

Writing as a Ministry for God's Glory

Chapter 4 **Balancing Non-Writing Duties**

by Kathy Collard Miller

I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.—1 Corinthians 9:23

If we are going to write articles and books, we're going to need to balance our writing life with our personal life, ministry, and other responsibilities. Although there will be some men who use this resource of writing professionally, most are women and the following section is for you. Trying to write in the midst of being a wife and/or mother, grandmother, ministry leader, and work is a great challenge. What do you find are the difficulties or hindrances to fulfilling your call from God as a writer? Take a moment now to write think through those difficulties.

Determining Priorities

The dictionary defines priority as "taking precedence in time, order, importance. A right to precedence over others in obtaining, buying, or doing something."

Ask yourself:

Why do I want to write?

Why do I think God wants me to write?

Right now, what are my priorities and where does writing fit?

As you think of your schedule and/or choices of the use of your time, what might need to be changed or eliminated?

It could be helpful to keep a diary of what you do at half hour increments for a week. At the end of the week, make the list of all your activities in the order of their importance along with the amount of time consumed by each. What changes might need to be made? What ways you are wasting valuable time? Try to challenge yourself to cut down the time spent on an activity by an eighth or a fourth.

After this season of evaluating your priorities, and if you still believe writing is God's call upon your life, then you will need to make it a higher priority if it's not already.

Ideas for Change

1. *Say no to the things not as important.* I often share with groups that "an opportunity is not necessarily God's opened door." We must learn to say no. Even Jesus said no at times to the needs around Him. In Mark 9:30-31, Jesus told people to not let others know He was in Galilee, so that He could teach His disciples. Jesus determined His priorities and said no to the people who had needs even though he could have met them. I'm sure many people were upset when they discovered later Jesus was nearby and he had not met their need. We should not let others dictate our priorities or how our time is used.

2. *God will give me enough time to do what He wants me to do.* I don't need to be anxious about getting the things done God wants me to do. As long as I follow His directions moment by moment, I will

accomplish whatever God wants me to do.

As I currently prepare this material, I am faced with the wonderful challenge of having more projects to complete than it seems possible to fulfill. Yet I know God will make it possible as I abide in His power and follow His leading

In the past I've seen Him accomplish through me what I never could have imagined. One year, I was blessed to see seven books published yet as I had worked on them, I kept thinking, "There is absolutely not enough time for me to get them all done." Yet God in His graciousness, empowered me to get them all done and on time.

3. *Do not apologize for writing.* Other people may not consider it important. It may be just like a hobby to them. They may not consider it a "real job" or a "real ministry."

We must be convinced it is important and it is our calling from God. If people criticize you, don't give excuses or reasons. After all, as someone has said, "she who doesn't stand up for herself will fall down as a writer."

If your writing is indeed a call from God, isn't it important enough to:
hire a baby sitter?
ask friends to baby sit?
hire a housecleaner, even if it is every other week?
let other things go?

Evaluate Distractions

Sometimes we give in to distractions because we are intimidated and feeling inadequate in our writing calling. It's easy to say, "I don't have time to write," when in fact our fear causes us to avoid writing by choosing to do the unimportant things of life.

Something as beneficial as a telephone and social media can become a problem. As soon as you hunker down at the computer to write, the telephone rings. Someone wants or even needs to talk, and it's hard to say, "I'm sorry, I must write right now." It seems selfish, yet you *are* working. If you were sitting in an office at a business, your friends would not feel free to call and chat, unburden their souls, or share their latest recipe. Yet because you and I work out of our homes, other people think we have the freedom to stop what we're doing.

It has taken me a long time to conquer my need to answer the telephone when I'm working. In the beginning, I had to turn off the ringer because I felt compelled to answer otherwise. Now of course we can know who is calling as indicated on our cell phone so that we can answer if we should.

Another important way to deal with distractions and set your priorities is to clearly state your boundaries. For instance, if you are going out to lunch with a friend, state clearly as you set the date, "I can only visit for one hour," or whatever time God is guiding. Don't assume your friend can read your mind and understand the demands upon your priorities. It boils down to: we must make our writing a priority because no one else will.

Jesus' invitation to abide in Him is the key to the priority of writing. As soon as any distraction comes, we must pray, "God, I know you are with me. You've asked me to abide in you and therefore I can be aware of your calling, your leading, and your guidance. Even if I don't respond to this needy person at your direction, I believe you can supply for her need."

Get Organized

1. Delegate

Think again about your priorities list. What can be delegated, especially when you release demanding or expecting perfection?

Could you use catalogs for shopping?

Can you consolidate trips to stores to save time?

Could you use a personal shopper for clothing?

Don't be afraid to delegate things to your family. My husband graciously does the food shopping for me most of the time. When my two children were still living at home, I involved both them in doing some

of my office work and paid them.

When we delegate to others, we will need to fight any perfectionist tendencies we have. When others help us, it may not get done exactly the way we would prefer and it may not be perfect. If something must be done perfectly, we must spend the time explaining and training our help, or do it ourselves.

