

BOOK FIVE

THE THIRD PRINCIPLE: Cycle Completion



As requested, he arrived at Frank's office at the end of the business day, and he was soon seated in a chair in front of his brother-in-law's desk.

"I'm ready for the third secret," he announced.

Frank laughed. "If that's true, you're the first."

"What do you mean?"

"People resist the third secret, but it is really the key point. Let's review first, shall we?"

"OK."

"The first secret is..."

"Take a minute to pray."

"And this means?"

"Our first priority is to plan our work in cooperation with our partner in life, God, who already has a plan. Before each task we take a minute to pray and reorient ourselves to both God's plan and purpose and our own plan and purpose. In this way we can fully know and fully achieve the vital 20% of our tasks which yields 80% of the benefit."

"And we call this?"

“Prayerwork.”

“And how do we accomplish this?”

“We journal until we achieve clarity about God’s will. *Journal clarity.*”

“And the second secret is...”

“Take a minute for people.”

“And this means?”

“Our first priority as we do our work is to focus on the people involved. They are the key to the best results.”

“And we call this?”

“Peoplework.”

“And how do we accomplish this?”

“*Network elements.* We recognize the elements in a human network and how they function interactively. We care for the system by taking care of the people in the system.”

“It sounds like you understand what you’ve learned so far,” Frank said. “And now we come to the third secret.” Frank showed him a framed plaque on the wall of his office. “Here is the basic concept of the third secret.”

The minister stood to read the plaque.

No job is finished until the paperwork is done!

“The third principle is this: *when I spend a minute on closure, I harvest what I have sown.* When we live the third concept, we take a minute to finish. And we call this

paperwork.”

The minister nodded. Finishing had always been a problem for him.

“Imagine all the work of a farmer throughout the year. It’s pointless if it is left in the field and not harvested. And closure is like picking the ripe fruit; it only takes a minute, but it’s the minute where you get paid for all your efforts.”

“That makes sense.”



“What would you say is the most valuable truth you have learned so far?” Frank asked.

“Show me the money. That one out of every five things that I do is significant and I should invest my time in identifying and performing that one task.”

“And what would you guess is the hardest part of the system for people?”

“I don’t know what that could be. It seems pretty easy to me.”

“The hard part is the third secret. And it’s hard because people think they can beat the system.”

“I don’t know what you mean.”

“The point of a system is to help you keep your life in balance. Therefore there are priorities, and you pray to God who is our first priority, and you pay attention to people because that is the second priority. Time invested here is worthwhile as these tasks are definitely in the vital 20%, and they point to the others that are in the vital 20% percent. When people focus on doing a great job at what is truly important they become

very productive.”

“So what’s the problem?”

“The problem is that you can’t ignore the other 80%. It has to be done as well.”

The minister was confused.

“You can’t beat the system,’ Frank said, ”and this is the mistake that people make. They start rearranging their schedules as if they could beat the percentages, so that in their minds they are working on the first vital 20% and then add a second vital 20% and doubling their productivity, and then doing it again.”

“I am a lot more productive!”

“I’m certain you are, because you are now giving the vital 20% the proper amount of attention. But the percentages don’t change in the 80/20 universe just because you’ve discovered the vital 20%. You still have to deal with the remaining 80%.”

“But it’s a waste of my time, you said.”

“Absolutely. Around here, however, we hire people to do 100% of a job, not just the first 20% that’s important. And they don’t last long if they continually fall 20% short of the results they are hired to achieve.”

“I ...” The minister was crestfallen. “I thought I would be able to focus on what was truly important and not have my day dominated by trivialities. This was very exciting to me. Now you are telling me I still have to do them.”

“You are right. You still have to do them, but you can do this and still achieve your goal to focus on what is truly important. The remainder - I don’t like calling them trivialities - has to get done. And it is a waste of time, so to speak, but a necessary waste. The emphasis of the third secret is to take the minutes necessary to finish up, but

waste absolutely no more than is necessary to achieve closure. It's all about *cycle completion*; go around the track all the way to the finish line. No matter how great you are, you can't win any race until you cross the finish line."



