



Marketplace Moments

Bibliophilia

The Procrastination Equation

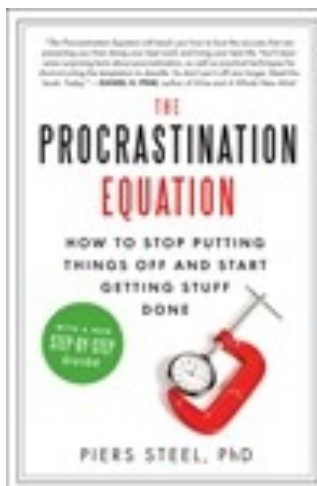
By Piers Steel.

The first word I learnt when I entered college was—"Procrastination". This is a phenomenon that plagues 95% of all people. Steel is a world leading researcher in Industrial Organizational Psychology and studying motivation and procrastination for more than 10 years. He has indentified the basic Matching Law :

$$\frac{\text{Expectancy} \times \text{Value}}{\text{Impulsiveness} \times \text{Delay}}$$

Steel traces how we are wired for procrastination and concludes that though it many not be 'our fault', we have to deal with it anyway. I may not fully appreciate his premise, but I agree that "we encounter procrastination in all of life's domains". Amongst his conclusions is "proximity to temptation is one of the deadliest determinants of procrastination." Today's ease of the internet to access online games, movies, Youtube videos etc constitute the biggest time wasters, and robs about 25% of productive working time at the workplace. There is a price to pay, large and small on a personal, corporate and national level.

Impulsiveness is identified as the greatest contributor to procrastination.



nation. "Impulsiveness runs through every vice that involves weakness of the will. Not only does impulsiveness forms the core of procrastination but it is strongly connected to dysfunctional relationships, lousy leadership, suicide, substance abuse and violence."

On the positive side, when see value in the work that we do, linking purpose (or calling) to our tasks, making the causal links to activities that we are to perform or complete, we are less likely to procrastinate.

Though a humanistic book, it does give much insights to human motivations and behavior, a realistic assessment of the human condition. As Christians, we need to reflect and make the appropriate links to our faith, in particular from the Wisdom Literature of Proverbs and Psalms. Stop Procrastination and Start Living!

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Of the Heart and Mind

The Elephant who doesn't move

It was told of a story about a boy and his father visiting a zoo. There they saw a pair of elephants, the mother was tied to a rope and the baby to a metal chain. The boy curiously asked the father why the mommy elephant being much larger and stronger is only secured with a rope whereas the baby has a chain around it? The father replied, "The baby is still struggling because he is looking for a way to escape, that is why you need the metal chain. The mommy on the other hand, has failed so many times, that she has given up and no longer strive to escape. That is why a simple rope is sufficient."

The bible speaks often of the poor, widowed and the oppressed where they have little to no options in their life. I read with great sadness and indignation of how in some poor villages of India, where the only option for young girls was to grow up to become prostitutes. Having a twelve year old of my own breaks a father's heart and is not conscionable.

In the book of Zechariah 7 writes, "4 Then the word of the LORD Almighty came to me: 5 "Ask all the people of the land and the priests, 'When you

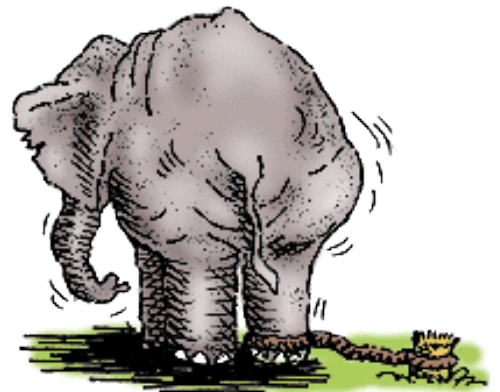
fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months for the past seventy years, was it really for me that you fasted? 6 And when you were eating and drinking, were you not just feasting for yourselves? 7 Are these not the words the LORD proclaimed through the earlier prophets when Jerusalem and its surrounding towns were at rest and prosperous, and the Negev and the western foothills were settled?" 8 And the word of the LORD came again to Zechariah: 9 "This is what the LORD Almighty said:

'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. 10 Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other.'

