

## Teach 4 the Heart Podcast Transcript

Episode 341—7 Planning Habits to Save Time & Simplify Your Schedule

### Introduction to Intentional Planning

Linda Kardamis (00:00)

We always have so much to do, but the more intentional and strategic we can be in our planning, the more we can maximize our time, have better balance, and get the things that matter most done. I'm so excited to talk to you about that today on this episode. Welcome back to the Teach 4 the Heart podcast where we tackle teaching challenges from a biblical perspective. Why are we here? Because we don't believe that our spiritual walk and teaching profession should exist in two separate domains.

Rather, the hope we have in Christ should change how we approach everything, not just at home, but at school as well. So join us as we explore both the spiritual and practical sides of key teaching challenges, integrating them together so we can succeed at teaching, glorify God, and make a lasting difference in our students' hearts and lives. This episode is brought to you in partnership with the Herzog Foundation. We also want to thank our sponsor, Dordt University. Is AI impacting your classroom?

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Well, today we're going to talk about ways to save time in bi-strategic planning. So how we plan our week and how we schedule our to-dos is so important and can really be a huge help in having us save time and find balance so that we are spending our time on what matters. We are stewarding our time well.

#### 1. Pray Over How We Spend Our Time

So our first tip that I have is to pray over how we spend our time. When we think about it, stewarding time, our time is a gift from the Lord. We want to honor God with how we spend it. We want to rely on Him for direction. We want to embrace our limits. So taking a moment before we sit down and plan and say, God, help me. Help me plan my time wisely. Help me to know where I should spend our time. That is so valuable. And when we find ourselves feeling stressed, overwhelmed, I'm going to Him and saying, God, I need your help.

Help me not to be worried about all these to-do's. Help me to trust you. Help me to work joyfully and not from a place of stress. So don't ever forget to invite God into your planning. I'm gonna share with

you guys sometimes throughout the episode today about our pray and plan planner. If you're not familiar with the planner, you can check it out at [teach4theheart.com / planner](http://teach4theheart.com/planner). It actually releases tonight, the new version for this upcoming school year.

But in Pray and Plan, one of my favorite things about it is that we have planning right next to prayer. So it's all right there for you, space to write down, jot down prayer requests and thoughts, right mixed in with our week. Because as I said, we don't believe our spiritual walk and our teaching profession are in two separate domains. They go right hand in hand. So I love having a spot for that right there in Pray and Plan.

## **2. Strategically Schedule Work Time**

Number two, plan work times. Decide when you're gonna work and when you're going to not work ahead of time. This is another feature that we have inside Pray and Plan where there's actually a spot to plan your work time. We have a spot for what you can do, but you don't need Pray and Plan to do this. But if you have Pray and Plan, it's right there in it for you. What you do is before the week starts, you sit down and you say, okay, what time am I going to arrive at work? What time am going to leave? And when am I going to work at home?

Okay, so you might pencil in, I'm gonna work from seven to nine on Tuesday night. On Saturday, I'm gonna work from eight to 11. Now, obviously you can always adapt this plan, but the value in deciding your work and off hours ahead of time is the intentionality behind it. You are placing barriers on your time and you're being intentional and you're being realistic. might say, research papers came in this week, I'm gonna need grading time. I'm gonna make a plan.

And that helps in so many ways. It relieves stress because you know when you're gonna do those things and it just helps you keep work from spilling into family and personal time. But it also makes space for work. I found that so helpful to think through ahead of time. When am I going to work this week? And then to the best of my ability to stick with that. So number one, pray over your time. Number two, plan your work time.

## **3. Plan Weekly To-Dos with Intentionality**

Number three, plan your to-dos each week and do it with intentionality.

I love planning my week at once. So every week, I like doing it on Friday. If I can all do it, normally, that's what normally one of my Friday to-dos is to plan the next week. And I'll sit down and I will write down on each day what I am doing that day. And there's kind of two different ways to do this. And I've done it differently in different seasons of life and also sometimes just depending on the week. What I've liked, what I've been enjoying lately is where I will actually put each day's to do on the day.

So I'll think through what needs to get done this week and then I'll think what should I do Monday, what should I do Tuesday, et cetera, and I'll actually put things on each day of the week like that. But sometimes I like to do a weekly to do list. And in Pray and Plan we have space for both weekly and daily to dos. But I like to actually, some weeks I prefer to just make a list and just say I'm just gonna just go down the list and get as far down it as I can.

