

## "Beyond Time!" Jesus-Centered, Scripture-Based Time Management for Youth

(for the Baltimore Washington Conference Council on Youth Ministries "Stress Less" Project)

Authors: CCYM Member Nito Slack and Rev. Dr. Dave Showalter with input from CCYM feedback panels

Christians...Jesus-Followers...Those who "trust Jesus for our every next move"...have the greatest foundation, based upon the greatest truth and the greatest promises, for life! Not just "surviving" from day to day, but thriving under the love and care of The God Who created us and loves us so much that God couldn't love us more, and will never ever love us less! But because of one of the biggest causes of stress in a teenager's life, that of "there never seems to be enough time to do all that is expected of me and that I want to do," it's hard sometimes to even begin to see how we could possibly "thrive" under this constant pressure we feel. Just think about it...don't we youth struggle with lack of time for things like these below? (This is just a partial list that your peers came up with in only minutes!)

School (Just thinking of all that "school" could include is a daunting list! Sports/After school activities/Clubs/Homework/etc.)

Youth group

Multiple obligations

(Like, specific examples from the two things above could look like: If you're a musician, you have formal rehearsal/classes, practice on your own time, auditions, concerts, etc. Being "active" as a youth in your church often means worship, Sunday school, youth group stuff, fundraising, youth functions beyond local church like inter-church, District, and Conference, volunteering, missions work, etc.)

Home responsibilities

Family/ Spending time with siblings

Friends/Social life

Jobs/work

Hobbies

Personal time (Leisure, Expanding what I know, Time for conversation)

Along with our feeling of "there's just not enough time to do all that is expected of me," we also struggle with the idea that we have to "earn" everything. And while it is true that we must do things like study and practice and work in school (and many times outside of school), one thing we DO NOT have to "earn" is God's love for us. God has created each person perfectly to fulfill the part of God's plan God has for each person's life. You may say, "Oh great, God has a plan for more for me to do!" But that which God has planned for us...to BE...and to do...God knows is that which will bring us two of Jesus's greatest promises for those who love Him and trust Him: COMPLETE JOY and ABUNDANT (JOYFULLY FULFILLING) LIFE! So when we strive to do that which God has planned and wishes for us to do in the ways God instructs us, it actually leads us to joy and thriving vs. the stress that trying to achieve everything on our own brings. Thriving vs. just surviving...now that sounds pretty good!

With this in mind, hopefully you’ll begin to embrace these 3 Great Truths:

1. God Loves U!
2. God has and knows that which is best!
3. God has a unique, amazing, fulfilling, joy-bringing part of His plan specifically for your life!

Truly, a God Who really loves us would put in place a system where we don’t have to earn our worth, but are simply and supremely loved by God...because we were created to be loved by God. And God wishes for us to “love God back!” If we realize the three truths above are completely true, our hearts will want to “love God back!” One way we can do this is to offer all we do...even, and maybe especially those things we “have to do”...and the time involved in doing those things...to God. We can make everything we do, and the time we must give in order to do them, as acts of worship to God. Doing this helps us to make God the centerpiece of our lives in a way that can...and will, if we “trust Jesus” to do so...bring us the joy Jesus promises, even in our seemingly full schedules and lives.

It’s totally understandable if you’re having trouble getting your heart and mind around this...or thinking, “How can this possibly work to give me more time for all I need to do?” So before we get into specific acts and strategies from a “Jesus-centered view” that can help us to “stress less” by managing our time better, let’s put together a few things God has said to us in a way you may have not previously considered.

- Jeremiah 29:11-13 gives us a great promise AND the way to claim this promise. The Bible tells us (in God’s words, spoken through the prophet Jeremiah...who was himself a teenager!): “I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future. Then you will call upon Me and come pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with your whole heart.”
  - God spoke these words through Jeremiah to people who, maybe like you, were scared and stressed. They felt like their lives were literally falling apart! (Remember, when you think it’s all falling apart, it could well be that God is actually bringing it all together...just in ways you can’t yet see!) But God assured the people that He had planned what was best for them. On the “other side of history”...that is, as we look back now...we see God not only gave His people exact instructions on how they could “thrive” immediately (by seeking God with their whole

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heart...with everything that was within them), but God also made good on His promise of "plans to prosper, not to harm them, plans to give them a hope and a future..."

