



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of
the Southern United States

The Monthly Message
to the Priests' Wives
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Procrastination and Postponing

Procrastination means postponing the task required to be done soon to a later time. Every one of us must experience procrastination in certain situations in his life for a reason or another. Procrastination can involve many areas of our life for example postponing worship and spiritual practices like praying, reading the Bible, confessing, or postponing the completion of required tasks in service, at home, or at work. The real problem is when procrastination becomes a chronic practice and a personality trait as these would lead to a lot of negative consequences that expand to involve all the life aspects especially the psycho-spiritual one.

Procrastination in the Holy Bible:

- (1) The foolish virgins were described to be foolish because they were procrastinators and they did not become active to buy oil until they ran short of time.
- (2) Felix the governor lost the chance to be saved because of his procrastination as he said to St. Paul, “*Go away for now; when I have a convenient time, I will call for you*”(Acts 24:25).
- (3) The Philippian jailer did not postpone accepting faith but it was said about him, “*And he took them **the same hour** of the night and washed their stripes. And **immediately** he and all his family were baptized*”(Acts 16:33).
- (4) When the prodigal son came back to himself and decided to return to his father he did not postpone putting his decision into action and said, “*I will arise and go to my father*”(Luke 15:18). Maybe he would never return if he would procrastinate.
- (5) In the sermon on the mountain, Jesus emphasized that one would never postpone reconciliation with others and commanded us saying, “*Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that*

*your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. **First** be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift”*(Matthew 5:23–24).

He also commanded us saying, *“Agree with your adversary **quickly**, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison”* (Matthew 5:25). The word *“quickly”* here incites us not to procrastinate.

(6) St. Paul also incites us to get rid of our wrath and anger on the same day without postponing to the second day saying, *“Do not let the sun go down on your wrath”* (Ephesians 4:26).

(7) As per the Psalms saying, St. Paul warn us that procrastination leads to hardening of the heart saying, *“But exhort one another daily, while it is called **“Today,”** lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin... while it is said: **“Today,** if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion”*(Hebrews 3:13,15).

He also warns us in another place saying, *“For He says: **“In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.”** Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation”* (2Corinthians 6:2).

(8) St. Paul call us not to be lagging in worship saying, *“Not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord”*(Romans 12:11).

(9) When the Lord Jesus Christ called somebody to follow Him, this person asked to postpone this until he buries his father. Then, Jesus motivated him not to procrastinate saying, *“Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God”* (Luke 9:60).

(10) When the Lord Jesus Christ called St. Matthew to follow Him, he left all in the tax office, rose up, and followed Him immediately (Luke 5:28). This is exactly what happened also with Simeon, Andrew, James, and John as they *“immediately left their nets and followed Him”*(Mark 1:18).

(11) When the Lord asked a hard thing from Abraham which is to kill his only beloved son, Abraham did not

postpone obeying God's request and it was said about him, *"So Abraham rose early in the morning"* (Genesis 22:3).

(12) David the prophet says, *"I made haste, and did not delay to keep Your commandments"* (Psalms 119:60) which means that immediate obedience of the commandment is a must.

(13) When Boaz knew about Ruth's case, he assured her he would do all what she requested and indeed he completed this in the morning fulfilling Naomi's words about him saying, *"The man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day"* (Ruth 3:18).

(14) Lot was about to perish with people of Sodom and Gomorrah because of his reluctance as it was said about him, *"When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, 'Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city.' And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city"* (Genesis 19:15-16).

(15) Solomon warns us saying, *"Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, 'I have no pleasure in them'"* (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

(16) The priests pray daily in the absolution of midnight prayer saying, *"But deliver us and keep us and raise us from our boredom, slothfulness and laziness. Do not let our enemy, the devil, deceive us by false hopes, but alert our minds and wake up our hearts from the sleep of carelessness and wasting life in vain"*.

Causes of procrastination:

(1) **Slothfulness and laziness:** they are the main cause lying behind procrastination, *"The lazy man buries his hand in the bowl; It wearies him to bring it back to his mouth"* (Proverbs 26:15); *"The desire of the lazy man kills him, for his hands refuse to labor"* (Proverbs 21:25).

(2) **Perfectionism:** here one would feel that postponing the work under pretext of doing it well is better than hastening into poor performance. In fact, perfectionists usually end up not fulfilling postponed tasks at all!!

(3) **Lack of motivation:** either because of physical, mental, or psychological exhaustion or because of depletion of psychological energy in many conflicts pushing one to postpone required tasks out of amotivation.

(4) **Bad time management:** faulty sense of time and inability to classify tasks according their priority and urgency leads to chaos in time management and hence to procrastination.

(5) **Burnout Syndrome:** when one overburdens himself with a lot of tasks that exceed his capabilities and fails to say “NO” and to set boundaries, he ends up feeling imminent breakdown under the many increasing burdens he lifts. This would lead him to procrastinate.

(6) **Distractibility:** the lack of focus and attention leads one to postpone a lot of things. The student who is distracted and cannot focus postpones many of the academic work required from him to later time. This poor concentration may be due to poor mental abilities, or due to working or studying in an environment full of distractors.

(7) **Slow rhythm:** some people are characterized by slow rhythm leading them to take a lot of time to fulfil tasks. When they find themselves lagging behind, they procrastinate.

(8) **Nature of the required task:** usually, one procrastinates boring tasks, hard tasks that require time and effort, silly tasks, and unpleasant tasks void of enjoyment.

(9) **Bad judgement:** one may misjudge the time required to fulfil a certain task. He then procrastinates it. He may also trivialize a certain thing unrealizing its importance and the urgency of its fulfillment. This would push him to procrastinate, “*But if that servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk*”(Luke 12:5).

(10) **Feeling bored and losing purpose:** when one loses the purpose of his life and does not find meaning in what he does, he suffers a chronic feeling of boredom. This would lead him to lose enthusiasm and postpone even the most urgent tasks.

(to be followed)