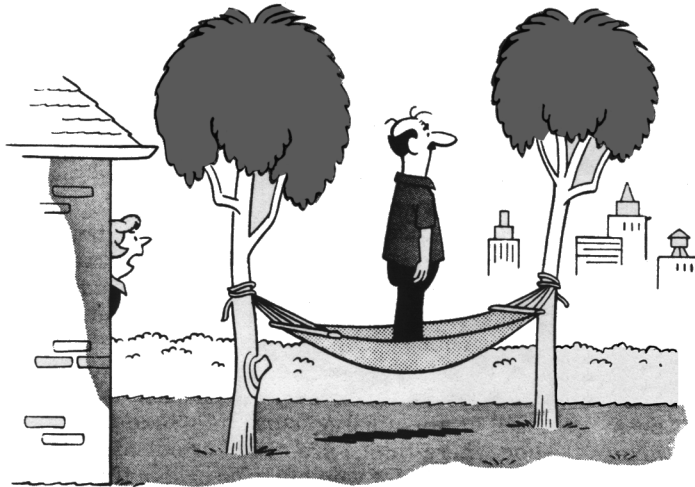


Crowded Loneliness: *Managing Too Many Worlds*

- Things will even out soon. This is just a temporary season of busyness.

Maybe this mirrors your life. The activities may be different, but the movement and noise are the same. The initial thought is that the more financial resources you have, the more likely you are to have a stress-free, relaxing life. In reality, though, studies show that with increased resources comes increased complexity, not simplicity. If they aren't especially careful, the ones who have more actually have more with which to destroy themselves.

Maybe you can relate to the cartoon caption below. Can you think of how many times you've made a resolution to do something about busyness and stress in your life only to find nothing really changing?



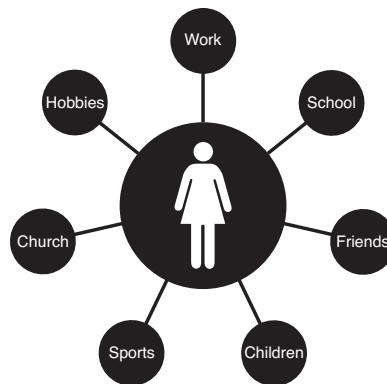
“Fred, you must learn to relax.”

porch rocker watching little birds suck juice out of a jar. I've always lived with a strong sense that God has a calling on my life, that he has something for me to accomplish. But I needed to find some balance and establish some boundaries. Certainly a big part of what God has for my life is what I can *become* as a person in Christ—not just what I *do* for Christ.

The solutions to my dilemma were rooted in God's Word, coupled with the common sense of sages who have gone before us. It has rescued me from a life of running on a hamster's wheel, a life of motion without meaning.

## Managing Your Relationships

Let's begin our journey together with some self-discovery. Grab a pen or pencil and a piece of paper. Now look at the following illustration.

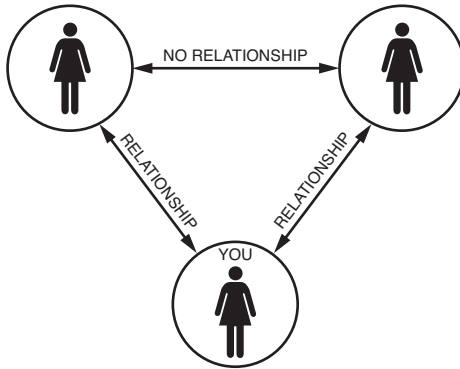


The individual in the center represents a person who is trying to make more room for life. Each of the smaller circles represents a relationship that they manage. They may invest time daily in a particular relationship, or only a few times a year. Think about your life and the various relationships you manage, and draw a circle for each.

*contacts* for a circle of community. For example, American Institute of Stress physicians and sociologists tell us that it is possible to be in the company of others and still feel isolated. Why? Because many people have a large group of “friends,” but in reality most of them are mere acquaintances.<sup>1</sup>

## The Linear Model

What is the difference between linear contacts and a circle of community? Diagram the linear relationship theory, and it will likely resemble the drawing of your world. There is a relationship of some sort between you and another person (a *line* drawn to them), but they typically do not share a relationship with the other people in the other worlds you manage (they are not in the same *circle*).



At first glance, this may not seem to be a serious problem. As a matter of fact, you may have some relationships that you would rather not expose to your preferred relationships. While this separation may spare you some embarrassment and frustration, in the long run this may not be what’s best for you.

In a linear relational model, you run from one relational unit to another. You go to work; you call your father or sibling on the cell

mentioned in chapter 1, this is called *crowded loneliness*. In the end, the linear world leaves us isolated, misunderstood, exhausted, anxious, and shallow.

