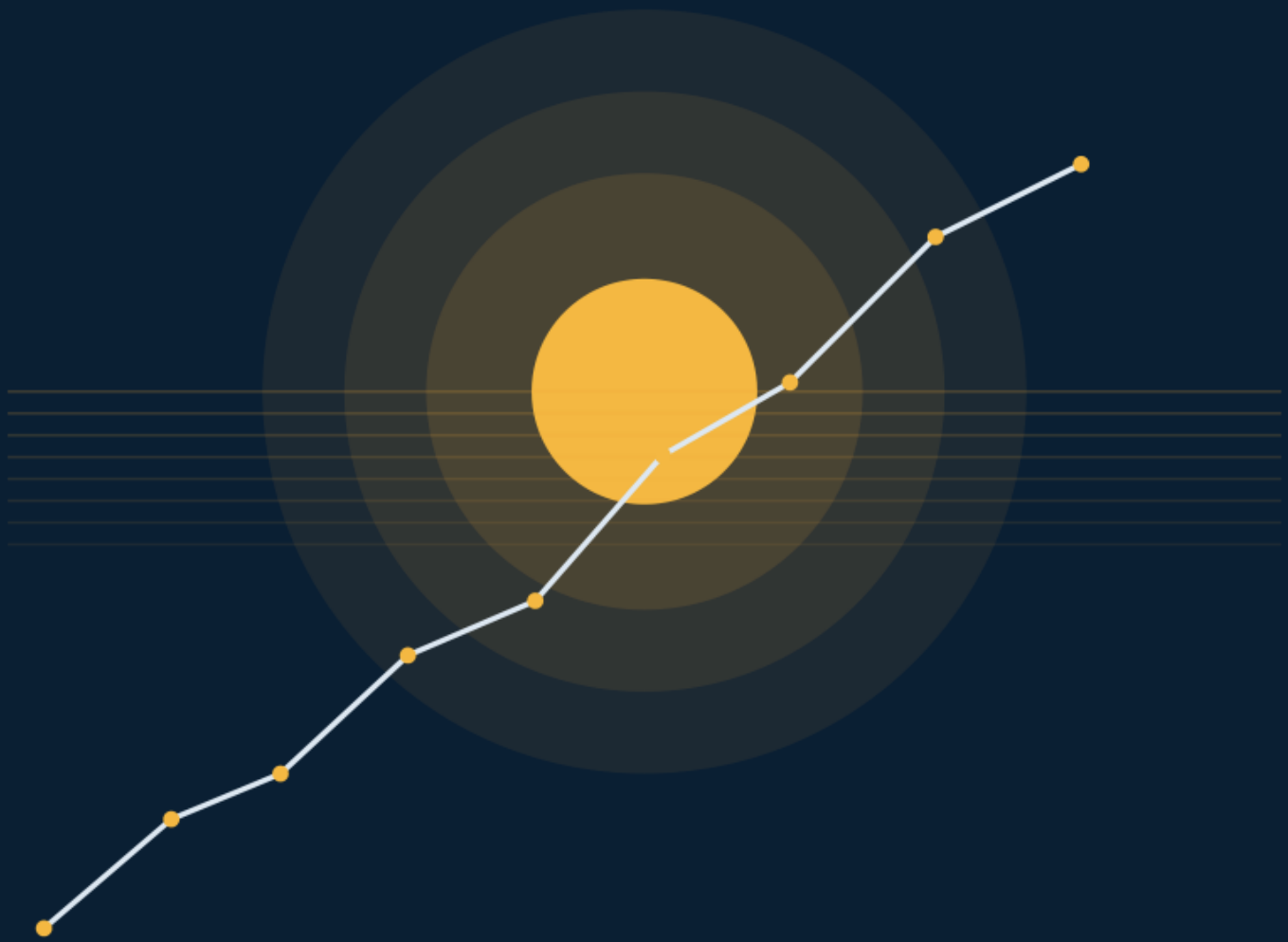

THE EARLY PRINCIPLE

Keys to Stop Being Late in Life

PREPARE EARLY • ACT EARLY • GROW EARLY



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Foreword

I coined the term “early principle” to describe the benefits of doing things early. I have been an early riser for most of my life and love the freshness of a new day—the sunrise, the sense of awakening, and the opportunity for a fresh start.

