

a Christian  
perspective on  
how to best  
do what's best

# Getting Things Done for the Glory of God

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# Primary Sources

- Getting Things Done (GTD) by David Allen
  - My favorite nuts and bolts of how to capture and track tasks, how to organize and plan work life.
- What's Best Next by Matt Perman
  - A Christian perspective on GTD, First Things First, and other productivity literature, lacking GTD's details
- First Things First by Steven Covey, A. R. Merrill, and R. R. Merrill
  - Prioritizing the Important in the face of the Urgent
- Do More Better: A Practical Guide to Productivity by Tim Challies
  - Why productivity is about glorifying God, and practical apps towards that end

# Outline

- ❑ Motivation for biblical productivity
- ❑ Top Down Approach from Roles, Relationships, and Responsibilities down to Inbox Processing and Next Action Items
  - Psalm 90:12 - Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.
- ❑ Lowest levels of Allen's 6-Level Model for Work Review
  - 20,000 feet: Areas of responsibility
  - 10,000 feet: Current projects
  - Runway: Current actions

# Challies' Productivity Catechism

- ❑ Q1: Ultimately, why did God create you?
  - A: God created me to bring glory to Him.
- ❑ Q2: How can you glorify God in your day-to-day life?
  - A: I can glorify God in my day-to-day life by doing good works.
- ❑ Q3: What are good works?
  - A: Good works are deeds done for the glory of God and the benefit of other people.
- ❑ Q4: But you are a sinful person. Can you actually do good works?
  - A: Yes. Christians are able to do good works because of the finished work of Christ.
- ❑ Q5: In what areas of life should you emphasize good works?
  - A: I ought to emphasize good works at all times and in all areas of life.
- ❑ Q6: What is productivity?
  - A: **Productivity is effectively stewarding my gifts, talents, time, energy, and enthusiasm for the good of others and the glory of God.**

# Motivation: Soli Deo Gloria

- ❑ Without a God-centric focus, our plans are a “meaningless chasing after the wind.” (Ecclesiastes 1)
- ❑ It’s possible to run a treadmill in life with great drive, great outward productivity, and great futility.
  - Proverbs 19:1 - Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails.
- ❑ Bach penned “Soli Deo Gloria” (Glory to God alone) on his works. We too should be motivated to have our lives glorify God.
  - Matthew 5:16 - In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

# Love the Lord with All You Are

- ❑ You have unique talents, unique skills, and a unique calling.
- ❑ Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30)
  - “Well done, good and faithful servant! ... Come and share your master’s happiness!”
  - It makes no sense that our imperfect lives would *merit* the favor of a perfect God, but our desire to bring God *happiness* with our lives is a grateful *response* to His gracious embrace.
- ❑ Lyrics to Petra’s Godpleaser

# Roles, Relationships, and Responsibilities

- 20,000 feet – areas of responsibility
  - Think of everyone in your life.
  - Characterize the relationships you have (or should have) with each and what role you are called to (e.g. son/daughter, student, friend, mentor, etc.).
  - Do not forget your Foremost Defining Relationship!
  - What are your responsibilities in these relationship roles? (e.g. prayer, call and encourage family members, responsibly complete assignments, be a servant leader in your Christian fellowship, etc.)

# Projects

- 10,000 feet – projects
  - What are the practical “project” headings that categorize your responsibilities?
  - (e.g. courses, Church participation, fellowship service, clubs, or non-traditional project categories such as “family”, “friends”, “long-distance friends”)
  - Personal note: While it may seem somehow cold or clinical to treat people I love with the same status as “projects”, it is precisely that I do not wish the myriad work projects to crowd them out as unimportant by omission. This is the essence of intentional relationship.
  - We categorize so that we can regularly review and note if any area of activity (i.e. “project”) is being neglected or overemphasized.
- **Activity: Make an outline of your roles, relationships, responsibilities, and related “projects” (e.g. Christian (prayer, scripture study, ...), student (course 1, course 2, ...), etc.), ...**



# GTD Summary

- Getting Things Done (GTD) model by David Allen:
  - Define and use your inboxes
  - Process your inboxes daily
  - Review your system and plans weekly