## The Circle of Relationships

In order to bring a deep sense of belonging to his or her life, the busy modern-day person needs a *circle of relationships*—a collection of people of all ages and stages who daily flow in and out of each other's lives. One of the secrets behind the success of this model of community is that the people know not only you but each other as well. It is an extended family of spiritual aunts, uncles, grandparents, nieces, and nephews who are committed to living out their faith in a simple, radical, and intentional way. This circle of friendships can also include those who don't live by faith in God but still share in the daily life experiences of a person. Together they share in the mundane exchanges of life: taking out the trash, checking the mail when the other person is out of town, sharing the rental fee on a rototiller, playing a game of kickball in the street, watching a classic movie together—the list goes on.

Take note of the simple illustration of a circle of friends. Instead of the complex milieu of isolated relationships, which promotes crowded loneliness, we have a simple circle of relationships where people interact



THE SOLUTION: *Restructuring Our Relationships and Time*

times, and days and years, and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth.” And it was so. God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.

Genesis 1:14–19

On the sixth and final day of creation, God made humans (Genesis 1:26–27). Now let’s connect the dots. Do you think we were designed by God in any way to function in harmony with the creation? More specifically, do you think the *divine clock* of night and day has any bearing on our lives? I believe the answer is an unequivocal yes. I also believe the evidence reinforces this conclusion.

As we look at the pattern of the Hebrew day, we see that God’s people have taken their cues from creation theology. Looking at the circle below we see that God has divided the twenty-four-hour day into two parts—night and day.



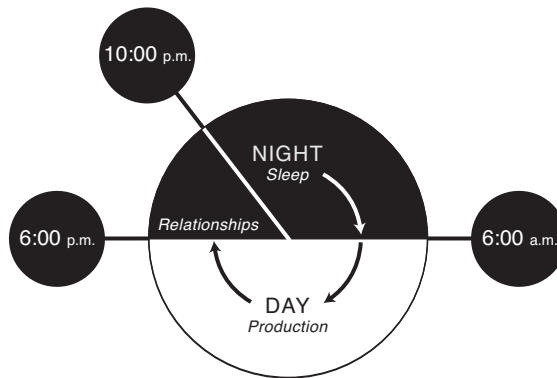
For the ancient Hebrew, there is a divine plumb line that governs the patterns of the day: 6:00 a.m. (dawn) and 6:00 p.m. (dusk). Oddly enough, the day begins for a Hebrew person the “day before,” or at 6:00 p.m. This is consistent with the way God referred to each day in Genesis 1. After describing each day’s creative work, the author of Genesis 1 concluded the section with these words, “And there was *evening*, and

~ 70 ~

there was *morning*—the first [second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth] day” (Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31, emphasis added).

At first this may not seem like a big deal, but it says something about the priorities of God’s chosen people that we fail to understand today. We’ll come back to this later. For now let’s focus on the principle that life for the Hebrew person transitioned on dawn and dusk.

There are essentially three major activities in each day that should be governed by night and day: *productivity*, *relationships*, and *sleep*. Because the work of the Hebrew was agrarian, productivity was accomplished during the hours of sunlight—6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. At 6:00 p.m. the sun would set and darkness would begin to descend. From that point on, the time would be devoted to relationships—time with family, extended family, and friends; sharing a meal; and a time of storytelling (no TV or Internet). This is where a Hebrew child would hear the creation story told over and over again. There would be no rush, because there was no place to go (no mobility). Between 9:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. everyone would settle down to get a good night’s sleep. The basic structure of a normal day for the Hebrews went like this: twelve hours available for productivity and work (6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.); four hours available for relationships (6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.); and eight hours available for sleep (10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.). The illustration below describes this basic structure.

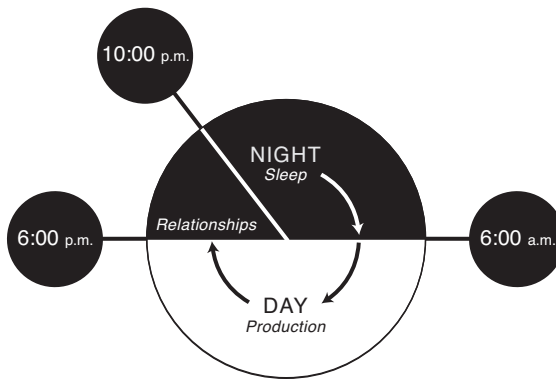


# The Hebrew Day Planner

The Hebrew Day Planner is an ancient approach to real simplicity and offers great help for the harried American.

As you look at this sample planner, notice the evening time comes first. This may mess with your head a bit; it did ours. But try it for a few days. We hope this exercise will help solidify the importance of the concept.

Start on Sunday night at 6:00 p.m. and finish on the next Sunday night at 6:00 p.m. Be intentional about planning your day to fit into this schedule. You will be planning the end of your day first, which is your dinner and relational time—the time God deems most important. After a week of trying this, evaluate and see how you did. Decide if you think designing your days this way has merit. If it does, give it a try for another week. We think you will find that whatever you plan for the 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. time will become your destination. It may just become a way a life for you—a way of finding real simplicity.