Over the years, I have experienced the benefits of rising early and beginning tasks early in the day. During a morning meditation, I began thinking about this principle and the spiritual laws connected to the rhythm of early action. I reflected on the idea, explored it more deeply, and researched it in historical, cultural, scientific, biblical, and business contexts.

In this short eBook, we will explore how the early principle applies across many dimensions of life, including culture, history, spirituality, family, work, career, and school.

People who are unaware of or do not understand the early principle may experience frustration, perhaps without realizing that it stems from resisting this principle.

One goal of this eBook is to introduce the many benefits of acting early. It is not intended as an exhaustive study or an attempt to persuade you to do everything early.

We will also examine notable people, past and present, who understood and mastered the early principle, along with the results they achieved.

As a Christian, I will include scriptural references to the early principle for use in your spiritual practice.

Finally, we will present a practical framework for applying the early principle throughout your life.

Enjoy this eBook. I pray that it offers practical insights you can apply in your life. Please share it with friends and family, especially younger people. The early principle can benefit us at any age, but those who begin young have more time to experience its rewards.

Chapter 1- The Early Principle and Time

What does early mean to you? In this eBook, we'll discuss what I define as the Early Principle. What's the Early Principle? I define the Early Principle as:

The practice of undertaking a task, action, activity, or life event early in its timeline or sequence to gain the benefits and advantages of starting early.

Everything occurs within a time continuum whose length depends on what is being measured. A time continuum is the continuous sequence in which events move from past to present to future.

Every moment relates to those before and after it. We experience the present; the past contains events that have occurred, and the future contains those yet to occur.

The time continuum explains why being early matters: "early" describes a position near the beginning of a sequence.

Being early for work, school, appointments, family events, or major life decisions means placing an action at an earlier point on that continuum.

In this sense, "early" is relational: it has meaning only because events unfold within a continuing sequence of time.

Early is a time-based concept. People created systems of time to understand and organize the abstract flow of existence into past, present, and future. Within any smaller span of that continuum, a point of demarcation distinguishes what is early from what comes later.

Where does early begin and end? What one person considers early may be late to someone else, and vice versa.

Although systems of time are human-made, celestial rhythms define the beginnings and endings of days, seasons, and cycles. In this broader sense, God established time through the movement of celestial bodies.

In ancient times, people marked each day by the sun's rising and setting and organized daily life around that rhythm. To understand the Early Principle more fully, we should examine the history of timekeeping. Humans did not create time; they created systems to measure and organize it.

Key Milestones in the History of Timekeeping

The earliest major timekeeping systems appeared about 5,000–6,000 years ago. The familiar 24-hour day, 60-minute hour, and 60-second minute evolved across several civilizations over many centuries.

3500–3000 BCE — Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia: People developed advanced calendars and used sundials and water clocks to divide the day. The Egyptians divided daylight and nighttime into 12 parts each, helping establish the 24-hour day.

2000 BCE — Babylonians: Their base-60, or sexagesimal, number system is the main reason an hour has 60 minutes and a minute has 60 seconds.

Ancient Greece: Astronomers increasingly used mathematical models to measure and predict celestial cycles.

1st millennium CE: Mechanical and astronomical timekeeping advanced across Asia and the Islamic world.

13th–14th centuries: Mechanical clocks appeared in medieval Europe, allowing hours to be measured more consistently without direct reliance on the sun.

1582: Pope Gregory XIII introduced the Gregorian calendar to correct accumulated errors in the Julian calendar.

1656: Christiaan Huygens built the first practical pendulum clock, greatly improving timekeeping accuracy.

