

4 Surprising Ways to Shorten Your To-Do List

I looked at my friend's to-do list that she posted on Instagram.

"No wonder I'm cracking!" she posted. "I need a clone."

I cringed as I looked at her list. It was long. I also cringed because I remember the feelings that huge of a to-do list brought on. The feeling that I was always behind. The feeling that I was a failure because I couldn't keep up. And it seemed the more I focused on all the ways I was behind the worse things seemed to get, especially my attitude. And as a prolific author and homeschooling mom of 10 kids, it seemed I was *always* behind.

Then I decided to make a few changes. Even though there is just as much to do, I don't have all the same anxious feelings inside. Here are four things I decided to *be*:

1. Be Choosy. I start by picking the *one thing* I want to have done that day. Yes, I do keep a to-do list, but that isn't my list for the day. My to-do list is the *one thing* I have to do. It may be to write a certain number of words on a writing project. It maybe to do an hour of homeschooling prep. It may be to do three loads of laundry. This one thing is beyond everyday homeschooling, caring for kids and cooking, although sometimes making a special meal is my one thing.

The night before, or when I first wake up, I decide on my one thing, and I give attention to that first. That means I work on my *one thing* before I get busy answering emails or scanning Facebook. And when that one thing is done I feel a sense of accomplishment! My to-do list is done. If I still have time, I think through my list again. I ask, "What is that next important thing?" There are times my one thing doesn't get

done, and if that happens, it's usually at the top of my list for the next day. And that's OK too.

2. Be Grace-filled. I am my hardest critic. It's easier for me to notice what is not done rather than what I accomplished. I've learned to give myself grace. Instead of allowing negative self-talk to pull me down. I say things like: "You are doing your best," "God loves you no matter what you get done today" and "Life isn't always about getting things done but about connecting with God and others."

3. Be Realistic. Even though I'm overwhelmed, I still tend to take on more things. (Why do I do that?) It's hard, but I've learned to say no more often. I do better when I'm realistic about what I can accomplish, especially with kids still in the house. Some days I may not get an hour of work done even though I've scheduled it because things come up—and that's reality. When I'm realistic from the start about how much I can accomplish, I don't get so stressed when I don't accomplish much that day.

4. Be Truthful. Sometimes when I have a full to-do list, I ask myself, "Why?" Am I trying to gain the approval of others? Am I not being wise with my time? Am I depending on my own wisdom and strength instead of turning to God? These take some soul-searching at times.

Or, the truth may be that it's just a really hard week, and the next one will be better, with less work and less stress. There have been times I've had to take on more work to meet a financial need, and that's okay, too.

Considering the truth about the situation makes me examine more closely why I'm choosing to do all I do. Sometimes the truth helps me to let go of some of my expectations or cut back on my to-do list. Other times the truth makes me realize I just need to buckle down and work hard for a while, even if there are more stress and challenges.

The most important truth that I tell myself is that if I *could* do everything myself I *wouldn't need* God. The truth is God doesn't want me to do everything on my own. He wants me to turn to Him, to depend on Him. God wants me to be needy so that I will turn to the source of my need, which is Himself.

All of us will struggle with having more to do than we have time. But hopefully, these tips will give you peace. Since you can't clone yourself, maybe there is something here that might be a better option! {eo}

Tricia Goyer is a busy mom of 10, grandmother of two and wife to John. Somewhere around the hustle and bustle of family life, she manages to find the time to write fictional tales delighting and entertaining readers and non-fiction titles offering encouragement and hope. A bestselling author, Tricia has published 50 books to date and has written more than 500 articles. She is a two-time Carol Award winner, as well as a Christy and ECPA Award Nominee. To connect with Tricia go to [or](#)

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