



# 5 Time-Saving Hacks for a More Productive, Fulfilled, Happier Life

By Beth Jones, VA, Speaker, Author

You are busy every day. You have important things to do. There never seems to be enough hours in the day. You're juggling being a spouse, a parent, an entrepreneur, a friend...not to mention running errands, paying bills, being a taxi-car driver for your kids, and then there's the unexpected things that hit you out of the blue like a freight train—a loved one is diagnosed with a serious illness, a friend's death, a lay-off at work. When was the last time you had time alone, just to think, chill out a second?

I understand. As a wife to paramedic Ray Jones, mom of 3 beautiful daughters, a virtual assistant, speaker, and author, my life is hectic, too. But I've developed a routine each day to help me focus on what really matters to me to live the best life possible, one that honors and glorifies God, to stay daily connected with the people I love the most, and to use my spiritual gifts and talents to help others and make an impact.

When I leave this earth, I want to have left my "heart print" on others, an unforgettable legacy to our children and grandchildren, and to have made a difference. Time is much too precious and life much too short to waste and have regrets.

Here are 5 time-saving hacks for a more productive, fulfilled, happy life:

- Fulfill your calling and purpose. You hear the word "purpose" so much, you're almost jaded about it. And yet it's so important to know why God created you, the work He meant you to do here on earth that only you can do! I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God called me to be a wife, mom, speaker, and author. I also use my virtual assistant skills to assist Christian entrepreneurs. I agree with Erma Bombeck's quote which says, "When I stand before God at the end of my life, I would hope that I would not have a single bit of talent left, and could say, 'I used everything you gave me'. Your purpose involves many different things: your passion(s), your spiritual gifts, your natural talents and skills, what hurts your heart or makes you angry (a cause), what you'd do even if you weren't paid

for it, what God is leading you to do. When you are walking in your purpose, you will be fulfilled and full of joy and peace. You will know you're making a difference, whether it's teaching a children's Sunday School Class, being the CEO of a major corporation, speaking at women's conferences, writing books or poems, painting or drawing, designing websites, coaching or counseling, taking care of your children or the elderly. Jeff Goins writes that a calling is something that you can't NOT do. When you're achieving your purpose, you won't waste time spinning your wheels, doing things you hate or that you aren't any good at. You won't feel bored or empty or that life is just meaningless. You will wake up energized and excited, ready to start the day. You have a reason to get out of bed in the morning. That doesn't mean that you'll never work at a job you dislike so that you can provide for your family. But an intentional, purpose-filled life means that each day you are progressing toward that purpose, your highest goals and dreams, to fulfill your potential and become all God created you to be and do. God has a good plan for your life. (Jeremiah 29:11)

- Take care of yourself. I have a precious friend who is struggling severely with health issues and has for years. She is now forced to retire due to her bad health. While some sicknesses, injuries, and chronic illnesses are inevitable and no fault of your own, many times they are because you're not using wisdom and taking good care of yourself. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 6:19, NLT: "Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and

was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself." It's important each day to eat healthy, exercise, get sufficient rest and relaxation, and drink plenty of water. You will feel better physically, mentally, and spiritually. You'll have the energy and stamina you need to achieve your goals and dreams, and your mission. If you're sick and tired all the time, you can't achieve God's purpose for your life because we can't do anything or go anywhere without our physical bodies. Last year I began radically changing my diet to eat more salads, eliminate as much sugar and fat as possible, stop drinking Cokes (I was addicted), and to exercise regularly. As a result, I've lost weight and am healthier now; I feel much better! Extra weight physically will hinder you emotionally and mentally. Develop a routine through the week to eat healthy, drink plenty of water, exercise regularly (say 3 to 4 times a week walking at the track or doing a work-out Zumba video), and rest/sleep. It's important to include doing fun things to de-stress and enjoy your life. Observe little children. They smile and laugh constantly. Doesn't that bless you as a parent? God your Heavenly Father feels the same way about you. He wants you to live fully and enjoy this life He has blessed you with, to not just survive but to thrive.