1884: At the International Meridian Conference in Washington, D.C., 25 nations adopted the Greenwich Meridian as the prime meridian and established the basis for 24 standard time zones.

20th century: Railroads, radio, telecommunications, and international commerce made standardized time increasingly important.

1967: The SI second was redefined using radiation from cesium-133 atoms, providing an extremely precise atomic standard.

Without a reference point in time, the Early Principle has no context. Understanding the time continuum provides the foundation for exploring the principle more deeply.

Chapter 2 – The Early Principle and Seeking God Early

Throughout the Christian Scriptures—from Genesis to Revelation and across both Testaments—the theme of seeking God early appears repeatedly. Why is this idea so prevalent? Although I could speculate, I do not have a definitive answer. Instead, I will present the many biblical examples of seeking God early.

The bible has multiple references to seeking God early.

Psalms 63:1: "O God, You are my God; Early will I seek You; My soul thirsts for You".

Psalms 5:3: "In the morning, Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation."

Isaiah 26:9: "With my soul I have desired you in the night; yes, by my spirit within me I will seek you early".

Jesus Rising and Praying Early

Mark 1:35: "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed".

John 20:1: "Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb".

On a personal note, this is a practice I follow. I love to rise early to meditate and pray.

Early in Your Spiritual Walk

Early in your spiritual walk is a term that commonly used in Christian circles. It typically means the beginning stages of a person's journey of faith and relationship with God. It can refer to a time when someone is:

- First discovering or deepening their faith
- Learning spiritual principles and Scripture
- Developing habits such as prayer, worship, Bible study, and fellowship
- Learning to trust God and recognize His guidance
- Growing in spiritual maturity, often through both successes and struggles

For example, I began my Christian walk in my early twenties with the zeal and energy often associated with young believers. As I learned more about God and spiritual matters, I grew in spiritual maturity day by day, week by week, month by month, and year by year.

Consider as another example:

Early in your spiritual walk, you may have many questions, but as you grow, your faith becomes more grounded and mature.

Some theologians have coined the idea that early in your spiritual walk is similar to saying early in your journey with God.

Regardless of what term one may use, early in your relationship with God can be very beneficial. In fact, Proverbs 4:22 states “God words are life and health to the entire body.” In the original Hebrew this passage is translated as health or healing which can also mean medicine. So, if one has a spiritual practice of communing with God early in the morning and early in their spiritual life, many people believe this scripture is a promise of physical health and emotional strength that one can benefit from earlier in their spiritual journey rather than later.

Chapter 3 – The Early Principle and Your Body

Does one's body prefer to function in a certain rhythm? Throughout nature, there is a natural rhythm to everything. The movement of the celestial bodies, the timing and rotation of our moon, the rotation of our earth, the rotation of the sun and the other planets in our solar system. There is a rhythm to all of it.

All plant and animal species have a natural rhythm. Our bodies are no different.

Consider our own bodies. Our bodies goes through a predictable transition from sleep to wakefulness.

What happens to your body in the early morning

- **Cortisol rises.** Your body normally increases cortisol during the hours before and after waking. This helps increase alertness, blood pressure, blood sugar, and energy availability.
- **Melatonin falls.** Melatonin production decreases as your biological clock prepares you to wake up.
- **Heart rate and blood pressure increase.** They generally rise as you transition from sleep to activity. This is sometimes called the **morning surge**.
- **Body temperature starts increasing.** Core temperature is lowest during the latter part of sleep and begins climbing toward daytime levels.
- **Blood sugar and metabolism become more active.** Hormones help make glucose available for the brain and muscles.
- **The brain becomes more alert.** Sleep inertia—the groggy period immediately after waking—gradually decreases, although it can be stronger if you wake during your biological night.
- **The digestive system starts waking up.** Eating, drinking, and movement stimulate intestinal activity, which is why some people naturally need a bowel movement after getting up.