- While verse 11 "gave the promise (I, God, will prosper and not harm you, I will give you hope and a future)," verses 12 and 13 then told the people exactly how to claim God's direction for their lives...by "seeking God with their whole hearts," and "praying to God," keeping the relationship through constant communication with God...just as you would with a friend with whom you want a close relationship. God promises we will find God...and therefore, God's plan for us...when we seek God with all of who we are!
- Jesus told His followers...and tells us: Do not worry about the many things of day-to-day living!
  - From the words of Jesus in Matthew 6:25-34, we know that God...like a loving, supporting Parent...doesn't wish for us to be stressed because of time pressures, or for any other reason. Here Jesus compares the worth we have in the eyes of God our Creator with that of lesser of God's creation. Jesus reminds us of how much God loves us and instructs us not to worry. We are not to worry in the least about things we cannot control, but rather pray to God Who provides for the things God knows we need. God has it all covered...keep reading!

For those things we can control and must get accomplished, rather than worry about them, we should link Jesus's instruction "Do not worry" with Paul's instruction to "do our very best for the Lord" given in the next scripture..."Don't waste time worrying...worrying doesn't help...God will help you do this if you ask...so instead of wasting your time worrying, do this..."

- Paul gave the people of Colossus this instruction from God in Colossians 3:17, 23, 24: "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him...Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for God and not for people, since you know you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ Whom you serve!"
  - It wasn't a human being who first said, "Your best will always be good enough!" This is scriptural and has its roots in this scripture. We are to do our best, in thanksgiving to God, and do whatever we are doing for Jesus. Part then of "giving our best" includes striving to manage

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our time in ways that honor God and in the process, help us do well at those things in which we must as well as at those which we enjoy!

- It’s amazing how when we look at things we just gotta get done, how easy it is to “let ourselves off the hook” and procrastinate or not do our best or just blow things off entirely. But when we’re doing things for those we love...and who we know love us...we are typically much more motivated to get those things done. Especially when we believe the result will bring joy to those we love. So it makes complete sense on a very human level that if we understand how intensely God loves us...and how much God wishes for us to succeed in God’s ways, we’ll be more motivated to tackle the things that stress us out. We can get past the feeling of “I don’t have time” when we tackle those things as though we’re trying to accomplish these things for God! God Who loves us, God Who knows and has that which is best, God Who has created us specifically, uniquely, perfectly for the specific, unique, fulfilling, complete-joy-bringing part of His plan for your life! And God Who supernaturally expands our time when we strive to honor Him!

You may still be having trouble understanding, even as great as these promises are, how they can help you to “stress less” by managing your time better. In fact, these truths will and do help, because they contain hints, clues, and commands on things that both “rob” your time and those which can seem to “provide more time.” We put “provide more time” in quotes because in reality

, there is only so much time. Everyone gets the same amount: 86,400 seconds each day. This resource is developed to help you “manage” the time you have from a “Christ-centered” strategy so you can “stress less” as you claim God’s promises by following God’s instructions...instructions God gave to bring you “complete joy” and “abundant life!”



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So let's get specific on the steps and actions you can take that will help you "stress less" by managing your time better by looking at how we are going about "doing the things we're doing" and what we may wish to do differently.