"I think Bill talked about this," the minister said. "He separated his cards so that he could focus on the vital tasks, but left the others in a pile for later. He got really angry when I asked him if he ever made a mistake putting a card in the wrong pile."

"What did he call that?"

"Crossing the categories?"

"Right. It's not a matter of putting a card in the wrong pile. What most people do is to pile up their non-priorities and ignore them; Bill doesn't ignore them. He is aware of everything in that pile, and is committed to finishing each of them before they ever become a problem that would result in that card crossing the category quality line ... moving from the trivial 80% to the vital 20% because he had ignored it."

"That's a violation of the system?"

"That violates the system, and is the heart of the third secret. You **HAVE** to deal with the little things, and it is wisest to deal with them while they are little. But you don't have to deal with them first, and you shouldn't. Implementing the third secret keeps things in perspective in your time management system."

"Which system do you use? The journal? Cards?"

"There are advantages to every system. What's important is to find what works

best for you, and you can only do that by practicing with them. Every system is a way of keeping lists.” Bill pointed to his daily organizer. “I use a standard organizer off the shelf. There are a variety here as well, and you can purchase what you need as you learn what that is. They all have the same basic design: a day of work is on display, separated into a calendar for appointments and a to do list. There is also a place for record keeping, sometimes just for expenses, sometimes for billing time to clients, sometimes for a diary of actions taken, results achieved, etc. There’s room for other information as well in the organizer. Some people cart around a years worth of work in a binder, other’s carry a month at a time in a suit pocket.”

“I can see the basic model in Bill’s cards. He has cards for people, cards for tasks. He writes appointments on the cards, and results on the cards.”

“Angel does the same in her journal. Things to pray about, peoplework and paperwork. We have five basic lists and you will find them in every organization system: I have a list of decisions to pray about, a list of people to see, a list of things to be done, a list to keep track of my time (which we call a calendar), and a list to keep track of money. Those are the basics.”

“Why is crossing the categories so important?”

“The secret to exterminating dragons is to do it while they are small and weak; don’t let them attain full growth. That’s also the secret to solving problems. Everything in the 80% pile is a problem if it is not done. Crossing the categories means that you waited so long to solve the problem that it became a huge problem, growing in severity until it crossed the quality line between categories.”

“Can you give me an example?”

“Sure.” Frank opened a drawer and gave the minister a small piece of gauze. “This is called a sponge. They cost a few cents and are used in open heart surgery; they are placed inside an incision to soak up blood so the surgeon can see to work. The important focus of the surgery is the bypass itself; the sponge is only there to help that goal. But if even one of these sponges is left behind in the incision after the surgeon closes, you are in a world of hurt. Everything is not equally important, but everything IS important in it’s own way.”

“Another example,” Frank continued. “Let’s assume you are the world’s greatest plumber. When you need a plumber in an emergency you really need a plumber. The important part of any task is the quality of the work done for the customer; that is peoplework, after all. Craftsmen who satisfy customers will have all the business they can handle because of the quality of their work. That same business will fail, however, if attention is not paid to little pieces of paper that have nothing to do with plumbing.”

“What’s that?”

“It’s the plumbing that’s important. But a little thing like sending out a bill is what gets the plumber paid for that great work. The bill is not in the vital 20% but it is absolutely necessary for the survival of the business. The plumber is famous for plumbing, not for artistic bills. There is no value to investing energy in creating the perfect bill, written with a quill pen on elegant parchment and sent by priority mail. Any piece of paper will do so long as what’s on it is sufficient. But it must be done; the cycle must be completed or we don’t get paid. The vital 20% is why we are paid well; finishing the remainder is about getting paid.”

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Frank opened his desk drawer and took out a roll of masking tape. He tore off a two foot section and put it horizontally across his desk. “This is the important line; 20% goes over the line, 80% goes under the line. 100% of it has to get done.”

“The job isn’t finished until the paperwork is done,” the minister quoted. “So I need to include time for paperwork in my routine.”