What is early morning? This requires a discussion of our **circadian rhythms**. (For an extensive discussion of Circadian Rhythms, visit [SleepFoudation.org](https://www.sleepfoundation.org).¹)

Key takeaways from the Sleep Foundation on Circadian Rhythms include:

- Circadian rhythms are 24-hour cycles that help govern essential bodily functions—especially the sleep-wake cycle—by syncing internal processes with the day–night cycle.
- Disruptions from factors like irregular schedules, travel, shift work, screen time, or underlying health issues can throw off your internal clock and negatively impact sleep and overall well-being.
- Maintaining a consistent sleep schedule and daily routine, along with strategies like timed light exposure and melatonin supplementation when needed, are the most effective ways to support a healthy circadian rhythm.

A circadian rhythm is your body's internal 24-hour biological clock that coordinates physical, mental and behavior changes. Your circadian rhythm is controlled by a master clock by a tiny cluster of nerve cells in the brain's hypothalamus. Your circadian rhythm is primarily driven by light and darkness but also affected by food, temperature and stress.

You may be saying, “I do not want to get up early”. I enjoy going to bed late, waking up groggy but using 2 to 3 cups of coffee to get me going for the day. I'll miss all the late-night TV shows and late-night sporting events on TV if I go to bed early. 😊

Modern life has disrupted many of our circadian rhythms. Common disruptors of our circadian rhythms include:

- Artificial light (screen time and bright light late at night confuses the brain clock.)
- Irregular schedules (shift work, frequent travel across time zones and erratic sleep times.)
- Bad habits (late-night heavy meals, caffeine and alcohol)

If one wants to derive the most benefits of the early principle, one must first align their body to their circadian rhythm. So how do we align or rest our bodies to our circadian rhythms? According to the Cleveland Clinic:²

- Try to stick to a daily routine.
- Go outside when it's light out to boost your sense of wakefulness.
- Get some form of daily physical activity.
- Foster a restful sleep environment. Make sure you're sleeping on a supportive mattress in a room with a comfortable temperature and proper lighting.
- Avoid caffeine, nicotine and alcohol, especially in the evenings.
- Limit your screen time before bedtime, as the blue light can disrupt your ability to fall asleep. Instead, try meditating or reading a book.
- Don't take a nap in the late afternoons or evenings.

Okay, if one does not align their circadian rhythm and get up early, what can happen?

For example, if you wake at 5 a.m. but normally sleep until 7:30, your body may still be operating in a sleep-deprived state. You can therefore experience:

grogginess → elevated stress hormones → increased heart rate → difficulty concentrating → feeling unusually tired or cold.

On the other hand, waking at 5:00 a.m. after going to bed at 8:30–9:00 p.m. can be very different biologically from waking at 5:00 a.m. after going to bed at midnight. Therefore, one can experience:

adequate sleep + consistent timing + alignment with your individual circadian rhythm + appropriate exposure to light.

If you consistently wake early, however, your circadian rhythm can gradually adapt, particularly if you get bright light soon after waking and maintain a consistent sleep/wake schedule.

Why do some people feel particularly bad when waking early?

The biggest factor is often sleep duration, rather than the clock time itself. If waking at 5 a.m. means you’re only getting 5–6 hours of sleep, the body is dealing with sleep deprivation even if you feel awake initially.

The following table examines various patterns of early as related to one’s circadian rhythm:

Pattern	Relationship to Circadian Rhythm
Waking early after sufficient sleep	Often compatible with a healthy circadian rhythm
Waking around sunrise	Strong natural environmental cue
Consistent early schedule	Can strengthen regular circadian timing
Waking very early while sleep-deprived	Can disrupt health despite being “early”
Going to bed extremely early solely to wake extremely early	May or may not fit an individual’s chronotype
Frequently changing wake times	Can make circadian synchronization more difficult

In summary, the body tends to function best when sleep, wakefulness, light exposure, eating, and activity occur at reasonably consistent times that fit the individual’s circadian rhythm. If your body is not functioning best, deriving the benefits of the early principle may be impacted. To derive the most benefits of the early principle, one’s body needs to be fully aligned with their circadian rhythms.