- Determine "What do I want to be 'my foundation?'" This means asking yourself, "Who do I want to be in each situation?" For Christians, we believe that "trusting Jesus" in each and every situation is the way we are to operate and live! So this is key to managing our time! Time is a precious gift from God to each of us. Ask yourself, "How will I use my time so that I am trusting and honoring Jesus? What does/will that 'look like' in each and every situation for you?" Here are key areas that help us "build our foundation."
  - Faith – When I "step back" and examine my beliefs, attitudes, actions, in whom does it appear I'm placing my faith with the way I used my time? Why do I come to this conclusion?
  - Values – What are my most precious values? How does the way I used my time reflect my values?
    - (Is there a difference between what they are and what they should be? If so, how am I doing with that? And what am I willing to do to make my most precious values be "Christ-centered" values? How can I claim Jesus's promises of complete joy and abundant life as I determine my values?)
  - Goals – Based on my values, what are my major goals? (Same questions: Is there a difference between what they are and what they should be? How and what am I doing with that?)
    - Note: Some of your goals will be determined for you. We never "get old enough" to where that is no longer true. So when you're given a goal you must meet, go back to your foundation and values to determine for yourself, "How will I approach meeting this goal? What does Jesus have to say about this? How can I claim Jesus's promises of complete joy and abundant life as I tackle this goal? How will I use my time in tackling this goal in ways that show my trust in and wish to serve Jesus?"

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We thought that it might be helpful further to clarify what we (your peer teenagers) think "success" looks like in our current, most important roles in life. What we call "success" can often tell us what we value, in what or who we are placing our faith, and what our goals are. Here's what success looks/feels like to us:

- When I get things done (the feeling I get)
- When I'm able to help someone
- When I help someone else to reach their potential
- When I achieve a goal
- When I exceed/overcome expectations (mine and other's)
- When I get finished and have time to relax
- When I get done and have extra time to do something I like to do
- What I thought was success may not be because Jesus has a different plan

So shouldn't this all flow naturally? Why is it so hard to "find time" to do all the things we need to do...to be "successful" at our goals? Well, a major part is that we often just "go with the flow" and take each moment, hour, day as it comes. And while that sounds almost scriptural and worrying is actually against what Jesus taught, Paul tells us in Colossians 3 that we need to do our best for God. Putting those together give us some AWESOME ADVICE about using our time well: Don't worry and do your best (as if you're working for God!)

So let's start anything we have to do well...and that begins with planning. So often, we don't take time to plan. And there is a true statement about that...which is...

- "Failing to plan = planning to fail" – Technology alone gives us ample opportunities to squander our time. In order to not let this happen, you'll need to plan and budget your time...just like money, if we don't decide what we will spend it on, our time will seem to "disappear." Put into action a planning process that helps you identify, schedule, and complete your "high impact" activities...those activities you must achieve and/or that will help you achieve your goals.

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So, you're probably not gonna want to do this. It seems almost "counter-productive." We tend to say, "But if I don't have enough time to do all the stuff I need to, I for sure don't have the time to make a plan or schedule for all I need to get done." We'll refer you again to the rule; "Failing to plan is planning to fail." This is one of those things that are like when we might feel God moving us to do something we really don't believe can work...or that we really don't want to do. We say, "Really God? That can't possibly work!" or "Really God, but I REALLY don't wanna do that!" Here we'll just say to you, "Don't ask questions about this planning thing! Just trust us!" But instead, we're gonna add a few letters to "us" to make it become "Jesus"...and say to you, "Don't ask questions about this planning thing! Just trust Jesus!" It really does work...have a little faith and try it! It doesn't have to be complicated...a list of priorities on your phone, in a small notebook you keep, maybe a section in one of your homework binders. This also helps to keep you from forgetting important things! Keep reading, we have a great way for you to look at this just a bit later!

And remember, you're working for Jesus! (No pressure! REALLY! No pressure...Jesus loves you so much He can't love you more...and won't love U less! Who else would we wanna work for?)

Here are some things that will help you greatly!

- Get ahead of the curve, look ahead to what will be asked from you, determine what are your priority or "high impact activities" that you will spend your time on and make a plan of how you will go about it. What will you do first, what will you not do while you're at work on it, and how much time will you spend on each thing you need to do?
- Identify your "time robbers!" What are the things I am doing that literally rob time from me to do the things I must get done? We and other teenagers in our conference identified these (below) as some "time robbers" for us/them:
  - Social media
  - Procrastination
  - Sleep (Yeah, but we gotta do that!)
  - Technology (Cell phones, home computers, etc.)
  - TV/Netflix(!!!)
  - Friends
  - Motivation (or lack of it!)
  - Fear of "not good enough" or "failing"
  - Chores/Home responsibilities

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NOTE: This list (above) includes a place where we can apply the first set of "Jesus-Centered Time Management" practices of which we spoke. Back on page 5, we looked at determining what is our foundation and what are our values. Hopefully, trusting Jesus and serving God are on our "radar screen" for those things. (Like, maybe at the top of that screen! ;-)) If we say that we wish to trust Jesus and honor God with our lives, then we might have to question whether "Chores/Home Responsibilities" belong on a list of "time robbers" or if we should place that on our "things we must do" list. Yeah? (Note: No money was accepted from parents for that last statement...)

