LESSON 1—INTERRUPTIONS
(VIDEO TRANSCRIPT)

Hi. Welcome to another 'Time to Change' video by The Practical Disciple. I am John Arnold and today we're going to talk about interruptions. Every day I go into the day with a plan. I have my five high-value activities that I'm going to do before 11 o'clock. I have an intention for the day that's going to shape my overall feel for what I need to get done. But, it seems like when I do that the world doesn't get the memo that I have a plan because all of this stuff starts crowding in. I really have to work hard to get on top of the day before the day gets on top of me.

As we talk about interruptions we are going to cover three things. We're going to look at **limiting or blocking those interruptions**. We're going to look at **breaking the habit of just reflexively responding to them.** And lastly, we're going to talk **about having planned responses**, so that you minimize the disruption that the interruptions cause.

I had something funny happen a moment ago. I was trying to shoot this video and I was talking about how technology has shaped our lives. There's a woman who recently spoke at a conference and she said that cell phones and IMing and text messages, tweeting and all those things, have nurtured what she calls continuous partial attention. We're never fully invested in what we're doing because we are all ways interruptible**. It's really hard to be truly productive or truly creative, or effective, if you're not able to give full attention to something**. So, you have to push that back. I said it was really funny that a moment ago I was trying to videotape this and I forgot to turn off my cell phone which is one of the things I'm going to tell you to do. It went off right in the middle of videotaping.

So, here's the first tip. **You want to block out time for productivity by actually shutting down, shutting off things that are going to interrupt you.** I used to find that I was reflexively responding to my e-mail because I had this little chime that we go 'ding' when I would get an e-mail. I would hear that and no matter what I was doing often

times spun around to my computer opened up my e-mail program and looked at what it was.

Well, mentally when you pull out a task like that… there's actually been a lot of research done… it takes several minutes to shift your mind back into the task. You lose a lot of productivity time in those few minutes. Particularly, if that happens three or four times, four or five times, when you're working on a project. So, one of the first things I did when I wanted to limit my interruptions **is I went into system preferences on my e-mail program and I shut off my alarm**. I would do the same thing with other applications. Don't have Facebook running in the background while you're working. If you really have a project where the deadline is imminent on it and you really cannot afford to be interrupted go ahead and turn your cell phone off. Use voicemail in your office if it all possible. If for some reason you're in a position where you really can't turn your cell phone off at, the very least put it on vibrate and screen your calls. Glance at and only take it if it is absolutely necessary. So you want to weed out technological interruptions by **turning off things that will alarm you and do not reflexively responding to them**. Just because it goes off doesn't mean you have to respond to it.

Now one thing I do is, I **set aside a block of ,time later in the day specifically for dealing with interruptions**. For instance I do not check e-mail before 11 o'clock. And then I don't check it again until three o'clock. So I have two scheduled time frames in which I process e-mail…from 11 to launch in three until I leave. That's caps the amount of time I'll spend on that and it also limits the disruptions I have in my day. So that's one thing you can do to limit. **Create blocks and look at those things specifically at those times.**

Similarly, you can **leave a margin in your day**. For example, let's say at two o'clock you are going to deal with anything that pops up. You are going to put off interruptions until then and deal with them then.

That's where **having a planned response comes in very handy**. If someone comes in the office and says, "hey listen can you do this for

me?" You're able to look at them and say, "Right now I am in the middle of something, but I'll be free at two o'clock and I can do it then." I do that as interruptions come in. I have a responses in mind for when I'll deal with it . Then you have to be sure to write it down on your to-do list or in your planner So, don't leave that person hanging because that's not good at all. But have those planned responses.

You may say thing like, "I can't work on that right now but as soon as I'm done with this I can call you back." "Can we talk about this at two o'clock?" "Can we talk about it tomorrow?" **You want to flag that you are in the middle of something, but you're willing to work on it and pick a time when you're going to do that.** Set that time right then and there. Otherwise, it's going to hang out there as just some unfinished task that you have to figure out when you're going to do. And if you start doing that regularly it's really going to diminish the amount of interruption or at least the amount of disruption that those interruptions cause. Some people will start to realize that you have blocks of time where you're just not available because you're working and you're intensely focused.

So, give that a try. Work on turning off alarms. Setting aside blocks of time to not be interrupted. Setting up a time to then deal with all those interruptions that come up during the day. You need to leave a margin just for things that will pop up. Well, that's it in this video. A I look forward to seeing you in the next video.