- Just do it. Stop the procrastination. I am not a procrastinator at all, but I know several people who are. Procrastination causes you to be unproductive, stressed out, and it often costs people financially in the long run. Edward Young says that, "Procrastination of the thief of

time." Good planning and goal-setting, along with time blocking, will help you to overcome procrastination. I encourage you to take some quiet time to be alone with God, a place where there's no distractions or interruptions and where it's very quiet and peaceful. Turn off your cell phone, get off social media (turning off notifications to Facebook, Twitter, Periscope, email), have your favorite hot or cold drink, the Bible, and a journal and a pen (I prefer Ultra Fine, black Sharpies, my fave pen in the whole world). Pray and ask God what it is that He wants you to accomplish today, this month, this new year. Then be quiet and just LISTEN. Write down what He tells you. Hearing God's still, small voice takes practice, but you certainly can't hear Him if you're constantly busy, on the go, or talking all the time. Read His word and meditate on it. Joshua 1:8 says, "Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful." As God instructs you what to do, write down what He says. Set goals and dreams for today and this year. Break down those goals into smaller action steps. Every day write your to-do list, and do the most important 1-3 priorities. Time block to get those tasks done. As you do them, check them off the list. I use iBloom's 2016 calendar to help me with my busy schedule and get my daily to-do's done. Sometimes God won't have you doing anything at all — but just being. But don't allow procrastination to stress you out and rob your time.

- Outsource. This is one of the most important things I have learned having my own business for the last five years as a speaker and author, and now a virtual assistant. God has given me certain spiritual gifts, talents, and skills. You and I all have strengths and weaknesses, gifts, and skills. I am not skilled at and dislike doing techy things like designing eBook covers or formatting a manuscript to publish an eBook on Amazon. (You can find my 11 eBooks at my Amazon Author Page at <http://www.amazon.com/author/bethmjones>

So I outsource these things—I hire someone to do what I am not good at! That way, I'm focused on using the gifts God has anointed me to do—speaking, writing, organizing, typing, assisting entrepreneurs, etc. When I was first in business, a coach told me and the other students in her writing class to do everything ourselves: write the book, design the cover, create an html sales page (if you don't know what that is, you're blessed; they are horrible!), put the book on our website to sell with the PayPal buttons, etc. Today I outsource many of these things so I can concentrate on things I know how to do and am good at. If you're worried about having the money to outsource thinking you can't afford to hire someone, I encourage you with what iBloom Founder and President Kelly Thorne Gore says: "I can't afford to NOT outsource." This will save you time, energy, frustration, and stress. You'll be a more productive, happy, pleasant person and get so much more accomplished!

- Rest. Take time off from work. This sounds counter-productive but research shows that workaholics burn out and eventually their work suffers, if they don't include some time off work. If you're exhausted, unable to concentrate, have a negative attitude or short temper, bored, tired all the time, feel like you never do enough, feel detached from people you love, or have frequent headaches, colds or other illnesses, these are signs and symptoms of burnout. A study by the U.S. Travel Society found that taking more vacations resulted in better health, more productivity, closer family relationships, newer perspectives, better mental health, and increased mental power. Think of how refreshed you feel after going somewhere new, eating new things, just breaking from the routine. While you may not be able to fly off to Fiji right now, do get up from your office desk chair each hour, set boundaries around your work time vs. family time, do something new, fun and adventurous, or even go away somewhere locally for a couple of days. I am now planning a "surprise," 2-day getaway with my husband Ray locally at a nice hotel—just him and me, no kids! You don't have to travel far or even spend a lot of money, but make sure you're not working all the time with no breaks. God set aside one day of rest for Himself and us for good reason. He knew our bodies and souls needed it. "Most of the things we need to be most fully alive never come in busyness. They grow in rest." — Mark Buchanan, *The Holy Wild: Trusting in the Character of God*.

These 5, time-saving hacks will enable you to have a more productive, happy, fulfilled life. I have time-tested them myself and have found they truly lead to the best life possible, being able to spend more time with God, those you love, yourself, and doing the things that really matter, to make the best life possible., one that is filled to the brim like a sweet, red wine with joy. This is not a dress rehearsal, but your one life to live. Let's you and me make the very most of it.

"Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?"~Mary Oliver, *The Summer Day* (poem)

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