So we've covered some ways to determine the types of things that make up the "what's ins" and also the "what's outs" in planning our time. If we do identify "what's outs," don't hesitate...toss them out! That leaves how to figure out how to attack (and conquer!) the "what's in" items. Let's go for it!

Discern the important from the less and not important.

- "Important" vs. "Urgent" –
  - Let's start here by giving definition to these two terms...and once you get familiar with this "Christ-Centered Time Management" process, you can adjust the definitions to better fit your needs.
    - Important – Things you must do/get done in order to meet a goal you've set or that has been set for you.
    - Urgent – Things that call to you immediately.
    - Note: These ARE DIFFERENT! For instance, your cell phone ringing is "urgent"...but it may not be important. If your cell phone rings or you get a text message while you're driving, keeping yourself and others safe is much more important than answering an urgent ringing cell phone or a text message. See the difference?

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- You may have already figured out then, that we have four category combinations in which the things we do will fall:
  - Important
  - Not Important
  - Urgent
  - Not Urgent
- So you might be thinking, how can I tell the difference? You actually have a great deal of power in this. In fact, you will "have the say-so" in many of these choices! (Exceptions being where an authority under which you live by definition has the "say so." Again, we all have this...even adults don't get to "make all the calls," believe it or not!) Here are some examples from your peers...other youth...which they think might help you in making decisions about what is important vs. what is urgent:
  - School classwork is important but not always urgent. We have to determine which is both important and urgent. For example, if we have 2 homework assignments due at different times, the first one due is typically more "urgent"...because it's due first. So we may wish to do that one first. (Unless that one is really easy and it would help to tackle the harder one first...so long as we know we can get the most urgent one done...but that's an exception to this method.)<sup>1</sup>
  - A commitment like a practice/rehearsal that occurs daily or several times a week may seem urgent on any certain day, but may be less urgent depending on the season or circumstances. For example, a dance class is not urgent when the recital is some time away but if the recital is tomorrow, a rehearsal today seems a bit more urgent.

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<sup>1</sup> In a situation where we need to get homework from the urgent class done but we have other things being asked of us and only enough time for one thing, we may need to try these or other strategies:

- Examine our schedule to see if something else we think is important doesn't seem so anymore since we have another important assignment now.
- Go to parents or teachers to explain why we need time to do the more "urgent" task.
- Ask for grace in your schedule from those who control it.
- Look at our "time robbers" and determine if eliminating something will help and what we should eliminate.
- Examine if we've set ourselves up to give our best in this effort. (e.g. – Am I in an environment that let's me concentrate well and shut out distractions? Have I removed distractions? Do I need to sleep now and work later when I've recovered from the sleepies? Have I asked God to help me concentrate for the next 30/45/60/90 minutes on this task?, etc.)

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- Conversations with friends are typically what we’d call “important,” but the urgency of the conversation is based on the need of our friend (crisis vs. “just checking in”) Urgency, in this case, is probably determined based on the level of stress that you think your friend may be under/how badly they need to talk vs. what you need to get done.

Those are examples we hope will help you. If you’re a “more visual” person, go to either page 13 of this guide or this link [http://www.franklincovey.com/liveclicks/toolkit-download/time\\_fun.pdf](http://www.franklincovey.com/liveclicks/toolkit-download/time_fun.pdf) <sup>2</sup> to see how to place those things being asked of you into one of these four category combinations:

- IMPORANT AND URGENT
- IMPORTANT BUT NOT URGENT
- URGENT BUT NOT IMPORTANT
- NEITHER URGENT NOR IMPORTANT

MORE HELP: Once you access the link back on page 9, you can use “the time matrix” to name the things for you that fall into each quadrant. (The matrix shown at the link has some good examples, while others seem to be more for working adults. So see which of the things already listed apply to you, and then think of more examples of things applicable to you and plug them into whichever category each “fits.” What are things for you that are: important and urgent, important but not urgent, urgent but not important, neither important or urgent? Make a matrix of your own that you can use to help you decide how to prioritize and sequence the things you need to do.

