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MONDAY MANNA
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TAMING AGENDAS AND THEIR UNRELENTING DEMANDS

By Sergio Fortes

One of the traditional mainstays of the business and professional world is the agenda. It is not just the calendars and time management books where appointments, tasks, and daily activities are recorded. It also refers to the top executive's primary areas of emphasis, the demands he or she must respond to, and the importance attached to each one.

In the minds of many leaders, having a busy schedule is a sign of status, a reflection of their own importance. I once tried to contact a prominent speaker to arrange a talk for an organization I was involved with, and an assistant informed me that his schedule was fully booked for the next five years! The world could turn upside-down by then!

It is not uncommon, for example, to have to wait months to get an appointment on a physician's schedule. This is typically an indication of famous and competent professionals. However, I sometimes wonder whether a crammed, inflexible schedule is the best path to success.

Thinking about this brings to my mind an amazing agenda, perhaps the most significant agenda of all time – that of Jesus Christ during His time on Earth. As a leader, He was faced with great demands and challenges every day, from dawn until dark. People came from many miles away to hear His words of encouragement, His teachings, and seek personal or family help.

Reading Jesus' story in the Bible, it becomes evident His free time was scarce. Time for a quiet meal, a moment of rest, or for personal reflection must have seemed a luxury. To maintain His time for personal meditation, and to spend time alone praying to His heavenly Father, Jesus used the early morning hours.

He apparently slept very little. The time when a deep sleep overtook Him during a fierce storm, while the boat He and His disciples were in rocked uncontrollably, showed Him overcome by fatigue. Yet, as we observe how Jesus interacted with people He encountered during the course of each day, we see Him not enslaved to the demands of a daily agenda. Somehow, Jesus always found time for people who brought their desperate needs to Him.

How He managed His agenda, especially His priorities, was especially evident in the days following His resurrection, recounted in the 24th chapter of the New Testament gospel of Luke. As news spread that Jesus had risen from the dead, the third day after His crucifixion, there certainly were many people interested in learning what would happen next. King Herod, Roman governor Pontius Pilate, religious leaders, His disciples, His mother, Mary, and Mary Magdalene

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were among those with special curiosity about this unique, incredible event. Without question, they all were eager to see Him.

But Jesus had other plans. On the most momentous day in history, He went on the road to Emmaus, in the heat of the noonday sun, and walked for about 11 kilometers – nearly six miles – spending more than two hours with two unnamed disciples to bring them up to date on what had happened. These two anonymous men, I believe, symbolize you and me.

On our own painful road of existence, when we think we have no more value, our dreams seem over and our expectations frustrated, this assures us that the Lord of the universe still makes us top priority status on His agenda.

If you are feeling excluded from the corporate agenda, marginalized, and forgotten, remember this promise from Jesus: “...I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). There will always be room for you in Christ’s agenda.

Sergio Fortes is a consultant on corporate strategic business, a coach and mentor. As a member of CBMC in the city of Sao Paulo, Brazil, he has coordinated the translation of Monday Manna into Portuguese for more than 20 years. He is committed to the Great Commission of Jesus Christ – to make disciples.

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. How much does your personal agenda – your daily schedule, calendar, and primary goals – dictate how you conduct yourself during a typical workday?
2. Have you known of people whose agendas were so crowded that they had no time for unscheduled or spontaneous interactions with employees, or even friends? How do you think that could be avoided – or should it even be a concern? Explain your answer.
3. It has been said, “If you want something to be done, find a busy person to do it.” Can you see any problems or flaws with that kind of perspective?
4. What can we learn from how Jesus Christ handled His daily agendas and schedules, if anything? Do you find His example relevant for the 21st century marketplace? Why or why not?

NOTE:

*If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages:
Proverbs 15:23, 22:11; Ecclesiastes 3:1-8; Ephesians 5:16, Colossians 4:5; Titus 3:14*

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