

## Time Management and Self-Control

This past week a couple of things took place that made me decide to make a few changes in order to re-establish a level of self-control in my life. In case you're wondering, here's what happened.

### *Challenged by a Facebook Graphic*

There was a [graphic](#) being shared on Facebook, posted from robertbrewer.org, that listed a number of statics about reading habits and proficiencies, ending with one suggestion that could make a change, at least on an individual basis.

The final segment of the graphic stated the if a person read one hour a day in a chosen field of interest, they could become an international expert on the subject in 7 years. I thought to myself, how could that be? So I did a little theoretical math.

If the average book has 10 chapters and you could read one chapter in an hour, excluding weekends, you could read 26 books each year or 182 books in 7 years. If you included reading on weekends, that number jumps to 255. Here's the math.

if, 1 book = 10 chapters and 1 chapter = 1 hour, then

$$((5 \text{ chapters} \times 52 \text{ weeks}) \div 10 \text{ chapters per book}) = 26 \text{ books} \times 7 \text{ years} = 182 \text{ books}$$

or

$$((7 \text{ chapters} \times 52 \text{ weeks}) \div 10 \text{ chapters per book}) = 36.4 \text{ books} \times 7 \text{ years} = 254.8 \text{ books}$$

I don't know this for sure, but, based on the master's level classes I've taken, I'm guessing those amounts are as many or probably more books than most people read in order to attain an advanced degree in a particular subject. I suppose then, it is possible to become an international expert on a subject by doing this simple thing, reading an hour a day in a chosen field over a seven year period.

### *The Use and/or Misuse of My Time*

I use an application to help me monitor how much time I spend doing different activities on my computer so that I can see how well (or not) I spend my time. It runs in the background on my computer and, to be honest, I usually forget about it until I read things like the above and then I check and see how much time I spent doing what on my computer over a number of days / weeks / months.

I reviewed my usage over the last few days and weeks and, as I suspected, it became evident that I was spending a lot of time doing only a few things that were frivolous. Nothing necessarily "bad" *per se*, just wasteful and a little hypocritical. Needless to say, I decided to make a few changes, choosing instead to cultivate one of the fruits of the Spirit: self-control, something I struggle with a little anyway.

Stephen Covey, in his book "[The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People](#),"<sup>1</sup> proposes using a grid to determine whether an activity is worth doing and how to prioritize it.

The grid has four quadrants with the following assigned values.

1. Important - Urgent
2. Important - Non-Urgent
3. Unimportant - Urgent
4. Unimportant - Non-Urgent

	Urgent	Non-Urgent
Important	I	II
Unimportant	III	IV

<sup>1</sup> Covey, Stephen R. *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Restoring the Character Ethic*. 1st Fireside ed. New York: Fireside Book, 1990. Print.

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You can read the book to see how he defines what activities might fit in which quadrant. Needless to say, most of my activities were residing in quadrant IV, Unimportant - Non-Urgent, and I needed to shift my focus to quadrants I and II. I needed to make a change.

### *My Plan of Action*

Step 1: uninstall all the games I had installed after the Windows 10 Update was completed on my laptop. I found that I would too often get wrapped up in completing the puzzles and "daily challenges" that these games offered. I would easily spend the hour, or more, mentioned above completing a jigsaw puzzle, playing TapTiles, Solitaire, Mahjong, etc. and not really accomplish anything, under the guise of "good for the brain" activities.

*On a side note:* I'm not totally in love with Windows 10. There are a number of performance issues that I'm having to work through but I don't know if they are operating system / software related or that my laptop is 7 years old. Probably a little of both.

Step 2: deciding to better manage how much time I was spending on Facebook and other internet sites. I had deactivated my Facebook account back in 2013 and was fine without it. But earlier this year I reactivated it. Upon further reflection, I realized that I didn't miss the "challenges", fake videos, or any number of other things that I would lose myself in and easily spend time doing nothing really all that important. Additionally, I was having little real interaction with people, opting instead for "virtual" friendships through Facebook.

So I decided to once again deactivate my Facebook account, choosing instead to connect with people in the flesh and blood, real world. I kept myself from going the one extra step of actually deleting my account, thinking that maybe some day I'll want to use it again.

Although, this is the second time I've deactivated it, so I'm leaning more toward just deleting it and being done with "virtual" friendships. Opting instead for maintaining friendships with those who choose to actually pick up the phone and call me, or write me a letter, or come by the house for a visit, and vice versa on my part. Quality time with quality people (not that my Facebook friends weren't quality people, just not live and in person).

Sure there will be some family and friends updates, birthday and anniversary reminders, and a few other activities that were nice and will probably be missed. But there were also a number of things that just seemed to me that the time spent could be better used doing something else. That's just my opinion. Each person needs to decide for themselves. Also, don't think that the irony of me posting this on a website is lost on me either.

Step 3: committing to reading one hour a day, or at least five hours a week, in my chosen field of interest. I've got some additional activities planned to do along with the reading to help retain and apply the information. Of course, the one activity that is most helpful is to find ways to teach on the subject studied, thereby passing it on to others. I don't know if I'll ever become an international expert on any subject. Then again, I *never* will if I keep doing the same thing and don't try.

Blessings.

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