Remember, don’t just “pick and choose” randomly. Apply what you determined your foundation, values, and goals to be as you select which activities go in each quadrant. As you’re doing so, remember how much you are loved by God, how intensely you can trust Jesus, and who God calls you to be because of these truths!

On page 14, the title “Live North of The Line” is talking about the horizontal line for which quadrants 1 and 2 are “north” of the line. You’ll notice the things that fall into those 2 areas are

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<sup>2</sup> This link is an open access by the Franklin Covey Time Management system . There was at one time extensive training available in the area of time management by Franklin Covey which has been transformative in the lives of many. The examples given focus on more adult-oriented tasks, assignments, and responsibilities of vocations, but can be adapted to any age group. We adapt them here in order to help adolescents living in a stress-filled culture.

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things that are "Important and Urgent" and "Important But Not Urgent." This means to "live north of the line" is to get to a point where you leave anything "not important" (any item that is below the horizontal line) off of your schedule or at least until you complete your important items before you "go south" below the line to those items. Sounds easy, but if that was so, we'd have "all the time in the world" to get stuff done....and nobody would need guide like this one!

You may find you're better at time management if you identify which "non-important" items you wish to delete from your schedule one at a time. Get rid of one successfully, then determine what needs to go next. You may not have to eliminate items altogether. It may be enough to eliminate those items during times when you say, "I'm dedicating this amount of time to do \_\_\_\_\_ and while I'm doing that, I'm leaving my phone (and any other distraction) in another space." Maybe you also need to turn off the TV, etc. If you're using your computer, you'll just have to discipline yourself to not go on over to social media while you work...no easy feat! But remember, you're working "as unto the Lord" (Colossians 3:22/23) so maybe you and Jesus can have a talk each time before you begin and covenant to stay on-task either until you're done or until you're allotted time for your task is up.

### MORE HELP:

- Do you have a trusted adult who you look to help you decide what your priorities should be and are? If not, why not? A trusted adult who has had some success at managing time could be a great resource for you. But teenagers don't always either think of asking an adult who might be helpful, or don't trust an adult to have your best interest at heart. Fair enough, but give some thought to asking a trusted adult who might be able to help you.

Here are some things that we as your peer students say prevent youth from looking to/for a trusted adult to help us make time management and priority decisions:

- Don't want to "tarnish" my perfect image
- Level of trust...or lack of it
- Not knowing how to explain myself
- Afraid I may be misunderstood
- Afraid of what their reaction might be
- Afraid of rejection
- Relationship with the person
- They may have opinions that vary from mine
- Age of the person depends on the type of help I seek/what I seek help for
- I don't have access to a person I trust