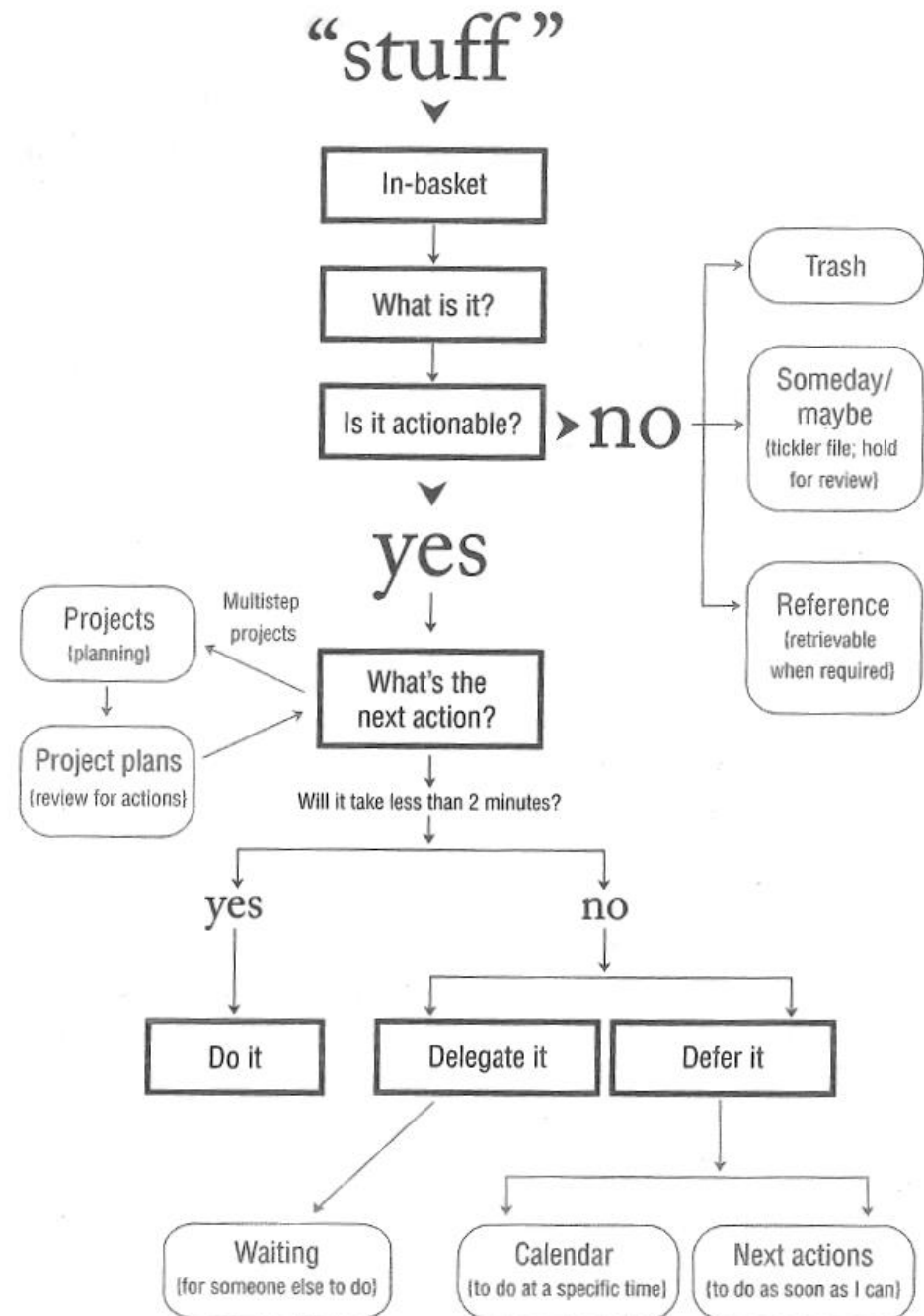
# Define and Use Your Inboxes

- ❑ **First, list all places where you expect to get “stuff”.**
  - Examples: email inbox, mailbox, backpack, desk inbox
- ❑ Next, find a time soon to:
  - throw *all* of your task-related stuff into these inboxes
  - process them (Note: “process” doesn’t mean “do”)
- ❑ **Build a *habit of capturing* tasks into your system by putting task-related stuff into your inboxes.**
  - If it’s in your system, it doesn’t have to be in your head. This is an example of “distributed cognition”.
- ❑ **Activity: List *all* of your inboxes.**

# Process Your Inboxes

- ❑ **Process your inboxes daily**, i.e. capture task next steps, due dates, etc. onto lists and calendars.
- ❑ For each inbox item:
  1. Decide whether or not to file it.
  2. If not, identify the next action.
  3. Process the next action.

# Process Your Inboxes



Flowchart from Getting Things Done by David Allen

# 1. Decide Whether or Not to File It

- For each inbox item: **“Is this actionable?”**
  - Actionable for a current priority?
    - **Yes.** → Step 2.
  - Reference item?
    - **Yes.** → File it.
  - Possible future task? Not a current priority?
    - **Yes.** → Add it to a “Someday/Maybe” list and file it.
  - Otherwise, recycle or trash it. (Circular file!)

# Tool Break #1: Filing Tools

- Someday/Maybe:
  - Challies' recommendation: Todoist "Someday/Maybe" project
  - Google doc
  - "Someday/Maybe" file folder with paper notes
  - What do/will you use to store someday/maybe ideas?
- Reference:
  - Challies' recommendation: Evernote
  - Cloud storage: e.g. Dropbox, Google Drive, One Drive
  - File folders
  - What do/will you use to store reference materials?

