this isn't worldly, this is spiritual. This is about stewardship. This is about giving an account (Hebrews 13:17).



go to the ant you sluggard!

Go to the ant, you sluggard;
consider its ways and be wise!

Proverbs 6:6

A sluggard does not plow in season;
so at harvest time he looks but finds nothing.

Proverbs 20:4

Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth.

Proverbs 10:4

Go to the ant you sluggard! But is that a call simply to work *harder*? Hard work is only part of the picture. The idea in the next proverb of "plowing in season" is as much about *effective* work as hard work. It's about *wise* work. Wise work is about investing now in what will be needed later (think of training and equipping leaders for example!...the harvest of leaders you do have now or don't have now relates to the training you did last year or didn't do last year...). The contrast of lazy and diligent hands in the third proverb above, is derived from the context of shooting an arrow from a bow. The lazy worker falls short of the target. So the contrast isn't between a lazy shot and someone frantically shooting as many arrows as possible wherever they can. Rather, it's the contrast between falling short of your target and actually hitting the target. "Diligent" might not seem like an exciting word but it is. It's a word that reminds us that time management in ministry isn't learning the art of shooting as many ministry "arrows" as is humanly possible. Wise ministry is about learning which arrows to shoot. It's knowing what your ministry really is... and getting ministry done.

important	1	2
	3	4
	urgent	not urgent

A helpful tool at this point is Stephen Covey's ('7 Habits of highly effective people') Four Quadrants. Covey believes that any minute of the day your activities fit into 1 of 4 quadrants:

- Q1. Important and Urgent (e.g. sermon)
- Q2. Important but Not Urgent (e.g. training)
- Q3. Urgent but Not Important (e.g. admin)
- Q4. Not Urgent and Not Important (e.g. 90% emails)

Covey believes the most effective people live the majority of their lives in Q2, looking after those

aspects of their lives that are important but not yet urgent (think again of training and equipping leaders ...the harvest of leaders you do have now or don't have now relates to the time you spent in Q2 last year or didn't spend in Q2 last year...). As ministers, we think we are doing well if we are scheduling and protecting Q1. We only dream of getting to Q2. That's because we haven't learnt how to really control Q3 & Q4. And Covey doesn't teach you!

'time management' isn't a dirty word...

...and not just because it's two words either...

It's easy for Evangelicals to be cynical about the value of such 'worldly' tools as time management books. The danger however, is that our cynicism may be too selective. We slam those who uncritically adopt worldly models for ministry. But perhaps avoid biblical scrutiny of our own models. It's comforting to see ourselves as the holy minority battling for biblical faithfulness. After all, if it works it's probably heretical, right? Hey, I'm surprised you're even reading this ministry paper with the words "how to" in the title!

We're not worldly, but are we wise? There's a biblical stream called wisdom—are we swimming in it? There's a biblical theme called stewardship—are we doing it?

Paying close attention to the book of Proverbs might help us here. Is it a problem for you that Proverbs has wholesale incorporated dozens of wisdom sayings from other Ancient Near East literature? It won't be a problem if you see how all those sayings are totally transformed when placed under the Proverbs banner: 'the fear of the LORD (1:7, 9:10). We can eagerly plunder the world's wisdom if we build on that foundation. In Proverbs, just as in the Exodus, Egyptian jewels have been plundered and placed within their right setting: worship of the one true God. All knowledge is God's knowledge.

It is possible to plunder Egypt without building a golden calf. The challenge is not to ignore knowledge that can be gained from the world, but rather to so fear the LORD that we always put it to use in service of Him.



what's the next action?

This simple question is revolutionary. Consistently asking it will transform your effectiveness. The key to doing more training isn't simply being told to "get into Q2", but learning to control the 100s of Q1, Q3 & Q4 items always coming at you. You need martial art effectiveness in parrying them off. Learning to ask and apply "What's the next action?" is the key.

get rid of your "TO DO" list

you've finally found fifteen minutes to sit down and do some planning. "This week I'm going to get organised!" But where to start? The study is a mess, there's a hundred things that could be done. Well, I can at least start with writing a "to do" list! You sit down at the desk, stare into space and list away...

Bible Talk
AGM

men's breakfast
music program
sort emails
order 'getting things done'
phone newcomers
fix photocopier
buy fruit & veg
train more leaders

There is something good to be said for the good old "to do" list. We realise instinctively that it's good to try to get things out of our head and down on paper. But how do you know you got everything out of your head? How thorough was the sweep? What about all those piles of folders and random post-it notes all around the study? And the other files still in the car? What lurks in all these files? And why are there so many emails still sitting in your inbox anyway?