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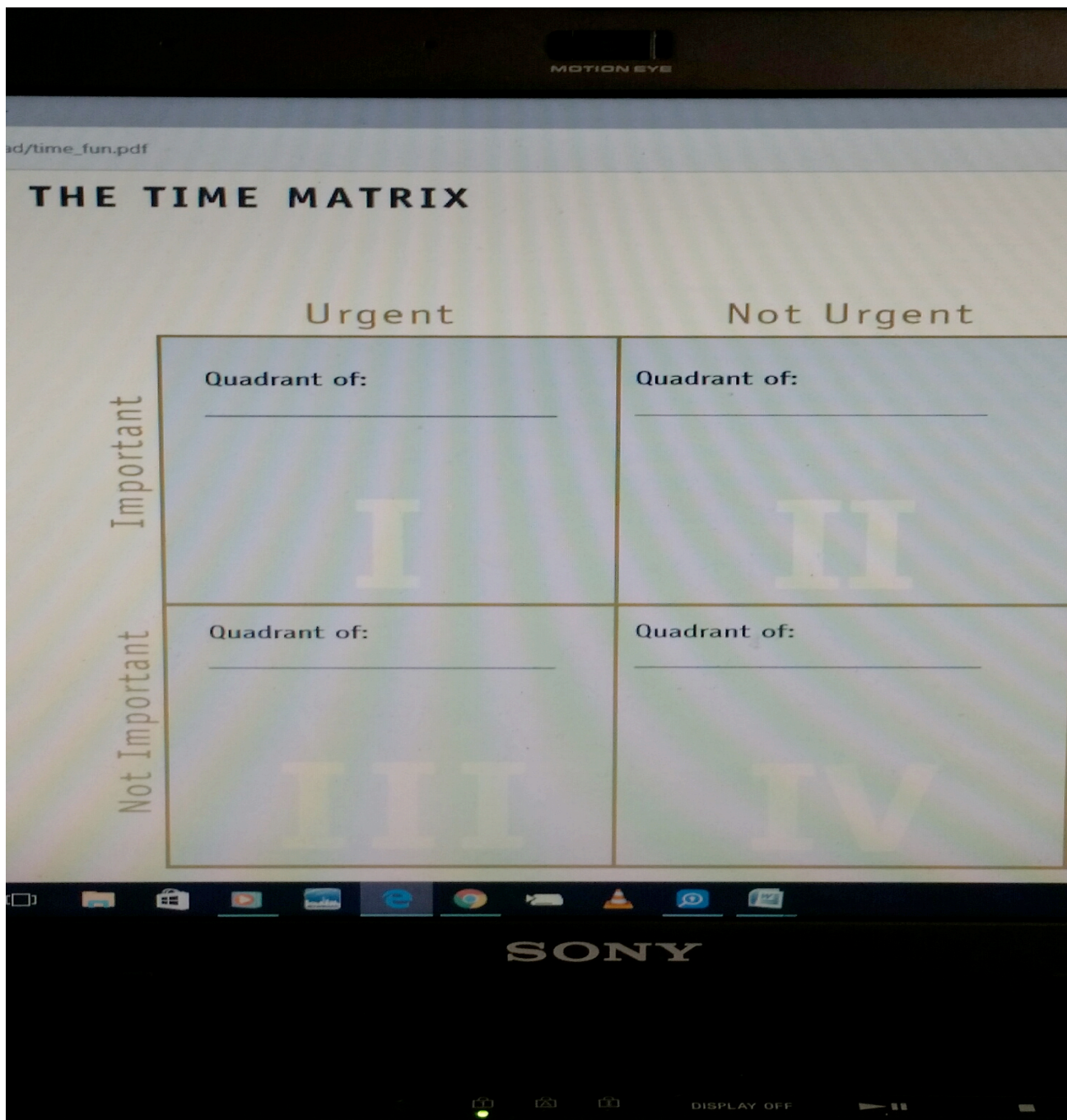
Here are some people who we, your peer teenagers in The Baltimore Washington Conference/MVA...feel we could trust to help us with stressors like managing our time:

- Trusted teachers
- Sunday school teacher
- Pastor
- Guidance Counselor
- Principal of my school
- Youth group advisors
- Other youth group peers

(Maybe you have others who you trust to help you manage your time. If so, don't hesitate to ask for help. God may have as part of His plan for your life that you discuss not only how to better use your time, but also your foundational faith, values, and goals that we spoke of at the beginning of this time management aide. We never know the hugeness of what great plans God has for us when we seek to trust Jesus for our every next step! God's best blessings, and the promises of Jesus for complete joy and abundant life be upon you as you strive to use the time God gives you for God's glory!)