”The heart of the third secret is to remember that we live within a system that we create; systems preserve homeostasis. Once a system gets itself in order it will tend to preserve that method of dealing with reality, so we want to go with the flow in our system rather than continually oppose it. Nature thrives on processes that are routine, and so do human beings. We are created to live in that context. So, develop a thoughtful routine through your prayerwork. And that routine *must* deal with the remaining 80% of tasks in one way or another.”

“I like variety in my day. Don’t routines rob us of freedom?”

“We all like freedom; it’s one of the basic human needs, which are relationships, power, fun and freedom. When we develop a routine, however, we need to remember that it is *our* routine. We can change it if we want to, but if we can’t stick with a routine then we have probably not thought through what our routine should be.”

“Can you give me an example?”

Frank laughed. “Remember when you wanted to arrange a different time to meet with the One Minute Minister other than that Wednesday night at Porch?”

“Yes.”

“That’s his routine at work. His time to help you was that Wednesday night and no other. That helps him keep control over the rest of his week. He asks people to adapt to his routine; those who have no routine and those who need him usually don’t mind that adaptation.”

“What if my need had been more urgent?”

“He has time slots in his routine for urgent things. He has to practice discernment, however, in that what might seem urgent to you is not truly urgent. And remember, only 20% of what is urgent is important. If it’s not important, why is it urgent? Who cares?”

“You seem to be saying that he doesn’t let my needs control his calendar.”

“That’s exactly what I am saying.”

“But that seems so ... selfish.”

“It might, if you believe being a minister means letting other people control you. It doesn’t.”



“You’re not a minister. You wouldn’t understand.”

Frank became visibly angry, and went to stand at the window of his office. “I understand two things. The first thing I understand is the protestant doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, which indicates that we are all servants of God, we are all ministers. I’m as much a minister as you in the eyes of God.”

“Frank... “ the minister started to apologize.

“No, let me finish. This is a significant problem for you and it is time to address it. Do you see all those cars out there?”

The minister came to the window and watched people leaving work and heading toward their cars.

“I am the head of personnel for this corporation. I am responsible for the well being of over 20,000 employees, here at headquarters and throughout our organization. That’s over a 100 times as many people as you have attending your church. When you factor in their families, the number goes up significantly.”

“Are you saying you are their minister?”

“Not in the mistaken way you are saying it. I don’t teach Bible classes during their work breaks or preach sermons. I do however look after their welfare as a shepherd looks after sheep. I pray for them and sometimes with them. I do my work according to principles of the bible, and sometimes share with them what that means to me. And I consider my work to be God’s work, and that’s what I mean by being a minister. We are all ministers when we serve the Lord.”

“Here’s the second point, and the one you need to hear: you are confusing your job title with what the Bible asks of all Christians. My job description is based on a system of thought derived from the Bible and my understanding of what God wants me to do seven days a week. I did the prayerwork and developed it myself, and so I can discriminate between what belongs on my plate and what does not. You’ve not done that work, and so your job description is a blank sheet of paper. Anything anybody wants at any time of the day is therefore your job. And you will run yourself ragged trying to please all of the people all of the time. Isn’t that true?”

The minister, while rather shocked, had to admit that it was.

“You must bring into focus what is yours to do, and you need the perspective of God to do that. That’s your prayerwork. Otherwise, you are breaking the first commandment and putting the needs of human beings ahead of the needs of God. And by being a people pleaser you are making it harder for everyone else around you to discern and follow the will of God.” Frank took a deep, cleansing breath. “I minister through my job, just like you do; it’s just another place for me to practice my faith, and living my faith substantially undergirds my success because it shapes and supports my character. It’s my faith that protects me from burnout. It’s reconnecting with my own spirituality that heals me from burnout.”

“The next problem,” Frank continued, “has to do with your people. They also want to serve and you are reserving all the work for you to do yourself. They are hungry to help and you are starving them. This is your peoplework; reconnecting with your people and letting them help you heals you from the harm of overwork. You need to stop being selfish and let them be ministers working alongside of you.”

“You’re right,” the minister admitted. “Ministers are all those who do God’s work, no matter who they are. I’m sorry.”

Frank smiled widely. “You are forgiven. Bless you, my son,” he said.

They both laughed.

