

LESSON 1 – THE BIG FIVE

(VIDEO TRANSCRIPT)

Hi my name is John Arnold and I want to welcome you to The Practical Disciple mini-course called “Time to Change.”

A quick word about me. I am a pastor of a Presbyterian Church. I am a father of two teenage kids, a 13-year-old and a 16-year-old and I am a husband to a lovely wife whom I work with and I authored this blog. And that means me a very busy guy. I have to juggle home work schedules with kids and going to games and getting posts put out in writing sermons and doing pastoral care. So I have a tremendously active life. A lot of people asked me how do you get everything done that you do. And this course is an effort to glean the best of the best time management solutions that I found that help me get things done and share them with you.

What motivated me to do this? It was two things. A few years ago I was talking with a woman who was a doctor and she was talking about all the people who come through the door who suffered with depression. She wondered why that was. I told her, “I think part of the problem is we have lost any sense of rhythm in our culture. **The rhythm of our culture is go, go, go.**” **There is no time to stop, to just rest and to recuperate. We pay a big price for that.** God didn't create anything out there that doesn't have a rhythm to it. You can look at nature. Plants and animals all have to conform to seasons. There is a rhythm to the day. There are rhythms to the seasons. People seem to be the only thing that are living without a rhythm right now. We just keep pushing harder and harder.

What I am going to do in this course is share with you all of the best of the best time management solutions that I have found that work. These are the things I use every day in my life so that I can be an effective pastor, an effective dad, an effective husband, and achieve the goals that I am working toward and the things that I think God is calling me to do. **I'm hoping it's going to also help you carve out space so that if you want to read your Bible you have the time to do that. If you want to have a deeper richer prayer life, you'll be able to do that as well. if you have goals you have been sitting on...things that God is calling you to do that you can't find the time for...hopefully, finally, you are going to get to do that.** So that's what this is all about.

For the next 30 days you'll get an e-mail from me every other day. In that e-mail you will have a task, some simple application to try, and a little bit of teaching around that. I'll tell you some stories along the way that personally have happened with me...that worked or didn't work...around all of those tasks. So that's where we are headed. Well, with no further ado let's get started.

The first thing I want to get started with is what we do. Specifically, I will start with a to-do list that matters. If you're not an avid list maker that's one of the first things you need to learn how to do. When I was a young man I encountered this other young guy in high school...He seemed so together and so on top of it. One of things I notice about him was that he took copious notes and made lists for everything he needed to get done in his life. He was achieving far more than I was. That was kind of the first glimmer I got of the power of having a list. You may be sitting there thinking I make list all of the time. I've got lists everywhere. I've got lists on the back of envelopes and napkins. I've got lists on notebooks. I have list everywhere. **Not all lists are like.**

Let me tell you a story about lists. Oh, probably about two years ago, **every day I was cranking out a to-do list and my to-do list might be 20 or 25 items long.** I would think of everything I needed to do, wanted to do, should do. I would write all those things down. **It was a demoralizing experience** because first off it was unrealistic. I could never get it all done. I kept kept carrying things over from list to list. Another thing I did... don't laugh too hard at this because I know some of you out there doing this...I felt so beat down by my list that sometimes I would do something and then I would go back and put it on my list and cross it off so I would feel like I was getting something done.

One day I realized this was an insane method and it wasn't producing the results I was wanting. So I decided I was going to focus my energies. So, instead I pared it way back. I made my big list and then I shoved it to the side. Then I said, "Now go make a realistic list". I called it **my 'Big Five.'** This started about two years ago. **I would sit down and write out five things that I was going to work on and five things only.** And I wouldn't allow myself to go back to my other list until I accomplish those five things. This very quickly gave me a lot of focus. But, it wasn't until maybe about six months ago that I figured out how to tweak that thing to really get the most out of it.

What happened was a friend of mine, Alison Lewis wrote a book, The Seven Minute Difference, about three or four years ago. I loved Allyson's book from the get-go. Recently, she came out with a planner. In the planner she talked about, **"5 before 11."** It was like a light went on for me when I shifted from my big five to making sure I did my big five before 11 o'clock everyday. Here's what happens. When I had just five things I was going to focus on, I was getting a lot better at getting things done. I was gradually chunking things off of my really long list but what would happen is I would come into the office and other stuff would immediately start pulling me around. I would start to react to what was coming into the office and I would be pushing back and pushing back those five things until the end of the day. Lo and behold, I'd only get two or three of the five done and all this other stuff I hadn't planned on. I would be done but it really wouldn't be what I needed to get done.

Well, when I started doing what Allison said of trying to **take my big five and get it done before 11**... made that my priority... **I saw a huge leap in my productivity** because what would happen is all those interruptions... we're going to talk about those in the next video... all of those interruptions I would push to the back burner of the day instead. I was unwittingly prioritizing. I was taking the five goals I had for the day and I was putting them at the front so that they would get the lions share of attention. **That drove my productivity way way up on the things that mattered most to me.**

So, tomorrow we are going to look at interruptions. We're going to talk about that little bit, but here's what I would like you to do today. **Go ahead and make out one of those crazy long list** of everything that you can think of that you need to do, should do, would really be nice to do. Create this master list of all this stuff that is in your head that needs to be attended to. Now once you have kind of brain dumped that out, I want you to shove your list to the side. **I want you get a blank piece of paper and write down just five things that you're going to try to do by 11 o'clock tomorrow.** It may be big. It may be small. It doesn't matter. Just five things that that seem like the most valuable way that you can spend your time. Try to make it a priority that those will get done by 11 tomorrow. Now, here's a key. **You always want to make that list the day before.** Don't wait to get in your office or until you get up and do it in the morning. Go to bed knowing what your top five are going to be. It will make all the difference in the world. Well, that is your first tip. Work on creating your list of big five. Try to get them done by 11 and I will see in the next video.