But here's the key of planning your to-dos weekly. It's to do it with intentionality and to be continually asking yourself what's most important. Typically when I sit down to do this, I will first just make a list of everything that I want to do that week. So these are all the things I'd like to do this week. And then I'll go through and I'll think, well, which of these are most important? And I'll get those scheduled in my most open, you know, the spots that I know I can get to them.

And then I will try to fit other things in, but some weeks I'll look at it and I'll say, there's more on this week than I can do. What needs to wait or what needs to not get done? What needs to get moved? Or do I need to plan an extra work block this week? So sitting down and looking at your to-dos and making intentional choices, it's really just the intentionality that is so powerful. Actually asking myself what matters and what doesn't. Because then when I sit down to work,

You know, just today when I sat down to work, I knew this is what I'm doing. And I didn't have to question that because I'd already thought it through. And I know now all I have to do is follow my plan. So it saves so much time when I actually sit down to work because I know what I need to do and I know in what order I need to do it too. It takes away all that wasted time and wasted mental energy on decision. And it's also ensuring that I'm getting the most important things done because I decided that ahead of time. So I absolutely love that. So number three,

Plan your to-dos. I recommend planning weekly with intentionality.

#### **4. Prioritize Daily Tasks**

Then, tip number four, each day choose the most important thing to do and do it first. Okay, now, quick disclaimer. First in a teacher's day might not mean first thing in the morning. First thing in the morning, might need to get your classroom ready. Kids might be coming in. I mean the first like actual, you know,

little work block that you get. So your first time that kids are at a special or you have a free hour or whatever it is. Doing the most important thing first though is so valuable because what can often happen if we're not careful is we'll be like, okay, I have time to work. I'm gonna check my email. And then we get distracted by like a bunch of other things or a bunch of little things that come up. I'm just gonna grade these few things first and then I'll do it. And we never get to that like bigger thing. Typically for most people, you have better energy and focus

earlier in the day, and then the later in the day, it's harder to focus. So what's better is, once again, recognizing if there's like, what's the one thing I really need to do today that takes a little bit more energy and focus, I'm gonna do that first chance I get, and I'm gonna avoid getting distracted by other things. Once that's done, then I can tackle everything else. And that works, typically works better too, because later in the day, when I'm like, I don't have as much energy, all I might be able to do is just simple grading, get stuff in the grade book, answer emails.

but that stuff is typically easier to do when your brain's not as free and clear. So that's my recommendation is planning your to-dos weekly, but then each day maybe star or mark what is my most important thing or just put it first on your list and say, I'm not gonna get distracted, I'm gonna do that first.

Linda Kardamis (08:51)

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## **5. Regularly Reevaluate To-Do Lists**

Linda Kardamis (09:23)

Tip number five is to regularly reevaluate your to-dos.

And we have a process for doing this in the planner. In the mini planner, it's smaller. In our ultimate planner, there's a lot more space for it. But what we recommend doing is using a 4T process to tame your to-do list. And we've taught this before on the podcast. So if you want to link to that, go to [teach4theheart.com / 341](http://teach4theheart.com/341), and we can link to a bigger detail about how to do this. But what we recommend doing is simply writing down

like a brainstorm of like, are all the things that are on my plate right now, or even like all the things that I do regularly. And then to use the 4T system, which is trash, transfer, trim, or treasure. In other words, you're reevaluating your to-dos and saying, should I be doing all of this? Treasure means it's something that's valuable, I'm gonna keep doing it. Trash means I'm gonna stop doing this. I don't need to do it. Trim means I'm gonna do this less often. Maybe I'm gonna do bulletin boards half as often.

I'm not gonna change them as regularly. Maybe I'm gonna not grade as much as I have been. And then transfer is, I'm gonna get someone to help me with this. I'm gonna get a student to help with this. I'm

gonna see if my paraprofessional can do this. I'm gonna see if a parent volunteer can help with this. So simply sitting down with our to-do list on a regular basis and pray and plan, we have a spot to do this once a month, which is a great cadence. Every other month is good too. But simply stopping and thinking, what should I be doing?

And are there things I can take off my list? I also love the question we ask in Pray and Play on our monthly reflection. Each month we ask, what's one thing you need to stop doing or let go of? And I just think, in life in general, but especially as teachers, it's like we're always getting more stuff put on our plate. we put more stuff on our own plate too. I wanna do this, I wanna do that. We don't always stop to take stuff off. So that's what's really key, is recognizing my time is limited. So I've gotta recognize what can I take off my plate?