2. Write it down

Are you using date books, lists, and schedules to get organized? If other activities take up the space in your schedule that should be dedicated to writing, determine how many days a week you will write, and then put a big W—for writing—on that many days in your date book or on your phone or other electronic device. When you think of that big W, don't just think of a complete day. I will write a W only on a morning or only an afternoon. Eliminate "all or nothing" thinking. Even an hour writing can be valuable.

I've encouraged a writer friend of mine who has a hard time choosing to write to just write fifteen minutes a day. That is reasonable for her. Fulfill small goals and they will add up.

3. Communicate

Are you communicating with your family the importance of your ministry?

One summer when my children were young teenagers, I announced that I was dedicating every Monday to my writing. Although I still wrote other times during the week, on Mondays I concentrated fully on writing. The other days I would agree to be more easily interrupted, but on Mondays the kids knew they should not interrupt except for something very important.

Now it may sound like I do not love my children or my husband, but I can assure you that's not true. I always have and continue to make them the highest priority, and I frequently interrupt my work to go places with them or to talk. But by setting down boundaries beforehand, the people around us will be more cooperative in working with our schedule. It also helps to tell them that we have a deadline and are working under pressure. That way they can understand what we're facing.

But also make sure you include them in the fun and joy. I keep my family informed about the good things happen with my books, articles and speaking so that they can feel a part of it.

Years ago, my daughter Darcy and I co-authored a book together called, *Staying Friends with Your Kids*. That was fun working together. Today she is an aspiring novelist who has completed a novel. I believe that one day she will become published.

4. Evaluate

In order to get organized and spend time on our writing, we've got to evaluate the importance of housework and meals. If no one in your family really notices what you're doing, stop doing it. Do they really appreciate gourmet meals or having no dust on the coffee table? Is your fantastic looking yard more important than seeing an article published or a book printed?

Re-evaluate those necessary chores to see if you can do them more efficiently or not as often. Years ago I always washed all our sheets every week because that was the way my mother taught me. I felt compelled to do that and if I didn't, I felt like a failure.

I happened to be talking to a neighbor and she mentioned she washed her sheets about every two weeks. I was shocked. I blurted out, "You mean it's okay to do that?" I laugh now because my strong reaction seems so ludicrous. But then I was shocked to hear of such an idea. I learned no one will ever know how often my sheets are washed but many will be reading my books.

Ask your husband for the three house work chores that are most important to him. There is a good chance what he says will not be the same as yours. By only doing what's important to him, you will have less to do and still keep peace in the family.

Another idea is to combine mindless tasks. Try to find two things you can do at once like folding laundry and talking on the telephone or folding laundry and watching the news. If you are waiting in line or on the telephone to make an appointment, always have something to read, especially if its research for your latest project. And clutter? Throw out as much as possible. The more you have, the more there is to dust or continue reorganizing.

Office Space

Few freelance writers have an office outside their homes. It's just too convenient to keep it inside the home and readily available, although there are disadvantages to that also. In a way you are never away from your office, and for those of us who are also domestic engineers, that can be a disadvantage. For we will be tempted to do house work when we should be writing, and will be tempted to write when we should be paying attention to our family or home.

Set Realistic Goals

What is your maximum functioning time?

When do you have trouble concentrating?

I am a morning person and therefore my best work gets done early in the day. As the day goes on, I'm more tired and have a harder time concentrating. How about you? Notice your creative writing patterns for your maximum functioning time. Use your minimum functioning time for mindless tasks that do not need your full attention.

As you set goals, remember there is a difference between desires and goals. Desires are what you would like to accomplish; goals are what you actually have the power to control. You could have a desire to have a book published by the end of this year, but you cannot guarantee it will happen because it involves other people like publishers and editors. But you can set a realistic goal toward the possibility by determining to write for two hours each day.

Only set as a goal what you actually have control over then you will not be setting yourself up for failure by trying to make something happen that is beyond your control.

I recommend that your goals be
realistic
specific
measurable

Start small, succeed, and be encouraged to continue. Also find someone who will keep you accountable and then rejoice with you in your successes.

What could be a realistic goal for your writing? Do you feel comfortable determining a set number of pages or times to work on a project? What will be your:

daily goal:

weekly goal:

monthly goal:

one year goal:

five-year goal:

ten year goal:

Are you ready to begin? Good. Then pray for God to guide you, determine your priorities, get organized, and set realistic goals. I know He will. Press on.

Kathy Collard Miller is the author of over 50 books and can be reached through www.KathyCollardMiller.com. Her books are available on amazon.com. She is also a speaker who has spoken in over 30 US States and 8 foreign countries. As a lay counselor, she meets frequently with those looking for greater sanctification

Copyrighted material

Do not reproduce, share, or print without including the author name and copyright

Contact Kathy at www.KathyCollardMiller.com