Attachment 1: The Time Matrix<sup>3</sup>



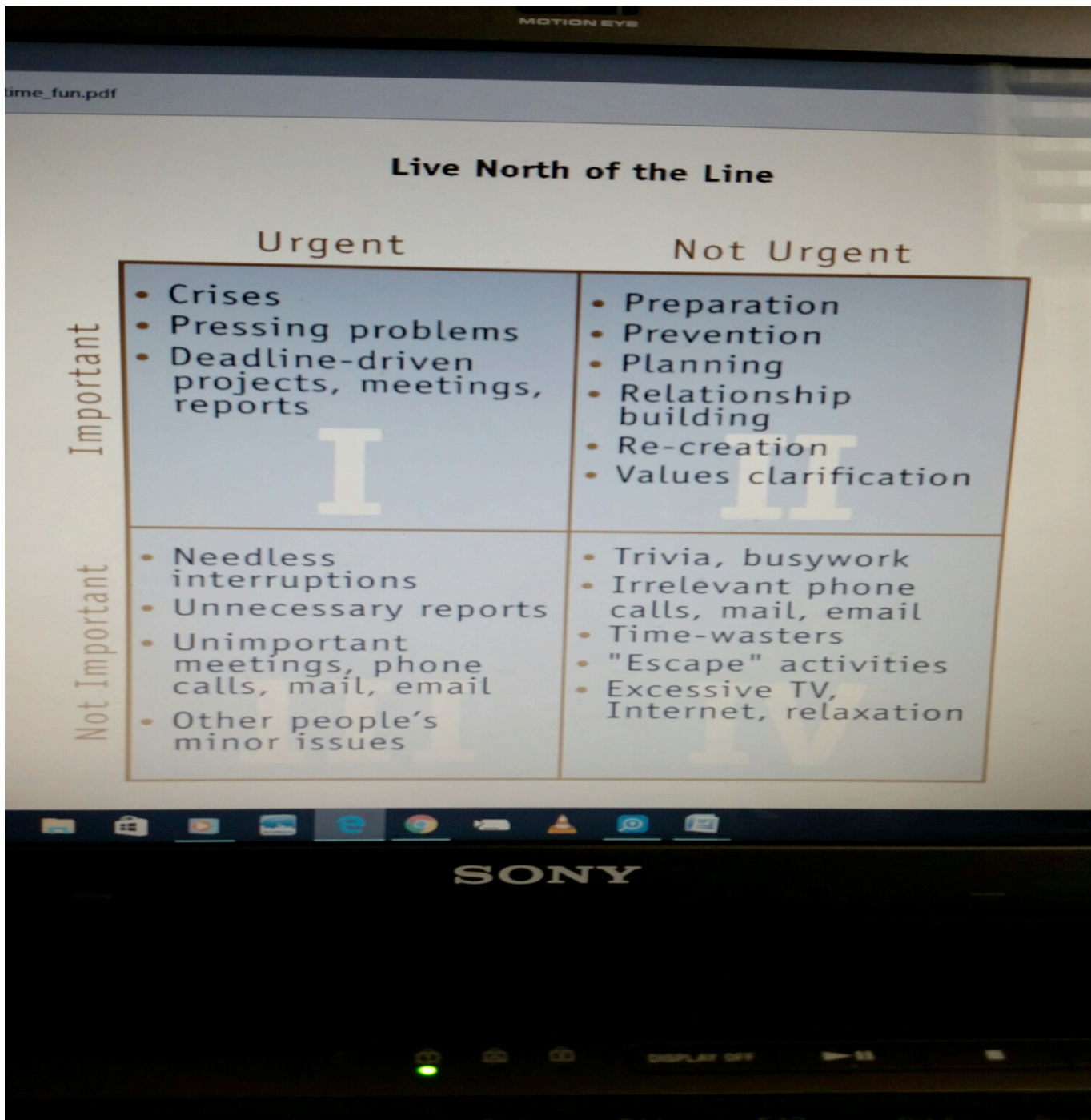
<sup>3</sup> [http://www.franklincovey.com/liveclicks/toolkit-download/time\\_fun.pdf](http://www.franklincovey.com/liveclicks/toolkit-download/time_fun.pdf) adapted for youth. Accessed 9/25/2016.

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Attachment 2: "Living North of The Line"<sup>4</sup>



<sup>4</sup> [http://www.franklincovey.com/liveclicks/toolkit-download/time\\_fun.pdf](http://www.franklincovey.com/liveclicks/toolkit-download/time_fun.pdf) adapted for youth. Accessed 9/25/2016.