



Did Jesus use an iPhone?

TN43 Training Notes series: Leadership

These notes were first published on the website in October 2008 and last updated in August 2024. They are copyright © John Truscott. You may download this file and/or print up to 30 copies without charge provided no part of the heading or text is altered or omitted (other than the bookmark at the end).

If there was one thing that Jesus had in equal measure to each one of us during his earthly ministry it was time. He took the very nature of a servant and, being made in human likeness, he humbled himself to living within the exact 86,400 seconds of each day that we are all provided with. In fact, he made it tougher for himself by restricting his public ministry to, probably, a mere three years – somewhat shorter than most of us have to make our mark.

So how did he use this clearly limited time? The four Gospels give us plenty of evidence to show how he managed his life. (To talk of *time*-management makes little sense. You manage *yourself* within the given resource of time.) Are there lessons to learn for today?

Before you buy yet another time management manual, it makes sense to study the Master we follow. There may be no diary in sight but that does not mean that there was no plan. There was certainly pressure – much more than any of us will ever have to cope with – but no sign of panic. These notes pick out some of the points we would be wise to ponder. You might like to use them as a meditation.

A laid-back approach

Jesus' agenda was hardly one governed by a tight diary that had each moment sorted. He never gave the impression of being in a hurry or chasing a deadline. He travelled through life in a measured way. Unexpected interruptions never fazed him. People who needed him had his time and attention.

- **One day at a time**

He told his followers not to worry about tomorrow, but to take each day as it came. It was that day's bread to ask for; the next day had time enough to consider its own troubles (Matthew 6:11,34 and see also v27).

- **Perspective**

He chided Martha's deadline for a meal that distracted her from listening to him – and no doubt she was pretty tetchy about it. (On the other hand, it seems she had 15 to feed that night!) See Luke 10:38-42.

- **Time off**

The idea of one day off in seven came from God, but the special day was for our benefit, he said, not for petty rule-keeping. We need to relax in every sense, and not just on the Sabbath. See Mark 2:27; 6:30,31.

- **Interruptions**

When he made plans, he allowed them to be revised when a pressing need presented itself. Even when he had time off he would cut into it for the sake of human need. See Mark 3:7-10; 6:32-34; 7:24,25. Or put yourself in Jairus' shoes at Mark 5:30-34!

- **Crises**

Although interruptions may have changed his plans, he seems to have been incredibly relaxed when emergencies presented themselves. Check out John 11:5-7 and read the story from the viewpoint of Mary and Martha. Martha had quite a tough time with Jesus when it came to priorities.

A driven agenda

Yet to say that Jesus was always laid-back is hardly the whole picture. When it came to his own self-discipline, he pushed himself to the limits at times.

- **Missed sleep**

His engagements must have taken their toll; yet after a hectic Sabbath teaching, exorcising, healing until late, there was no time for a lie-in as he slipped away in the darkness (read Mark 1:35 in the context of vv21-34). Feeding 5,000 must have burnt up plenty of emotional energy, but he was still on the go at about 3 am. (Mark 6:48).

- **Tired, hungry and thirsty**

Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman in John 4:6-8 was at a time when he was exhausted and, by implication, hungry and thirsty too. He took his disciples away in Mark 6:31 because meals had been neglected and they were all shattered. He must have needed the rest to be soundly asleep in the storm of Mark 4:37,38. And then, of course, there were the Temptations.

- **Packed schedule**

Matthew 4:23-25 and 9:35-38 both record what sounds like a pretty typical 'week in the life of...'. Teaching, preaching, healing, having compassion on all, and all the time walking and standing, walking and standing. No wonder he asked his disciples to pray for more workers for the harvest. Mark's Gospel gives us some idea with his use of words like 'Immediately...', 'At once...'. Chapters 1 to 8 give the impression of ceaseless movement: criss-crossing the lake, moving from village to village, going further afield. And there is then the ultimate throw-away line in John 21:25...

- **Psychological pressure**

We forget that Jesus had not only a gruelling schedule, he had all the relentless exposure that goes with an A List celebrity, not to mention the plotting, the trick

questions (Matthew 22:18; Luke 10:25; John 8:3-6 etc.) and the disappointments (John 6:66). And all the time there was the shadow of a dark fate that awaited him.

A clear plan and priority

But behind these apparently contrasting points, there is a master-plan. It may not have been given out in print to all his disciples as a neat purpose and statement of vision, but once we take an overview of each Gospel as a whole (though I shall only cite examples here), it comes clearly into view.

- **Waiting**

Jesus waited a long time for the right moment before his baptism, temptations and then the start of his public ministry (Matthew 4:17).

- **Prayer**

He was not constantly available to the crowds. He needed time to get away to be with his Father in prayer often enough for the apostles to take note (as in Luke 5:16 and John 6:15). He had special times for prayer before a major decision (Luke 6:12), before a sharpened priority (Mark 1:35) and before his death (Luke 22:39-46).

- **Team training**

He made it a priority to train his disciples and especially his twelve apostles, ready for when he would no longer be with them – a clear example of forward planning. Check out the large sections of the Gospels given over to his teaching in his final hours, but note also Mark 9:30,31 and the focus on the inner cabinet (Mark 5:37; 9:2; 14:33).

- **Overall purpose**

His movements may have seemed irregular, but they were never aimless. See the “I have come...” passages such as Matthew 5:17; 9:13; 10:34,35; 20:28; Luke 12:49; 19:10; John 9:39; 10:10; 12:27,47; 18:37.