“I’ve always wanted to say that,” Frank said.

“You’ve got the terminology down,” the minister said, smiling back.

“And it’s true. You have the power to change. Forgiveness allows change.”

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The minister thought for a minute. “Yes, it is,” he said. “It’s a job and I am my own boss. If I don’t like the results I’m getting, it’s my own fault.”

“If you have the need and the power to change something and don’t, yes, you are responsible.”

“What happens when someone wants something from you and it is not time for it in your routine?”

“There is time in the routine every day for important things. If it is my boss, that’s automatically important, so my routine shifts. Actually, time for my boss is built into my routine, and at the time that my boss usually asks for it. If I worked directly with customers, I would likewise make time for them. That’s basic peoplework. I have other indicators of importance for which my routine will shift. But my routine does not automatically shift simply for the convenience of others, and particularly for those who are demanding my attention for a Q34 task which wastes my time.”

“So how do I use the third secret?”

“There are a number of basic principles that help us with cycle completion.” Frank opened a desk drawer and pulled a single sheet of paper from a file. “Don’t look at it now; we’ll go over these scheduling tips at the next Solomon’s Porch. Let’s look at simpler things now.”

“OK.”

“This week in your prayerwork, be aware of your life as a whole. Draw the

horizontal quality line in your mind by asking what is important and then shuffle everything that happens into the proper category above or below the quality line. And then pay attention to what gets done and what gets left undone.”

The minister groaned.

“Exactly,” Frank grinned. “I know about the little piles all over your office. And everyone else does also. And there’s more clumps of not-yet-dones in your file cabinet, aren’t there?”

“Frank, let’s not be too obsessive about this,” the minister joked.

“Exactly,” Frank said. “Not obsessing is the key to the third secret; you don’t need to worry, give in to your anxiety or strive for perfection beyond the minimum that is needed for any item below the quality line. Just get it done. Cycle completion.”

“So what do I do this week?”

“First, don’t mix things that are done with what is undone. Go through what’s on your desk, every little pile in your office, and put what’s done away so it won’t camouflage what needs to be done. Then go through what’s left and draw the horizontal quality line; sort it into what is highly profitable above the quality line, and what is not. If your below the quality line pile isn’t four times as large as the above the quality line pile, resort them again in order to achieve the 80/20 balance.”

The minister laughed. “You’re right; when I make my own list, it seems like 80% of what I do is important.”

“It is important,” Frank said. “Everything is important. It’s just not as profitable as what is in the vital 20%. Our goal this week is awareness; we want to recognize everything for what it is. And over every pile of undones I want you to say the magic

words.”

“What are those?”

“Just two: *cycle completion*.”

“That’s all?”

“That’s enough. That’s why they’re magic.”



At the next Solomon’s Porch:

“The strange thing about being a human being,” the One Minute Minister said, “is that we think we can ignore 80% of our work without consequences. It needs to be done.” He tore a two foot strip of masking tape off a roll and put it on the table in front of him as a horizontal line. “The first sorting question we ask during our prayerwork is this: *Is this important?* And if it’s important, where does it go?”

“Above the line,” the minister said.

“Once we’ve sorted everything into these two categories, which we call Q12 for the important and Q34 for the remainder, we deliberately set the remainder aside to work on what is important.

“When we are finished sorting,” Frank said, “our pile of Q34 remainders should be 80% or four times as high as our pile of Q12 importants. If not, we sort some more of what is above the line to its proper place below the line. When we start to work within a category, we first sort it according to the second sorting question.”

“During our prayerwork within a category,” Angel said, “we pray and sort again and ask the second sorting question: *Is this urgent?* And we work on what is urgent first.”

“When we are sorting,” Bill said, “we work on what involves people first.”

“You’ve had a week to look at our rules for keeping the categories straight,” the One Minute Minister said. “What do you think about them?”

“I’m ready to learn,” the minister said, looking at the list.

TAKE A MINUTE TO FINISH

No job is finished till the paperwork is done!

