

How to Defeat Procrastination

It's been said that "A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step."

The biggest thief of our dreams is procrastination. We can *think* about doing the right thing, *plan* to do it and *talk* about doing it, but nothing changes in our lives until we start consistently *doing* what we need to do!

For instance, perhaps you are struggling with bad habits that are holding you back. You would like to change, but you're not sure you *want* to change. Someone once said that bad habits are like a comfortable bed; they're easy to get into, but hard to get out of.

But think of it this way: Are you willing to sacrifice and do the more difficult thing now in order to enjoy a life of freedom later on?

Hebrews 12:11 (NIV) says, "No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it."

The irony is that we are often unwilling to suffer for a short while just to do what needs to be done. Then we end up with continual misery, dread, guilt and the penalties of having put off something that would have taken a few minutes or a few hours to do.

In other words, by putting off the pain of doing something hard, we often spend much more time avoiding it than it would take to just do it.

To me, nothing feels better than knowing I am doing my best, making the best choices I can make and consistently making progress toward the best life God has for me.

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Being mediocre does not feel good to me, and I doubt that it feels good to you either. You may have gotten used to it and forgotten that there is something better, but this is a wake-up call to arise and be all you can be. The best time to get started is now.

Procrastination is deceptive. It makes us complacent by telling us that we are going to do the right thing. It justifies inactivity. I once heard a story someone made up to illustrate this point:

Three demons who were graduating from their course on how to deceive people in the world and prevent them from knowing God. Satan was questioning each demon, and he asked each one how he would deceive people.

The first one answered that he would tell people there was no God. Satan answered, "You won't deceive many because most people down deep inside of them do believe God exists even if they have not chosen to follow Him."

The second demon said he would tell people heaven and hell didn't really exist. Satan said, "You will deceive a few more than your co-worker, but you won't get many souls either."

The third demon said that he would tell people that there was no hurry, and they could put off the decision to follow God until another time. Satan got excited and said loudly, "You will reap many souls for the kingdom of darkness by simply telling them to make the decision later."

I have never forgotten this story even though I heard it more than 30 years ago.

Procrastination is a thief—it steals our time, our potential, our self-esteem and our peace of mind. It is like a lullaby

that whispers, "Go to sleep—everything will be fine." But everything will not be fine if we put off doing what we need to do. And the task isn't going to get done by itself!

Procrastination is deceptive, and we can only conquer it by becoming what I call a "now" person. Be aggressive when you know you need to do something. Don't put it off and keep putting it off—just do it!

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When we put things off, they aggravate us. We may not even be consciously aware of it, but unfinished projects pressure us.

If you walk through your home and see dishes in the sink, laundry on the floor, trash cans filled to the brim, beds unmade and every countertop piled high with mail that needs to be sorted, I feel certain that it pressures you in some way.

You may even get grouchy and start an argument with someone else in the house just because you feel overwhelmed. When we find fault with someone else, it diverts our attention from how we feel about ourselves. Procrastination never makes us feel good.

If the grass needs to be cut, the weeds need to be pulled, the car needs to be washed and the oil needs to be changed, and the garage is a disorganized mess, it pressures you. You can complain about the mess, or you can stop procrastinating and take action one item at a time to bring order to your home.

God is certainly a God of order and organization. Some of the details recorded in the Bible about the building of the ark and the temple are just amazing to me. God made sure that everything was done in the most orderly and best way possible. Chaos makes us feel confused, and God is not the author of confusion, but He's a God of order and peace (1 Cor. 14:33).

I encourage you to form the habit of being a now person—one who does what needs to be done as soon as you can. All truly successful people have this habit. We don't become successful by putting things off!

Again, something can seem so big in our minds, but if we make a decision to just get going and take action, it's amazing how much differently things appear after we make a little progress.

Galatians 6:9 is so encouraging. It says, "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

Take a few moments right now and ask God to give you the grace to become a now person. Then write down one or two things—even if they are small—that you can do today to get started. *Then do them.* Little by little, you can defeat procrastination if you refuse to give up.

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