Early in the morning and sunrise around the world

If we add the phenomenon of sunrise to our circadian rhythm discussion, it evolves into an interesting discussion. “Early in the morning” is closely connected to sunrise, but the meaning of “early” changes substantially depending on where you

are in the world, your latitude, the season, and the local clock. When we add sunrise and morning light into this relationship consider:

Sunrise → morning light → biological clock synchronization → alertness → daytime activity → evening sleepiness

In many societies, early morning is a time associated with work, prayer, farming, exercise, study, reflection, or preparation for the day.

Thus, a person who wakes at 5:00 AM in one part of the world may be waking well before sunrise, while someone elsewhere may already have experienced sunrise considerably earlier. Sunrise and morning light are key variables in optimal biological clock synchronization, but that may not be always possible depending on where one is in the world or their early morning schedules.

Therefore, early morning is the period surrounding the transition from darkness toward daylight, but the actual time of that transition changes across the Earth.

In summary, to determine your early morning, consider your optimum circadian rhythm and where you are in the world (whether sunrise is a factor), to build a key foundation to derive the benefits of the early principle.

Chapter 4 – The Early Principle and Daily Appointments, Work, and School

How can we apply the early principle to one's work, school and career? Let's look at some practical applications.

Let's discuss practical aspects in early principle in your day-to-day activities.

Arriving early for appointments is generally a strong habit because it gives you a time buffer and reduces the chance that an unexpected delay will make you late.

Benefits of arriving early

- Reduces stress: You aren't rushing through traffic or worrying about the clock.
- Provides a buffer: Parking problems, traffic, elevators, check-in lines, or unexpected delays are easier to handle.
- Shows respect: Being on time—or slightly early—demonstrates consideration for the other person's schedule.
- Allows you to prepare: You can review documents, collect your thoughts, use the restroom, or simply settle in.
- Creates a dependable reputation: Consistently arriving early can communicate reliability and good time management.
- Improves focus: You begin the appointment calmly rather than distracted by the effort of getting there.
- Protects against the unexpected: Planning to arrive early means a small problem doesn't automatically become lateness.

Consider this useful rule for your day to day activities:

For many appointments, arriving about 10–15 minutes early is a reasonable goal. For important appointments—such as job interviews, medical appointments, flights, or formal meetings—you may want a larger buffer.

The key distinction is that being early is not the same as simply being on time. If the appointment begins at 10:00, planning to *arrive* at 10:00 leaves no margin for anything that goes wrong. Planning to arrive at 9:45 gives you room to handle the unexpected.

Arriving early is a practical form of preparation and reliability.

How can we apply the early principle to your work habits?

Arriving early for work is generally a positive workplace habit. It means getting to your workplace before your scheduled start time so you have enough time to prepare and begin work on time.

Some benefits of arriving early for work

- Shows reliability: Consistently arriving early demonstrates that you take your responsibilities seriously.
- Reduces stress: You have a buffer for traffic, parking, transportation delays, or unexpected problems.
- Allows preparation: You can organize your workspace, review priorities, check messages, and prepare for the day.
- Improves punctuality: Being early makes it much less likely that you will be late.
- Creates a productive mindset: A calm start can help you transition into work more effectively.
- Builds a good reputation: Managers and coworkers may view consistent punctuality as evidence of dependability and professionalism.
- Provides time for unexpected issues: If something needs attention before the workday begins, you have additional time to handle it.

As before, arriving early for appointments is the same concept that can be applied to your work arrival habits. Arriving 10–15 minutes early is often enough to get settled without unnecessarily extending your workday. Being early is valuable when

it supports preparation and reliability. Arriving early gives you a head start, reduces rushing, and communicates preparedness, reliability, and respect for your work responsibilities.

How can we apply the early concept to schoolwork and assignments?

Being early in doing school projects and assignments means starting and completing your academic work well before the deadline, rather than waiting until the last minute.