Another question: why did you put "Men's Breakfast" on your list when it's still 6 months away? Buying the bacon, or booking a speaker? Perhaps the latter should have gone on your list. Maybe an entry in your calendar would also be helpful, setting aside an hour next month to plan out what else needs to be done and who's going to do it. "Training leaders" might need more than an hour scheduled! And how are you going to phone those newcomers when their numbers are still down at the church building? Maybe this 'to do' list thing isn't getting things done!

getting things done

Learning to ask and apply the question "What's the next action?" is at the heart of this excellent book, *Getting Things Done* (formerly published as *How to Get Things Done*), by David Allen. What Allen offers, however, is much more than just that one powerful tool. The book presents a comprehensive system for "stress-free productivity", especially in the face of modern challenges such as email. "Stress free" may be promising a bit too much, but this book is a wonderful jewel of Egypt that you'd do well to plunder in service of the Christ. Acts 6 calls us to ensure we have a plan for keeping our focus on the ministry of word and prayer. Ephesians 4 calls us to equip God's people for works of service. 1 Timothy 4 calls us to devote ourselves to such ministry. We are fools and sluggards if we don't learn how to organise ourselves for the ministry that matters. I have "a friend" in ministry who has been sleeping a lot better since implementing Allen's approach to workflow (more on the backpage). Just to whet your appetite.... here's a few other simple, powerful tools in the book...

getting it out of your head

your head is a bad inbox... having reliable places to plot all thoughts is wonderful.

keeping "in" empty

especially with emails—learning to process them efficiently so in is empty every day

the two minute rule

we often spend a total of 30 minutes deferring over & over, a 30 seconds task

throwing out more

when you're committed to keeping in empty you get better at deleting & binning

using the diary/calendar more

if it needs an hour, schedule it and forget it till the hour arrives

the "waiting for" list

e.g. you've sent a request for info—you need to track such 'open loops' till they close

the @shops or @home lists

having subcategories within the next actions list based on locations

the dymo labeler

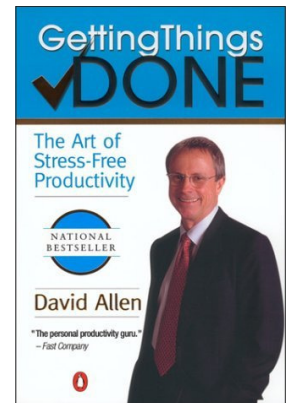
have a stack of manila folders in reach & a labeler, to instantly create project files

A-Z filing

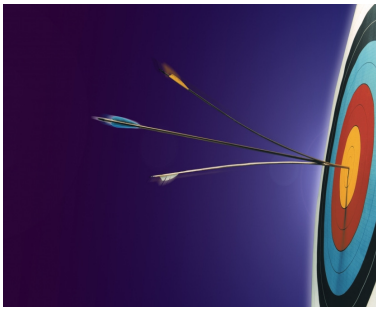
turf the labels on your suspension files & replace them with A-Z... always current!

the weekly review

more on the next page, but planning/reviewing is what keeps it all going... a small amount of time daily, and larger amounts of time quarterly/yearly/etc are vital... but your weekly review is critical especially in the weekly rhythm of ministry



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staying on target

Remember that the goal of all of this organizing is not just to be *efficient* as an end in itself, but effective for Christ. Indeed, if you choose the wrong goals, or don't watch your life and doctrine closely, you'll be dangerous—a more efficient heretic! The model below is helpful, but make sure you use it to allow more time for equipping God's people for works of service.

planning to plan

You know the old saying that if you're ever going to plan, you need to plan to plan. It's true. You need to set aside, for example, 15 minutes a day, an hour a week, a day a quarter, a week a year... to PLAN.

Everything you do every other minute, hour, day, week etc will be so much more effective if you maintain this discipline. You will be amazed at the difference in your effectiveness and ability to do that all important Q2 stuff. You'll get training leaders off a to do list and into a plan you're not just committed in your head to, but actually doing.

Absolutely vital to the 'mastering workflow' system depicted in the chart on the right is the ongoing process of planning/review on a regular basis. The chart itself really only covers the collecting, processing and organizing phases of workflow. You need to add to the picture your regular times of review/planning...in order to actually DO.