Let us not forget those who are suffering amongst us and seek out ways to extend a helping hand.

Many of us however, may not be in very dire situations. Yet, we do live with many of these unseen ropes that keeps us in bondage. We scarcely realize their presence. After all, we have been so used to it.

The concept of learned helplessness was discovered accidentally by psychologists Martin Seligman and Steven F.



Maier. They had initially observed helpless behavior in dogs that were classically conditioned to expect an electrical shock after hearing a tone. Later, the dogs were placed in a shuttlebox that contained two chambers separated by a low barrier. The floor was electrified on one side, and not on the other. The dogs previously subjected to the classical conditioning made no attempts to escape, even though avoiding the shock simply involved jumping over a low barrier. (www.psychology.about.com)

Our care-group from church has been going through a book, "Emotionally Healthy Spirituality" by Peter Scazzero which I highly recommend. It opens up a whole new dimension of seeing how we have been affected by our upbringing and the messages or narrative that we grew up with. In our case, it has brought a new level of vulnerability as

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Eyes in a Darkened Room

Empresses in the Palace

It tells the story of one of Emperor Yongzheng's concubines, Zhen Huan, who's the mother of Prince Hongli (the famous Emperor Qianlong). This drama, adapted from popular Internet novel of the same name, will tell the story of the heroine, Zhen Huan (Sun Li), who joined the palace harem with her sister. She was selected to be Emperor Yongzheng's (Chen Jian Bin) concubine. When Zhen Huan first enters the palace, she is innocent and gullible, but gradually learned the hard way to fend for herself when she inadvertently becomes caught up in the schemes between the Empress (Ada Choi) and Concubine Hua (Jiang Xin). Through cunning and deceit, Zhen Huan finally succeeds in becoming Empress. However, she arouses Emperor

Yongzheng's suspicion about her loyalty and is forced to poison her true love, 17th Prince. Finally, when Emperor Yongzheng dies and Hong Li ascends the throne, Concubine Zhen Huan becomes the Empress.

I like the beauty of the language and how the script was put together. The entire series brought up for me a very crucial question; can someone honest and innocent be truly able to survive or even thrive in a very toxic work or family environment? Like Zhen Huan, it was a matter of survival. But that very survival instinct has also slowly eroded her innocence and she became more vicious. In a fallen world, is there no other way?

In the old testament, we have examples of both;



those who have done well and succeeded (like Joseph and Daniel) but other with a tragic ending (like Uriah the Hittite who served in King David's army and husband of Bathsheba). What are options to believers when we work or live in such toxic heartlands? By His grace, I believe there is hope. At other times, we have to leave behind the toxins.

The other character worth considering is Emporor Yongzheng. His struggle was between justice and grace (or at least the outward appearance of it). This is a classic case how favoritism, power struggles and double standards wreck havoc in leadership, both at work and at home. For those who are able to appreciate the Chinese culture, the language and also the fallacies of such deeply rooted heritage, I highly recommend it.



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well as deepening of relationships amongst members of the group, understanding how our current person is affected, positively and adversely by those messages. It was also a warning for us as to what kind of messages are we nurturing in our children as they grow up.

The beauty of it all is that there is hope, beginning with a relationship with our Lord Jesus. Isaiah 41:10 encourages us, "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand"

Breaking out of a vicious cycle takes more than simple will power. It also takes a caring community and people to surround us with God's love. We are hampered by the negative self talk, discouragement to try it 'one more time', even as we possibly face another failure and wonder why a good God would even bother any more! The apostle Paul, for whatever ailment he had, wrote these words in 2 Corinthians 12:9, "But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for

you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.¹⁰ That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

⁵⁴ When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."⁵⁵ "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.⁵⁷ But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁵⁸ Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:54-58)

Timothy Liu