1. Develop a useful routine and stick with it.
2. Assign 20% of your day to each category.
3. Within each category, do urgent work and peoplework first.
4. Make appointments for Q12 tasks, make lists for Q34 tasks.
5. Make daily appointments for at least 20% of your day at your most productive time for your Q12 tasks.
6. Make a daily appointment for at least 20% of your day at your least productive time for your Q34 tasks.
7. Buffer Q12s: Do not schedule Q12's back to back; create a buffer to allow extra time if necessary to finish each one. Until you know from experience, let your buffer be 20% of the time needed to finish added to the appointment for the task.
8. Finish Q12s: it only takes a minute to do your paperwork.
9. Batch Q34s: categorize them by type of task.
10. In your weekly planning, procrastinate on your Q34s. Put them off till later in the week. Finish them as rapidly as possible.



“Let’s go through the principles one at a time. Please read the first one for me.”

“1. *Develop a useful routine and stick with it,*” the minister read.

“A useful routine has prayerwork built into it,” Angel said. “It will include time to *journal* until we achieve *clarity.*”

“A useful routine has peoplework built into it,” Bill said. “It will recognize the

human *network* of which we are a part and monitor the people that are *elements* in that network.”

“A useful routine has time for paperwork built into it,” Frank said. “It will push you for *cycle completion*.”

“Occasionally a crisis will occur that demands that we change our routine,” the One Minute Minister said. “But there is no need to change a wisely designed routine for the unimportant, however urgent it might be. If it is a part of the 80% remainder, it can wait.”

“People can’t always wait,” Bill said, “but people are by definition important. The right investment in people at the right time pays huge dividends.”

“How will I know how to develop a useful routine?”

“You pray over it,” Angel said. “Creation is built from routines and processes that repeat in endless cycles of effectiveness. Sunrise, sunset, day, night, seedtime, harvest, spring, summer, fall, winter. God brings order to chaos by the means of processes that cycle. As you pray over your life, an inner order will emerge.”

“Chaos comes from adapting to people rather than adapting to God and our own needs,” Bill said. “We need to be sensitive without being subservient.”

“The main advantage of a routine is it will help you from overinvesting in the 80% remainder while at the same time not allow you to ignore it and avoid it,” Frank said.

“Cycle completion is the heart of routine.”

“OK, I think I have that one in mind. #2. *Assign 20% of your day to each category.*”

“As 80% of the good comes from 20% of what you do,” the One Minute Minister said, “you need to set aside a minimum of 20% of your time for these most profitable tasks. To set aside less would starve them of the resources they need. So give them a minimum of 20% of your day. Usually this vital 20% of our time is the high energy part of our day. We need to give our best to what is best when we are at our best.”

“And in order to guarantee that you don’t procrastinate forever and that you are aware of what is in your remainder pile, assign another 20% of your day to the remaining 80%.” Frank smiled. “Usually this remaining 20% is the low energy time of the day and it gives a boost to clear these items one after another. If we work on them when we are tired, we aren’t as tempted to waste time on them. After all, they’re unimportant; all that matters is that they get done.”

“The remainder of the day,” Angel said, “is flexible and shifts between the categories. Don’t schedule your whole day on vitally important tasks; it’s too much.”

“And don’t waste a whole day on the remainder; they’re not worth it, unless your remainder pile gets so high you need a day to clear it. But that shouldn’t happen that often, especially if you are delegating and don’t let yourself become a task charity.”

“What is a *task charity*?” the minister asked.

“Charities help the needy,” Frank said. “Some people at work operate a charity rather than a business. All kinds of people drop by and drop off their needs for the charity worker to take care of for them so that they won’t have to do their own work. Your desk is not a dumping ground for the work to be done by other people.”

“Especially the people who work for you,” Bill said. “One of their jobs in most organizations is to work on *your* remainders, not the other way around. Whatever they can do, will do or can learn to do, delegate it to them.”

“How do I know when they are ready?”

“You pray,” Angel said.

“You know your people,” Bill said.