Benefits of starting early for school work and assignments:

- Less stress: You have more time and don't feel rushed.
- Better quality: You can think through your ideas and produce more thoughtful work.
- Time to revise: You can review, correct, and improve your assignment before submitting it.
- Better learning: Starting early gives you time to understand the material instead of simply trying to finish.
- Fewer mistakes: Rushing often leads to careless errors that can be avoided with additional time.
- Better time management: You learn to divide a large project into smaller, manageable tasks.
- Room for unexpected problems: If you encounter difficulty, technology problems, or need additional research, you still have time.
- Greater confidence: Completing work ahead of schedule can make you feel more prepared and in control.

Here's a simple example of using the early principle to complete a school project:

Instead of waiting until Sunday night to complete a project due Monday, a student who starts early might:

Monday: Read the assignment and understand the requirements

Tuesday: Research and gather information

Wednesday: Create an outline

Thursday: Write the first draft

Friday: Review and make corrections

Saturday: Finalize the project

Sunday: Submit it early or do a final check

In this example, early is not simply about finishing quickly. It is about giving yourself enough time to do your best work.

Chapter 5 – The Early Principle and Your Family

Let's now discuss the early principle as it applies to families. Depending upon cultural connotations, being early in your family can have several meanings. It can refer to being early in the family's birth order, development, responsibilities, traditions, or major life events.

1. Early in birth order

Being one of the first children in a family can shape your role. Older children often experience:

- More one-on-one time with parents before younger siblings arrive
- Greater responsibility as younger siblings grow
- Becoming an example or role model for siblings
- Helping establish family traditions and expectations

2. Early to take family responsibilities

Someone may become a responsible member of the family early by:

- Helping parents with household responsibilities
- Caring for younger siblings
- Learning practical skills early
- Contributing financially when appropriate
- Becoming dependable during family challenges

3. Early in family milestones

Early in your family can also mean experiencing major milestones relatively early, such as:

- Marriage and establishing a household
- Having children

- Buying a home
- Beginning a family business
- Establishing traditions that later generations continue

4. Being an early influence

A person who comes early in a family's history can have a foundational influence. Their choices may affect the family culture, values, traditions, relationships, and opportunities that follow.

This connects with the broader idea of being early: getting started before circumstances force you to, preparing ahead of time, and establishing something that others can build upon.

5. A biblical perspective

The Bible frequently emphasizes the importance of generations and family legacy. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob provide an example of how one generation's decisions and faith can influence generations that follow. Proverbs 22:6 similarly emphasizes the importance of what is established early in a child's life.

So, being early in your family can mean being among the first to establish something valuable—responsibility, faith, stability, education, work ethic, or a family tradition—that future generations can inherit and build upon.

Chapter 6 – The Early Principle as a Life Philosophy

How can we apply the early principle to our overall lives? Consider the following:

Arriving early for life can be understood as a mindset of preparing, beginning, and positioning yourself ahead of the moment when circumstances require it.

It goes beyond simply waking up early or arriving before an appointment. It can mean being ready before the opportunity, responsibility, or challenge arrives.

What arriving early for life can mean:

- Early in preparation — preparing before you are forced to.
- Early in responsibility — learning to handle responsibilities before they become urgent.
- Early in opportunity — positioning yourself so you are ready when an opportunity appears.
- Early in wisdom — learning from experience, history, and others before making the same mistakes yourself.
- Early in relationships — investing in family, friendships, and community before you need their support.
- Early in your career — developing skills and good work habits before advancement requires them.
- Early in finances — saving, planning, and managing resources before financial pressure arises.
- Early in spiritual development — establishing principles and practices that can guide you throughout life.
- Early in recognizing change — noticing trends and circumstances before they become unavoidable.

- Early in action — taking constructive steps rather than continually waiting for the perfect time.

As we discussed in a previous chapter, being early for an event means you arrive before it starts. On the other hand, being early for life means you prepare before life demands it.

