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An Unexamined Life?

God has given each of us one life. How do you live *yours*?

Do you live intentionally or accidentally? Perhaps you have never asked that question. It's a critical one for those of us who know Christ. In the parable of the talents, Christ makes the point that He has given each of us gifts—in trust. How we use that trust has eternal consequences.

OK, let me be the first to make a confession: I don't always like living intentionally. And I have to work at it. I have to work at scheduling my priorities. I have to work at living with margin. But I have learned that either I determine what God has called me to do and connect the compass (God's calling) to the clock (my schedule), or life and circumstances will schedule me. When that happens, I become a slave to the tyranny of the urgent rather than a servant to the calling of God.

We have not been called to do everything. We have been called to do some things and to do them well on behalf of Christ. As EFCA pastor and author Dale Burke reminds us in his book *Less Is More Leadership*, the best leaders do fewer and more focused things.

To live this way requires thought, prayer and planning. Here at the national office we use Key Result Areas to identify the handful of results each of us needs to see from our work in a given year. Then we intentionally fashion our schedules around those key issues, to ensure that we are effective rather than simply *busy*. Most people are busy. Fewer people are effective. This has caused us to focus more carefully on those things that are most important. It has given us permission to say yes to some things and no to others.

Intentional living is a process rather than a one-time event. Following the lead of some trusted colleagues, I have started to take a monthly personal retreat day to spend time thinking, praying, and reflecting on my schedule, priorities and God's call. This day, away from the office, helps me keep my life in alignment. And for many years I have practiced an annual retreat at the end of the year to reflect on the past and plan for the future.

What I know is that either I will plan life or it will plan me. And the call of Christ on our lives is too important to live an accidental life. I trust you will be challenged to consider the intentionality of your life as you read this issue of *EFCA Today*. ■



DR. WILLIAM J. HAMEL