“You know the tasks in your remainder pile,” Frank said. “When all three are green lights, it’s safe to go ahead. Remember, the remainder isn’t important *except that it must get done*. An acceptable level of quality is usually easy to define and the only monitoring usually needed is whether a task is done or not. If your company pays for you to have a staff made up of people who are less educated or less trained than you are, the job of that staff is usually to work on the 80% remainders in your area of work to free you up to work on what is vitally important. Delegate as much as you can of the remainders.”

“And delegate prayerfully from the vital 20%,” Angel said. “Your people can’t grow if all they work on is unimportant remainders. Train them through practice on vital work as well.”

“Delegating from the vital 20% is usually a process of education and working cooperatively as you raise the effectiveness of your people,” the One Minute Minister said. “You are much more involved when you delegate from the vital 20%. It’s a partnership, both to get the job done and to coach the person doing it.”

“Cycle completion each day is the key,” Frank said.

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"#3. Within each category, do urgent work and peoplework first," the minister read.

"It's not hard to identify the urgent", the One Minute Minister said. "There will be people attached to it, clamoring for it, interrupting you to know what is happening with it."

"Urgent things demand our attention," Angel said. "It's why we prayerfully separate the important 20% from the remaining 80%; otherwise we would spend our entire day working on the urgent and missing a great deal of what is important."

"Because people are important, you do the peoplework first," Bill said. "This means first being aware of the people associated with a given task; you may need to consult them, include them or consult with them. The people component is frequently what delivers the value from the investment of your time."

"Vital projects often stall for all kinds of reasons. You need input from somebody, a part is missing, a decision from someone else is needed before you proceed," Frank said. "Cycle completion is even more important when we are dealing with a vital task."

"As prayerwork is where we do our planning," Angel said, "writing helps us clarify the task and it's components. We clarify the best way to proceed and forecast the obstacles. Its dangerous to improvise on what is important; if the payoff is four times what we put in, it's definitely worth working out the details prayerfully on paper first."

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"#4. Make appointments for Q12 tasks, make lists for Q34 tasks," the minister read.

"Important tasks take time and concentration," the One Minute Minister said. "They pay off four times what we invest in them. So make appointments for what is important to allow time to concentrate on it."

"Making appointments allows us to prioritize the important tasks for the time of day when we are at our best," Angel said. "Save your remainder tasks for when there is free time."

"Appointments are necessary for things involving other people," Bill said. "They will need time to prepare their work for your meeting and they will need a deadline as well."

"If it's not important," Frank said, "it's not worth planning; just put it on a list so you don't forget it and can easily monitor it."



"#5. Make daily appointments for at least 20% of your day at your most productive time for your Q12 tasks." the minister read.

"If it is important, it deserves its own time slot," Frank said. "You can tell what is important to a person by looking where they invest their time. Just look at their appointments."

"It seems strange to make an appointment for a task," the minister said. "I only

make appointments to see people.”

“The weakness in that is that an important task gets continually interrupted if you don’t set aside time to focus on it,” Frank said. “And 80% of interruptions are by definition unimportant.”

“You will have lost forever the time you spend returning to the high level of concentration needed for an important project after a worthless interruption,” the One Minute Minister said. “If it’s important, it deserves your full attention until you are done for the day.”

“How will I know I am done for the day?” the minister asked.

“You clarify that in your prayerwork,” Angel said. “In prayer we define the steps, and then we walk through the steps. If it’s important, it’s worth the time to plan it out, including a schedule as to when we are going to work on each step.”

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“#6. Make a daily appointment for at least 20% of your day at your least productive time for your Q34 tasks,” the minister read.

“This appointment to work on our Q34 list makes certain that we attend to it each day,” the One Minute Minister said. “A lot can be done in a short time to mark things off our list.”

“As these tasks require little planning and preparation, you usually can just do them,” Angel said. “People find marking things off in this way gives them a great feeling

of accomplishment.”

“Everyone has down time in their day,” Bill said. “You don’t dare risk working on your most important projects when you are at your worst. Use that time to handle the remainder.”

“Working with the remainder every day helps us easily monitor 80% of what we do,” Frank said. “If we start with the urgent first we can usually handle our remainders before any of them become critical so as to interfere with time devoted to vital 20% work.”

“What about the rest of the day?” the minister asked.