# 2. Identify the Next Action

- ❑ For this item, what is the next physical/visible step of progress? Make it concrete. Examples:
  - ~~Climb the mountain.~~ Locate the trailhead.
  - ~~Get a summer internship.~~
    - Request an appointment with a Center for Career Development Career counselor.
  - ~~Write a paper on topic X.~~
    - Research information on X, write the thesis statement, outline paper, write first draft, ...
- ❑ For larger projects, take a few minutes to outline your plan, but **the next action should be concrete**, not abstract.

# 3. Process the Next Action

- ❑ If it would take less than 2 minutes to do, **do it now**.
- ❑ If not, should you be doing it? If not, **delegate it**.
- ❑ Otherwise, **defer it**.
  - If it's time-specific, **put it on your calendar**.
    - Examples: scheduled classes, project partner meetings, extracurricular events
  - If it's to do ASAP, **add it to your "Next Actions" list**.
    - Examples: assignments (include due dates!), project steps, promises to friends, summer internship search steps



# Tool Break #2: Calendar / Next Actions

- ❑ Calendar:
  - Challies' recommendation: Google Calendar
  - Paper planner
  - What do/will you use to store time-specific events?
- ❑ Next Actions:
  - Challies' recommendation: Todoist
  - Google tasks (within Gmail and Google Calendar)
  - Paper to-do lists
  - What do/will you use to store "what's best next" tasks?

# Weekly Review

- **Make a regularly scheduled weekly time to *prayerfully* review your system.** Examples of things to review:
  - Consider the past week with respect to your roles, relationships, and responsibilities.
  - Are you getting all task-related items into your inboxes?
  - Are you processing your inboxes daily?
  - Review past and future calendar dates for new action items.
  - Review project/long-term task plans.
  - Review any lists you keep, e.g. “Next Actions”  
“Someday/Maybe”
  - Allot time for important, non-urgent tasks in the coming week’s calendar.

# The Clock and the Compass

- In Covey, Merrill, & Merrill's *First Things First*,
  - the *clock* symbolizes the life driven by urgency and disconnected from purpose and meaning, whereas
  - the *compass* symbolizes the life driven by "true north" principles and purpose.
- Activity can be (I)mportant and/or (U)rgent.
  - I notate Covey et al's "quadrants" as follows: Quadrant I (+I+U), II (+I-U), III (-I+U), IV (-I-U).
  - High performance organizations typically have a high proportion of II (+I-U, compass), whereas typical organizations have a high proportion of III (-I+U, clock).
- Quadrant II time doesn't take place by accident. We must apportion time to it.
  - Many spiritual disciplines fall into this category, as does career research, internship applications, relationship building, etc.
  - A weekly schedule where you block out time for Quadrant II is helpful.
- **Question: What are examples of activities/tasks in your life that are important but not urgent, i.e. must be done now/soon?**

# Productivity Through Self- and Other-Accountability

- Robert Boice study on scholarly writing productivity:
  - Control group:
    - Tended to write in binges before deadlines, no intervention
    - ~16.9 pages / year
  - Self-Accountable group:
    - Committed to **writing daily** for 15-60 minutes (30 min. avg.) and **keep a daily writing log**
    - ~63.7 pages / year (~3.8× control group)
  - Self- and Other-Accountable group:
    - Committed to **writing daily** for 15-60 minutes (30 min. avg.) and **keep a daily writing log**
    - Committed to **be accountable for progress to someone else weekly**
    - ~157.3 pages / year (~9.3× control group, ~2.5 × self-accountable group)

# Review

- ❑ Prayerfully consider:
  - All of the precious people God has placed in your life, your relationship to them, and the roles in their lives God has called you to.
  - A helpful categorization of all of your “projects”.
- ❑ Define your Inboxes and habitually direct incoming “stuff” to them.
- ❑ Process your Inboxes daily.
- ❑ Review your system weekly and plan next week. Block out and defend this time (and other Quadrant II time) on a weekly schedule.
- ❑ **Question: What additional time management wisdom and tips do you have to share with others?**

# Conclusion of the Matter

## □ Key Scriptures:

- Psalm 90:12 - Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.
- Ecclesiastes 9:10 - Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the realm of the dead, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.
- Ecclesiastes 12:13 - Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind.
- 1 Corinthians 10:31 - So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.
- Colossians 3:17 - And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.
- Colossians 3:23-24 - Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.
- Matthew 5:16 - In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

- **Throughout our short lives, may we work with all of our might to love and serve God and men to the glory of God alone. Amen.**

# Additional Student Resources

- My GTDFTGOG talk resources (slides, books, etc.):  
<http://cs.gettysburg.edu/~tneller/resources/gtd/>
- Cal Newport:
  - Getting Things Done for College Students: The Full System (<http://calnewport.com/blog/2007/07/20/getting-things-done-for-college-students-the-full-system/>)
  - Getting Things Done for College Students...Made Easy (<http://calnewport.com/blog/2008/10/06/monday-master-class-getting-things-done-for-college-studentsmade-easy/>)
- LifeHacker's Chris Lesinski: Getting Thing Done Explained for Students (<http://lifelacker.com/5334886/getting-things-done-explained-for-students>)