Kind like we talked before, it's that intentionality, right? You're doing this on a weekly basis, but also on a monthly or bi-monthly basis, stepping back further and saying, okay, are there things I should stop doing? Are there things I should do less of? Are there things I should get some help with? That is so valuable.

So that's number five, regularly reevaluate your to-dos and we love the four T method.

## **6. Develop Good Habits**

Number six is developing good habits. So another feature we have in our pray and plan is a habit tracker where you can check off habits that you're trying to develop. So growing in good habits is so valuable and obviously there's so many different habits. They might be time-related habits. It might be, I'm gonna choose my thing each day and I'm gonna do that first.

Or it might be, you know, hey, it might be related to technology. It might be related to health. All of these things are really important. And by the way, just as an aside, things that help you like getting better sleep, exercise, eating well, drinking water, these things help your energy, which directly relates to your time. Do you ever have time to work, but you're so tired? You're like, I can't. Well, right. So energy and time, they totally flow in together. So having a way to just

Tracking your habits, developing good habits is so, valuable. And honestly, we've talked about just a moment ago how your energy affects your time, but also developing habits also helps save mental energy. So in other words, if I know I do this every day, because it's a habit, I always do this. I don't have to think about that anymore. It's a good thing, it's a habit that I have. It doesn't take any mental energy. Even if it takes a little bit of time, it's just part of my routine.

So that can really save a lot of mental energy as well. So highly recommend thinking through habits, use a habit tracker to track it and actually make it a regular habit.

## 7. Color Code for Efficient Planning

Number seven, this final tip, I haven't used personally. This tip comes from my team, but I said, ooh, this is a good idea. I gotta start doing this myself maybe, but it's color coding. So you can use different colors in your planner to differentiate different things.

So in other words, you might use an orange highlighter on any meeting that is actually like I have to actually be there at a certain time. You might use different colors for different projects like you know grading things get this color or you might do it by subject. However, it is that it would help you kind of when you look at your plan and be able to see okay, these are meetings. These are things that I have to pay attention to or that can be or maybe you highlight in a certain color your most important thing for the day so you know you do that first.

Sometimes I like to break up my planning in focus blocks and then like these are things that really need my focus and then like miscellaneous stuff. So you might highlight it that way. So think about for yourself, what would be helpful in to be able to just kind of color code and highlight as we go through.

### Recap + Extra Resources

So those are our eight tips, particularly related to planning. So many more we could talk to, but I hope that these are helpful. Number one. Pray over your time. Don't neglect that one. It's so powerful. Number two, plan your work hours when you are and aren't going to work each week. Number three, plan your to-dos once a week with intentionality. Number four, choose the most important thing each day to do first. Number five, regularly evaluate your to-dos, reevaluate them, and trim transfer treasure. Number six, develop good habits. Use a habit tracker to help you. And number seven, color coding.

Just using that to help with your planning. So if you are interested, by the way, in learning more about our Pray and Plan Planner, we're actually having our Planner Reveal Party this evening. If you're listening to this live on, it is April 7th in the evening. You can get all the details and join our Planner Reveal Party at [teach4theheart.com/party](https://teach4theheart.com/party). If you're listening to it after that, you can go ahead and check out the planner at [teach4theheart.com/planner](https://teach4theheart.com/planner).

[teach4theheart.com/planner](https://teach4theheart.com/planner). All the features that I talked about are in there, but there's so many more. We have mini planners all the way up to our full on ultimate planner, which has both lesson planning and to do's. And then we have lots of versions in between. So going over to [teach4theheart.com/planner](https://teach4theheart.com/planner), you can check out all the features, all the things that are included and see which version is best for you. And of course, if you have any questions, you can always reach out to our team. We're happy to help you at [hello@each4theheart.com](mailto:hello@each4theheart.com)

Well, if you'd like any of the links from this episode or just want to check it out, share it with a friend, you can go to [teach4theheart.com/341](https://teach4theheart.com/341) and you'll be able to get everything there. And speaking of which, please do if you've enjoyed this episode, subscribe to the podcast, like the video if you're watching this in video form, share it with a friend, leave a review. All these things are super helpful to help more teachers find this podcast.

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