“It’s best to focus on what is important,” the One Minute Minister said. “But you have that extra time as a buffer against *remainder creep*.”

“Remainder creep?”

“Parkinson’s Law states that tasks expand to fill the time allotted for them. The Pareto Principle teaches that 80% of those expanding tasks are a waste of time,” Frank said. “Our appointment principle guarantees that a portion of your day will be spent on important tasks; unimportant tasks also have their time slot because it is a vital 20% task to deal each day with the remainders. It’s just that it’s smarter to deal with them as a group rather than individually.”

“Your remainder tasks will routinely expand and creep into the rest of your day,” Bill said. “It’s creepy. But the balance of time remaining allows for this without them ruining your important project time.”

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"#7. Buffer Q12s: Do not schedule Q12's back to back; create a buffer to allow extra time if necessary to finish each one. Until you know from experience, let your buffer be 20% of the time needed to finish added to the appointment for the task." the minister read.

"The payoff from any task happens after we finish it," the One Minute Minister said. "That's basic cycle completion. But what if an important task needs ten more minutes? If you have appointments for important tasks tightly scheduled, you are going to make all the others late as well."

"And since important tasks usually involve people," Bill said, "you will make everyone you deal with in your organization ten minutes late, and everyone they deal with, and so on and so on."

"Life is unpredictable," Angel said. "You cannot foresee in prayerwork what might throw you off your schedule. So you build in some free time for every important task. Sometimes you need it, sometimes someone else you are working with is less organized than they should be, sometimes accidents happen, and sometimes the important task has intricacies which could not be foreseen. It's important to have the extra time built in, and the best time to build it in is during your prayerwork as you plan your time."

"Another reason for the buffer," Frank said, "is the reality that these important tasks are exciting and intense. Often we need some time between them to calm down. The buffer is where you have a chance to take a break, go for a short walk, have a

snack, go to the bathroom. That refreshes us for the next task.”

“The worst thing is to be moving toward completion on an important task, with everyone present working in harmony at a high level of effectiveness, and not have the time to finish it or finish that component of the larger task. If the task gets derailed, it takes a long time to get back on track, especially to restore that level of common understanding and cooperation that a team achieves when it is working well together.”

“Aren’t you scheduling wasted time into your schedule when a buffer isn’t used?” the minister asked.

“Important tasks pay off four to one on the time invested,” the One Minute Minister said. “The time in the buffer is never wasted because it’s an important help to finishing off the important task. The pay off is so big that it’s worth it.”

“What would you use that extra time on instead?” Bill asked. “Nothing is more important than finishing the big one.”

“That is another question,” the minister said. “What do you use unused buffer time for?”

“I pray over my plans for the next task,” Angel said. “Sometimes insights from what I’ve just finished bring other tasks into clearer focus. Everything we do is interconnected.”

“I check and see if anyone needs to see me,” Bill said. “As I don’t allow interruptions when I’m working on a Q12, there’s usually a couple quick phone calls I can make.”

“I use the time to get a couple remainders down; it’s a change of pace,” Frank said.

“I’m getting older,” the One Minute Minister said. “I use the time to rest and relax; it makes me better able to harness energy for the next task. Sort of a mini-Sabbath.”

15

“#8. *Finish Q12s: it only takes a minute to do your paperwork.*” the minister read.

“The important part of a Q12 may be done,” the One Minute Minister said. “Yet there are bits and pieces that are also a part of the task that need completion. Rather than being remainders, they are a part of the Q12. The payoff is to get the Q12 *done*.”

“Can you give me an example?” the minister asked.

“A visit to the hospital is a Q12 for you when someone is in crisis, right?” Frank asked.

“Yes.”

“There is paperwork associated with the hospital visit, isn’t there?”

“Yes.”

“Whatever that paperwork is, it’s better for you to finish it as a part of the Q12 being finished. Putting off the last little bit prevents the Q12 from truly being finished. Don’t let it go in the remainder pile; it’s a part of the Q12.”

“What sort of paperwork do you mean?” the minister asked.

“When I’m done with a hospital visit, I pray about what is needed next while the whole situation is in my consciousness, and I write down the next task in my journal,” Angel said. “Cycle completion includes prayerwork.”

