

It's Not Procrastination, It's Just Careful Planning!

It is rash to assume that there will be a tomorrow.

It was a simple request for a jump start. Clearly, his battery was dead and it would only take two minutes to help.

Or at least, that was the claim made by the young man standing by his ancient Plymouth beside the highway. "Ancient" was not exactly the right word. As I looked closer, I decided "neglected" would be a better choice.

Or "decrepit."

Also, he did not have jumper cables.

[Inaudible sigh.]

No problem, just let me dig mine out from under the back seat of the pickup. Right here under the chain, the ball hitch tow bar, the ratchet straps, the tool bag... and voila! There they are!

I was already in too deep

I maneuvered my Chevy pickup into the ditch alongside the questionable Plymouth, raised the hood and connected the cables to my battery. He attached the other end to his battery (I watched carefully to make sure the wires weren't crossed), and then I listened with sinking heart as he tried the ignition. It clicked and then generated a loud buzz that died quickly away.

He looked at me blankly, then back at the dashboard and tried again.

Same result.

I shook my head., endeavoring to hide my frustration, and disconnected the cables from his battery. I was careful to keep the live clamps from touching each other, then disconnected my end and began to coil the cables.

"Bad starter," I said.

“You think so?” he asked, still sitting in the driver’s seat.

I nodded. “The starter does not stay engaged long enough to turn the engine over. You probably need to have a mechanic look at it.” I did not go further to explain [what a Bendix was](#), and what it did, and how the centrifugal force of the spinning flywheel would disengage the starter motor once the engine fired.

Explaining all that would be a step toward owning the problem, and I was already in deep enough.

I suppose I’m not that good a Christian.

Warning signs are to be heeded

I should have known better, of course. Some of you have already figured out, as I should have, that a car that had obviously gotten here under its own power had bigger problems than a dead battery. We were two miles outside of town.

He had driven the Plymouth here, the engine died, he had coasted to a stop, then tried the starter, to no effect. The battery may or may not be dead; the starter was certainly inoperative; and furthermore, there was some reason why the engine had died in the first place.

In terms of deciding what to work on, it was a target-rich environment. But each solution would start with a tow truck.

I took the fellow to the Quik Trip where, in those days, there were pay phones, and wished him good luck.

Putting off the inevitable

The guy’s problems had begun much earlier, when he would have first detected difficulty with the starting routine. In technical language, there was something hinky about the car when he hit the ignition. But it started, apparently, so problem solved. For the moment.

Dad used to say, “The problem may be intermittent, but it ain’t gonna fix itself. Get the tools and get after it.”

If you need scriptural justification for getting yourself in gear, here are some that may be sufficiently convicting:

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish... Ephesians 5:15-17

Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning. Luke 12:35

The desire to put off till tomorrow something that really should be done today has been around a long time. [According to James Clear](#), it has been with us long enough that the ancient Greeks had a word for it: Akrasia. It does not exactly translate to procrastination, but rather to lack of self-control.

In plain fact, procrastination is much worse than laziness or lack of discipline. I submit that it is arrogance.

Arrogance assumes that I will have a tomorrow.

Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring. Proverbs 27:1

Put in that light, procrastination is more disruptive than a bad starter or an empty gas tank or a dead battery. Procrastination can mean those who depend on you must suddenly get on without you, or provide care for you while keeping everything else functioning in daily life.

Whoever is slack in his work is a brother to him who destroys. Proverbs 18:9

How to push yourself

James Clear, again, suggests the way to overcome procrastination is to (a) raise the enjoyment of doing the work, or (b) raise the fear of pain associated with NOT doing the work.

Tips:

Only do [the thing you love] while you are doing [the thing you hate]. Example: only listen to the audiobook while you are working out. (Raise the enjoyment.)

Develop accountability. Agree with another to do the work, and then report to one another. If you don't do it, you'll have to admit you are a jerk. (Raise the pain.)

Set up a visual reminder. Measure daily success, as with a calendar with days X'd off, posted in a place where it will be seen frequently. Once the momentum starts, the pain of breaking the chain of Xs can be enough to keep you going.

Prepare the To-Do list the night before. (My online writing frequently requires an unrecoverable hour of staring at an empty screen. Compose the topics — better yet, the headlines — ahead of time and decide what to write about before bed.)

James Clear has other tips, but you get the idea.

A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man. Proverbs 24:34

The more serious downside of procrastination is that involving relationships. Some trite advice suggests saying, "I love you," every day.

I am not quite romantic enough to overcome the tedium of that practice. But there are long-term requirements in managing health, wealth, and legacy that we should each pursue.

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit" — yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. James 4:13

"I'll begin tomorrow," is not just lazy. It is arrogant.