- **Clear priorities**

But it was more than purpose. He had the strength of character to stick to different priorities within it at different times. In Mark 1:37,38 he goes against conventional wisdom which might say ‘build on success’; he knew his priority then was teaching not healing. There is the pivot point (Mark 8:27-30) when the disciples realised who he was and his teaching then changed to what he must do and how he must die (v31).

- **Right timing**

But it is still more than purpose and priorities for in the shadows behind the narrative of Jesus’ movements is the idea of his ‘time’ or ‘hour’ (John 2:4; 7:6,8). This comes into clearer focus the nearer he gets to his death (Matthew 26:18; Mark 14:41; John 12:23,27; 17:1). See also John 9:4,5; 11:9,10.

- **Final climax**

At the end he arrived in Jerusalem perfectly on time, not that his followers could work all that out. His presence, the Passover and the plotting of the Jewish leaders all came together in one place at one time (John 12:31). Just as, in the wider sphere, his life had been lived in the right place at the right time. God’s plans are perfect.

Lessons for us

But we are not Jesus! True, but as his disciples we follow him and need to pay great attention to what his life teaches us. Use the above analysis to ponder on Jesus' use of time and compare our own. But, in addition, note the following.

- **God's timing, not ours**

Jesus lived a life in perfect harmony with God. His times of prayer, often carved out of a hectic programme while others slept, showed that if he needed to keep in touch with the Master-planner, how much more we need to do this. Only in this context could he relax within the timing of each day (Luke 4:1,14,18).

- **God's agenda, not ours**

Jesus taught in parable after parable that our lifetime belongs to God and we need to be ready for him to overrule our plans and take over. See, for example, Luke 12:16-21; 35-48; 19:11-26, and also Matthew 6:10,33. Just as Jesus viewed time as a precious gift to be used for God's glory, so we need to thank him for every moment.

- **God's expectations, not ours**

Finally, there is what for me is the most challenging idea of all in Jesus' management of his life. After a mere three years of ministry, in an out-of-the-way corner of the Roman Empire, when thousands were unhealed, thousands more untaught, and with eleven apostles left and about to let him down when he needed them most, he could say to his Father, "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do" (John 17:4 NIV).

Are we prone to think that God wants us to do more than any human can achieve? Is our problem somewhere in our own pride and an over-ambitious idea of what we should complete in Christian ministry?

Verses cited

Only one example has been used when a passage appears in more than one Gospel.

Matthew 4:17,23-25; 5:17; 6:10,11,27,33,34; 9:13,35-38; 10:34,35; 20:28; 22:18; 26:18

Mark 1:21-35,37,38; 2:27; 3:7-10; 4:37,38; 5:30-34,37; 6:30,31,32-34,48; 7:24,25; 8:27-31; 9:2,30,31; 14:33,41

Luke 4:1,14,18; 5:16; 6:12; 10:25,38-42; 12:16-21,35-48,49; 19:10,11-26; 22:39-46

John 2:4; 4:6-8; 6:15,66; 7:6,8; 8:3-6; 9:4,5,39; 10:10; 11:5-7,9,10; 12:23,27,31,47; 17:1,4; 18:37; 21:25

See next page for a bookmark/card summarising the points in these notes.

These notes are available at <https://www.john-truscott.co.uk/Resources/Training-Notes-index> then TN43. They are based on an original piece of research undertaken by his colleagues Lance Pierson and Martyn Dunning when all three were on the Administry staff. See also Training Notes TN11, *Keeping a time log*, TN23, *How to do 'To Do' lists*, TN62, *Know what distracts you*, TN68, *Administrators who miss the point*, TN84, *How to say 'No' when you should*, and TN106, *Talk about taking time 'off'*.

John's resources are marked for filing categories of Leadership, Management, Structures, Planning, Communication, Administration. File TN43 under Leadership.

John Truscott, 24 High Grove, St Albans, AL3 5SU

Tel: 01727 568325 Email: john@john-truscott.co.uk Web: <https://www.john-truscott.co.uk>

This is a summary of Training Notes TN43 in the Resources section of John's website at <https://www.john-truscott.co.uk>.

Did Jesus use an iPhone?

A laid-back approach

One day at a time (Matthew 6:34)
Perspective (Luke 10:38-42)
Time off (Mark 2:27)
Interruptions (Mark 6:32-34)
Crises (John 11:5-7)

A driven agenda

Missed sleep (Mark 6:48)
Tired, hungry and thirsty (John 4:6-8)
Packed schedule (Matthew 9:35-38)
Psychological pressure (John 8:3-6)

A clear plan and priority

Waiting (Matthew 4:17)
Prayer (Luke 5:16)
Team training (Mark 9:30,31)
Overall purpose (John 10:10)
Clear priorities (Mark 1:37,38)
Right timing (John 7:6,8)
Final climax (John 12:31)

Lessons for us

God's timing, not ours (Luke 4:1,14,18)
God's agenda, not ours (Luke 12:16-21)
God's expectations, not ours (John 17:4)

Print this sheet out, perhaps onto card. Cut it down to one-third of A4 size, so effectively deleting this column. Use the card as a book-mark or keep it in a pocket. When you need to, simply print another copy from the website.

john truscott

creative organisation for effective christian ministry

24 High Grove, St Albans, AL3 5SU
Tel: 01727 568325
Email: john@john-truscott.co.uk