The CENTER for STUDENT SUCCESS — TIME MANAGEMENT & PRODUCTIVITY

If you have taken the time to plan out your semester (see our guide on **Planning your Semester**), you may be overwhelmed by the sheer number of **tasks** you will need to complete each week—not to mention your many responsibilities outside of homework! Attempting to keep all this straight is stressful, overwhelming, and distracting. To maximize productivity and minimize stress, you need **tools** and a **system** to help you manage your time and responsibilities.

Productivity: "effectively stewarding your gifts, talents, time, energy, and enthusiasm for the good of others and the glory of God," which requires "brokering peace between each of the different tasks we could prioritize in any given period of time." *

The Productivity Tools

1. TO-DO LIST: we recommend **Todoist**, since it has cross-platform functionality and more features than a simple to-do list. A notebook can work too, though it will require re-writing.
2. CALENDAR: we recommend **Google Calendar** or something similar, though a paper agenda works too.

(Note: like physical tools, these tools will not do your work for you, but they will make it easier.)

The Productivity System

- Throughout your day, drop every possible **task/assignment** you can think of into your **to-do list**, such as: email prof about paper topic, call mom about insurance, read article before class, prep lesson for Sunday School.
- Throughout your day, add every **event** you can think of to your **calendar**, such as: marketing lecture (Tues 2:30-5:15 pm), small group (Wed 7-9 pm), gym (M/W/F 7-8 am), dentist appointment (Mon 1-2 pm).
  - NOTE: if something happens at a *certain time/place* (events, meetings, appointments), it goes on the *calendar*; everything else goes on the *to-do list*.
- At the **beginning of each day**, take 5-10 minutes to do a **quick review**:
  - Scan your **calendar** to remind yourself of your schedule for the day.
  - Sort through your **to-do list** to determine your priorities for the day.
    - *Sort* what you added yesterday; *reschedule* things you missed yesterday; *delete* what is no longer necessary; *defer* what can wait; *delegate* what someone else can complete.
    - NOTE: Todoist allows you to create color-coded tags/folders, which is helpful for distinguishing your various areas of responsibility (school, work, family, church, etc.).
  - Based on your priorities, create a flexible **schedule for the day**. When will you complete each of your priority tasks? Follow this schedule as well as you can, but be ready to improvise as life happens around you.
- At the **end of each week**, take 15-20 minutes to **prep for the week/month ahead**:
  - Check your calendar for the upcoming week/month to remind yourself of what is coming up.
  - Organize tasks on your to-do list onto appropriate days in the upcoming week(s).
  - NOTE: it is helpful to break large tasks (such as writing a paper) into smaller steps on your to-do list (see our handouts on **Planning your Semester** and **Writing Strategies**).

CAVEAT: remember, **productivity is not an end in itself**. Prioritize faithfulness in your responsibilities, but not above loving God and loving your neighbor.

*See Tim Challies, *Do More Better*, for this definition. This guide is drawn heavily from the productivity system Challies outlines in his book. In addition, Cal Newport's system in *How to become a Straight-A Student* also influenced this guide.