# The Hebrew Day Planner

**SUNDAY**

**Schedule for Sunday** Date

RELATIONSHIPS	6:00 p.m. <i>Saturday</i>
	7:00 p.m. <i>Saturday</i>
	8:00 p.m. <i>Saturday</i>
	9:00 p.m. <i>Saturday</i>
REST AND REPLENISH	10:00 p.m. <i>Saturday</i>
	6:00 a.m.
	7:00 a.m.
	8:00 a.m.
	9:00 a.m.
	10:00 a.m.
	11:00 a.m.
	12:00 p.m.
	1:00 p.m.
	2:00 p.m.
	3:00 p.m.
	4:00 p.m.
	5:00 p.m.

**MONDAY**

**Schedule for Monday** Date

RELATIONSHIPS	6:00 p.m. <i>Sunday</i>
	7:00 p.m. <i>Sunday</i>
	8:00 p.m. <i>Sunday</i>
	9:00 p.m. <i>Sunday</i>
PRODUCTION	10:00 p.m. <i>Sunday</i>
	6:00 a.m.
	7:00 a.m.
	8:00 a.m.
	9:00 a.m.
	10:00 a.m.
	11:00 a.m.
	12:00 p.m.
	1:00 p.m.
	2:00 p.m.
	3:00 p.m.
	4:00 p.m.
	5:00 p.m.

**TUESDAY**

**Schedule for Tuesday** Date

RELATIONSHIPS	6:00 p.m. <i>Monday</i>
	7:00 p.m. <i>Monday</i>
	8:00 p.m. <i>Monday</i>
	9:00 p.m. <i>Monday</i>
PRODUCTION	10:00 p.m. <i>Monday</i>
	6:00 a.m.
	7:00 a.m.
	8:00 a.m.
	9:00 a.m.
	10:00 a.m.
	11:00 a.m.
	12:00 p.m.
	1:00 p.m.
	2:00 p.m.
	3:00 p.m.
	4:00 p.m.
	5:00 p.m.

**WEDNESDAY**

**Schedule for Wednesday** Date

RELATIONSHIPS	6:00 p.m. <i>Tuesday</i>
	7:00 p.m. <i>Tuesday</i>
	8:00 p.m. <i>Tuesday</i>
	9:00 p.m. <i>Tuesday</i>
PRODUCTION	10:00 p.m. <i>Tuesday</i>
	6:00 a.m.
	7:00 a.m.
	8:00 a.m.
	9:00 a.m.
	10:00 a.m.
	11:00 a.m.
	12:00 p.m.
	1:00 p.m.
	2:00 p.m.
	3:00 p.m.
	4:00 p.m.
	5:00 p.m.



# The Hebrew Day Planner

## THURSDAY

### Schedule for Thursday

Date \_\_\_\_\_

RELATIONSHIPS	6:00 p.m. <i>Wednesday</i>
	7:00 p.m. <i>Wednesday</i>
	8:00 p.m. <i>Wednesday</i>
	9:00 p.m. <i>Wednesday</i>
SLEEP	10:00 p.m. <i>Wednesday</i>
PRODUCTION	6:00 a.m.
	7:00 a.m.
	8:00 a.m.
	9:00 a.m.
	10:00 a.m.
	11:00 a.m.
	12:00 p.m.
	1:00 p.m.
	2:00 p.m.
	3:00 p.m.
	4:00 p.m.
	5:00 p.m.

## FRIDAY

### Schedule for Friday

Date \_\_\_\_\_

RELATIONSHIPS	6:00 p.m. <i>Thursday</i>
	7:00 p.m. <i>Thursday</i>
	8:00 p.m. <i>Thursday</i>
	9:00 p.m. <i>Thursday</i>
SLEEP	10:00 p.m. <i>Thursday</i>
PRODUCTION	6:00 a.m.
	7:00 a.m.
	8:00 a.m.
	9:00 a.m.
	10:00 a.m.
	11:00 a.m.
	12:00 p.m.
	1:00 p.m.
	2:00 p.m.
	3:00 p.m.
	4:00 p.m.
	5:00 p.m.

## SATURDAY

### Schedule for Saturday

Date \_\_\_\_\_

RELATIONSHIPS	6:00 p.m. <i>Friday</i>
	7:00 p.m. <i>Friday</i>
	8:00 p.m. <i>Friday</i>
	9:00 p.m. <i>Friday</i>
SLEEP	10:00 p.m. <i>Friday</i>
PRODUCTION	6:00 a.m.
	7:00 a.m.
	8:00 a.m.
	9:00 a.m.
	10:00 a.m.
	11:00 a.m.
	12:00 p.m.
	1:00 p.m.
	2:00 p.m.
	3:00 p.m.
	4:00 p.m.
	5:00 p.m.