

Eídon

A Newsletter on Spirituality for Church Leaders

November 2007

Best Practices

Praying in a Busy Schedule

You're terrifically busy working for your church, organization, or business. You are a pastor, an executive director, or a business owner. You work 50 hours a week. Maybe 70.

And since you're a good spouse, parent, or friend, you also have work to do at home. You cook dinner. Rake leaves. Get the car winterized. Clean bathrooms.

On top of all this (if you're not already a pastor), your church wants you to teach a class or lead the gifts discernment committee.

You work like the dickens. Work is never very far away, thanks to your cell phone, laptop, and PDA. You work at work and work at home.

I know how it is. For four years, I worked a job and did a doctorate. Now I work two jobs. For half a dozen years, I've hovered around 55 to 75 hours a week. And that doesn't include housework.

Who has time to pray?

With your strenuous schedule, how do you pray? Where do you fit in spiritual practices that sustain your ability to function effectively as a Christian leader?

I'm convinced that no matter how busy we are, we can shoehorn prayer into our schedule on most days. It takes a bit of thought and

diligence, but it can be done.

It so happens that I've written a small book on this, and will offer a retreat on it in early December (see the box below). But telling you about that is not my purpose here.

My purpose is to deal face-forward with a serious problem that plagues good Christian people: we are terrifically busy. Before moving to north-central Indiana five years ago, I lived in Miami, Chicago, and Columbus, Ohio. I think people here in small-town Indiana are busier than people in those three cities.

Most of us probably won't simplify our schedule anytime soon, though we might want to. Maybe we'll manage to do it in retirement. Until then, I want to figure out how to adequately—no, successfully—nurture a life with God in the middle of a pressing schedule.

Prayer Practices for Terrifically Busy People

A half-day retreat on Saturday, December 8, 8:00AM—12:30 PM. For only \$30, you'll receive:

- A copy of my new book on prayer practices
- A chance to think about prayer in your busy schedule
- A lunch of home-cooked soups, salads, and desserts

To register, visit www.danschrock.org, write dan@danschrock.org, or call 574-533-1729. Contact me by November 26, when the price jumps to \$40!

Do it briefly

Here are two ideas. The first trick is to invent forms of prayer that you can do in short blocks of time, say in 15 minutes or less.

For example, you're in your office and you get an e-mail asking you to pray for Harold, who broke his hip. You care about Harold since he's a member of your church. But you don't have 20 minutes to shut the door and intercede to God for Harold. What can you do?

You can visualize your prayer. Close your eyes and imagine Harold resting gently in the strong, safe hands of God. Focus on this image as long as you wish—6 seconds, 14 seconds, whatever. Then open your eyes and return to your work. You've just prayed for Harold *and* connected with God in the middle of your busy responsibilities.

Do it in conjunction with

The second trick is to pray while you're doing something else. For instance, why not pray while you cook? At this point in your life, cooking is probably second nature to you anyway. As you're cutting, sautéing and baking, why not whisper, or silently think, your prayer?

Small but frequent prayers throughout the day can deepen our awareness of the Holy One who is always everywhere.

DAN SCHROCK
SPIRITUAL
DIRECTION
INC.

DAN SCHROCK

SPIRITUAL

DIRECTION

INC.

64366 Meadow Ridge Dr.
Goshen, IN 46526-8503

dan@danschrock.org
www.danschrock.org
574.533.1729

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Future *Eidon* topics include: God's susurrations, dealing with anger, strategies for discerning a decision, kataphatic and apophatic prayer, spiritual divestment, the dark night, finding a spiritual director, geography and spirituality, beholding, and other useful subjects.

What's "Eidon?"

It's a free newsletter on Christian spirituality. In each issue, you'll receive tips on useful topics such as:

- praying in new ways
- recognizing key movements in your spiritual life
- developing a more mature life with God

Because you're a busy person, each issue is short—only the front and back of one page.

Eidon

Eidon (pronounced "ay'-dohn") is the most common of the many Greek verbs for seeing. Depending on the context, it can mean "to perceive," "to note," "to

establish," "to realize," "to know," "to mark," or "to heed." It occurs some 350 times in the New Testament.

Seeing well is an essential mark of Christian spirituality. Before we can respond to God, we must see what God is doing. Biblical faith links seeing with knowing, and knowing with doing. In this way, seeing precedes doing. Of course some people with blindness may perceive better than some of us with sight.

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