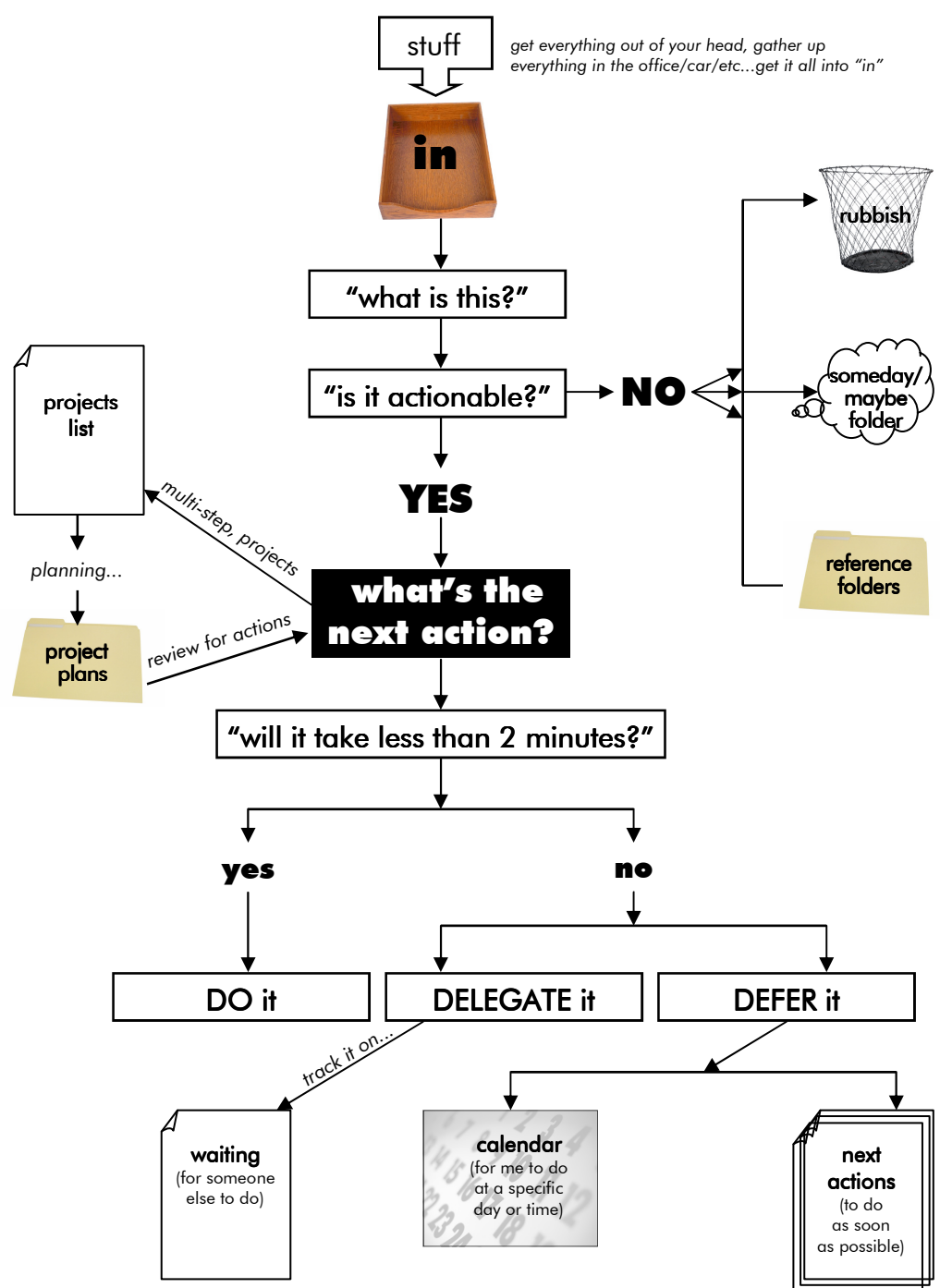
Allen has a great analogy for the different levels of planning... think of it as a climbing aircraft...

- Runway**
current actions = daily
- 10,000 ft**
current projects = weekly
- 20,000 ft.**
current responsibilities = monthly
- 30,000 ft.**
1-2 yr goals = quarterly
- 40,000 ft.**
3-5 yr goals = annually
- 50,000 ft.**
career (!) lifestyle, etc = annually+

So a NEXT ACTION right now is... schedule the different levels (and quantity of time needed) of planning into your day/week/calendar for the rest of the year. You won't get off the ground unless you plan to plan.

mastering workflow

You really need to read 'Getting Things Done' to implement Allen's system effectively. But here's an adaptation of his workflow diagram (p.36) that gives an overview of the summary to see its potential...



the above diagram represents the first 3 stages in mastering workflow: COLLECT, PROCESS, ORGANISE The next 2 stages are REVIEW & DO (!)—see sidebar for more.