“I write down the gist of the interaction on a card as a record,” Bill said. “It’s worth keeping a record of what happened for anything that’s important. Cycle completion includes record keeping when it involves Q12s.” Angel tapped her journal, Frank tapped his organizer and the One Minute Minister showed his PDA.

“We all keep records,” the One Minute Minister said. Record keeping helps us maximize the benefit out of any Q12. We don’t keep records on Q34s as it isn’t worth the time, but noticing trends and being able to use the past in the present is worthwhile when we work with Q12s.”

“And the record that gets neglected the most is your expenses,” Frank said. “It’s so easy to write down your mileage or other expenses as you incur them. It’s so hard to reconstruct them. Finish your paperwork then and there because it is a part of the Q12.”

16

“#9. Batch Q34s: categorize them by type of task.” the minister read.

“Human beings work better when they work consistently,” the One Minute Minister said. “That’s why we batch remainder tasks by type. Do letters one after another. Do phone calls one after another.”

“Batching similar tasks allows you to pray and plan for all of them at once,” Angel said. “The same materials, tools, concepts and preparation is needed.”

“Batching Q34s works with people as well,” Bill said. “If you use a secretary to dictate, it’s better to do all the letters in a batch so that your secretary is not being

continually interrupted.”

“When you get on a roll, you get a lot more done,” Frank said. “That’s what we want with remainders: a high level of quality attention, and get them out of the way one after another. You don’t need the same downtime with remainders as you do after completing a Q12; they’re not as intense. By definition, a remainder won’t be more profitable if you spend more time on it. Therefore it’s easier to do them one after another.”

17

“#10. In your weekly planning, procrastinate on your Q34s. Put them off till later in the week. Finish them as rapidly as possible.” the minister read.

“This technique helps us focus more time on the important Q12 tasks,” Bill said. “Stephen Covey encourages people to plan on a weekly rather than a daily basis. ”

“How do you do that,” the minister asked.

“For years I divided my workdays among the quadrants: Monday was Q1, Tuesday was my Sabbath day, Wednesday was Q2, Thursday was Q3 and Friday was Q4.” Bill smiled. “This planning tool took advantage of one of my greatest strengths: my natural procrastination. I gave myself permission to procrastinate on 80% of my work until Friday. And if I attended to what was important early in the week, I had plenty of time later in the week to deal with the remainder without overworking.”

“Overworking is the result of poor planning,” Angel said. “By definition it means

having to rush to complete an important project because we did not do what needed to be done earlier. Always do the remainder as the remainder.”

“It’s the stress of trying to pull things together at the last minute that wore me out,” Bill said. “Now I do what’s important first and don’t need to rush. If what’s important gets done, people will give me time to get the unimportant done.”

“Overtime is always the result of the remainder taking quality time away from the important,” Frank said. “Then when you are tired and worn out, you *have* to work on the important at a time when you are least able to get it done well. We allow a little bit of time each day for the remainder in order to keep on top of it, but usually it can wait. And on Friday we are less likely to waste more time on it than is needed.”

“It makes sense to me,” the minister said.

“It only takes a minute to get back on course,” the One Minute Minister said.

“Amen,” they all agreed.

BOOK SIX

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT: The Rest of Your Life

The minister returned to his home and began to take a minute whenever necessary to pray about what he should do. If he was confused he would write or think about it till it became clear.

He began to notice the people in his life and their importance; he honored their contribution and allowed them a more fulfilling role in his life. With their help, he was now able to do everything that needed doing. He was more enjoyable to work with at the church and more emotionally available at home.

And he saw to it that things got finished in the best way, so that he seldom fell behind or was too busy to pray or pay attention to the people he loved. He grew calmer and happier as he grew wiser.

One day he realized that he had also become a One Minute Minister. And that, because of his practice of the wise principles he had learned and his willingness to help others learn them, the people in his personal network were also becoming One Minute Ministers. And as they became calmer and wiser, his satisfaction and joy with every aspect of his life increased.

And they lived happily ever after . . . one minute at a time.