

Escaping the Pressure Cooker . . .

“Late again! . . . How did this happen? . . . Why didn’t I start earlier? . . . What is the matter with me? The deadline has come and gone, but here I am again . . . feeling guilty, frustrated, and defeated. How can I get myself out of this pressure cooker and enjoy completing a task—and, yes, even complete it on time!”

Procrastination is a thief, continually robbing me of those wonderfully rewarding words, “Job well done!” Of course, others are continually robbed of receiving my work on time. Procrastination has stolen my confidence, my integrity, and my peace. Now, the cry of my heart is, “Lord, please show me how to prevent this destructive decay of delay. Oh, Master, teach me how to faithfully manage my time!”

“Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.”
(Luke 12:42–43)

Q: “Is there a difference between procrastination and laziness?”

Many people assume that procrastinators are always lazy; however, laziness is just one of the causes of procrastination. If you are lazy, you are negligent in handling your responsibilities because of your not choosing to do what you need to do. On the other hand, you may be highly productive and in no way lazy, but still procrastinate by simply failing to start a task on time. One procrastinator has the desire to work and yet delays—the other lacks the desire to work and then refuses.

“The desire of the sluggard kills him, for his hands refuse to labor.”
(Proverbs 21:25)

Q: “Could there be a combination of causes for my procrastination that would make overcoming my temptation to delay a more difficult struggle?”

Yes. One person could be both fear-based and excessively overwhelmed and therefore struggle with major procrastination. Another person could put things off because of both low self-worth and a lack of goals.

Whether your procrastination stems from one cause or several causes, the Bible says that each and every temptation to procrastinate can be overcome.

“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”
(1 Corinthians 10:13)

Checklist for Possible Procrastinators

The following questions will help you determine whether you have potholes—if procrastination is causing your life to be bumpy.

- Do you delay until it's too late to start a project?
- Do you obstruct the efforts of others by delaying doing your part?
- Do you avoid competition and other situations where you might not succeed?
- Do you act indecisively and force others to make decisions?
- Do you dodge making commitments?
- Do you become irritable when asked to do something unpleasant?
- Do you find yourself consistently late for appointments?
- Do you pay bills and other financial obligations late?
- Do you become addicted to time-wasting activities such as watching TV or shopping?

“An intelligent heart acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.”
(Proverbs 18:15)

Four Contributing Factors for Needless Delay

Learned behavior . . . Over time, we generally learn how to respond in life by observing and “copying” those around us.

Lack of self-discipline . . . A lack of organizational skills is more of a technique problem, whereas a lack of self-discipline is more of an emotional problem.

Poor project management . . . Feeling overwhelmed by the enormity of a large task is the result of seeing the task as one huge job rather than a complex job with several smaller, more manageable components.

Poor time management . . . Not using time wisely when working on a project can lead to disaster.

“Let us choose what is right; let us know among ourselves what is good.”
(Job 34:4)

Key Verses to Memorize

“Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time.”
(Ephesians 5:15–16)

Key Passage to Read and Reread

Proverbs 24:30–34

Ten Steps to Success

1. **Acknowledge** that procrastination is the assassin of your motivation. (Proverbs 21:25)
2. **Tell** God that you are tired of fighting the clock and pray for wisdom in using time. (Ecclesiastes 8:6)
3. **Keep** a small datebook with you at all times. (Ecclesiastes 3:17)
4. **Don't** major on the minors. Each day, number the five most important tasks and do them in that order. (Proverbs 28:19)
5. **Realistically** evaluate the time needed to complete each project. (Luke 14:28–29)
6. **Don't** feel guilty if you can't complete all your tasks in one day—you can't! (Hebrews 10:35–36)
7. **Evaluate** your self-talk when you get emotionally stuck. (Psalm 19:14)
8. **If you struggle** with getting started, ask a friend or someone wise to help you. (Proverbs 12:15)
9. **Yield** your life to Christ, giving Him total control. (Galatians 2:20)
10. **Claim** God's promise to provide everything you need through your dependence on Christ. (2 Peter 1:3–4)

Prevent the Decay of Delay

When you know what you should do, yet can't seem to do it, you need to learn how to "prevent the decay of delay." Start by taking time to be alone. Reflect over two or three occasions in the past when you needlessly put something off. Write down what you remember.

- What responsibility did you put off?
- What led you to procrastinate?
- What feelings did you have?
- What was the outcome of your procrastination?
- What other people were affected by your lack of follow-through?
- Were there any common patterns of behavior? For example, were you afraid of someone's response—are you "fear-based"?

This awareness alone will not bring about change, but it can motivate you to take the first steps.

Related Topics . . .

- Critical Spirit:
Be an Encourager—Not a Critic
- Guilt:
Living Guilt Free
- Habits:
Success in Self-Control
- Perfectionism:
The Push to Perform
- Pride & Humility:
The Prescription for "I" Strain
- Self-Worth:
Discerning Your God-Given Value

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Procrastination:
Preventing the Decay of Delay.

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