Biblical perspective

Several biblical themes fit this idea of preparing before life demands it:

- Proverbs 6:6–8 — the ant prepares its provisions ahead of time, presenting preparation as wisdom.
- Proverbs 22:3 — the prudent person recognizes danger and takes precautions.
- Ecclesiastes 3:1 — life has seasons and appointed times, emphasizing the importance of recognizing the right time.
- Matthew 25:1–13 — the parable of the ten virgins emphasizes being prepared before the moment of need arrives.
- Ephesians 5:15–16 — encourages people to live carefully and make good use of their time.

So, arriving early for life is preparation before necessity. In other words.

Arrive early. Prepare early. Learn early. Build early. Save early. Serve early. Correct mistakes early. Invest in people early.

The goal isn't to rush through life. It is to avoid continually being caught unprepared by life.

Arriving early for life means preparing yourself today for responsibilities, opportunities, relationships, and challenges that may not arrive until tomorrow.

Chapter 7 – The Early Principle and Longevity^{3,4}

Do people who get up early live longer?

There is some evidence that being an early/morning-type person is associated with greater longevity, but the relationship is more complicated than “wake up early = live longer.”

What the research suggests

Studies of chronotype—whether someone naturally tends to sleep and wake early or late—generally find that evening types have somewhat higher mortality risk than morning or intermediate types.

For example, a longitudinal study of older adults found that people with an evening chronotype had about a 15% higher mortality hazard than other chronotypes.

The bigger longevity lesson

If your goal is maximum healthy longevity, these factors would rank considerably higher than simply trying to wake up extremely early:

- Get adequate sleep
- Keep a consistent sleep/wake schedule
- Maintain a healthy circadian rhythm
- Get substantial daytime/morning light
- Exercise regularly
- Maintain healthy blood pressure, glucose, cholesterol and body composition
- Don't smoke
- Eat a generally high-quality diet

So there is a real early-riser/longevity correlation, but the evidence doesn't support the idea that setting your alarm for 4:30 a.m. will make you live longer.

In fact, forcing yourself to wake early while sacrificing sleep could potentially do the opposite.

More recent U.S. data are interesting as well. Among adults 81 and older, a late chronotype was associated with approximately 2.2 times the mortality risk compared with an intermediate chronotype, after adjusting for several factors including sleep duration and health conditions. However, this is an observational association—not proof that staying up late causes earlier death.

Early rising itself probably isn't the longevity factor.

What appears more important is the combination of:

Early enough sleep + sufficient sleep + consistent schedule + alignment with your circadian rhythm.

For example:

- 5:00 a.m. wake-up + 8:30 p.m. bedtime + 8 hours sleep → potentially a healthy pattern.
- 5:00 a.m. wake-up + midnight bedtime + 5 hours sleep → potentially harmful despite being an “early riser.”
- 7:00 a.m. wake-up + 10:30 p.m. bedtime + 8.5 hours sleep → can be perfectly healthy.

Sleep duration itself has a substantial relationship with mortality. Meta-analyses have found increased mortality associated with both short sleep and unusually long sleep, although these associations are complicated by underlying health conditions.

Why might early/morning types have an advantage?

There are several plausible explanations:

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- Circadian alignment — Morning types may have sleep/wake patterns more closely aligned with daylight.
- More consistent schedules — Early types may experience less “social jet lag.”
- More morning light exposure — Early waking naturally provides more opportunity for morning sunlight, which reinforces the circadian clock.
- Lifestyle differences — Morning types may be more likely to exercise regularly, eat on a consistent schedule, and avoid very late-night eating or alcohol.
- Health selection — Better health itself can cause people to sleep/wake earlier, so the direction of causation isn’t necessarily one-way.

Chapter 8 – The Early Principle Throughout History and Various Cultures

The concept of early being first, beginning at the beginning of the day, starting life’s stages sooner, or acting before other appears in many cultures. Although the meanings differ, early is often associated with readiness, wisdom, discipline, opportunity, blessing, and advantage.

The following table list the early concept across various cultures

Culture / Tradition	Meaning associated with “early”	Common expression or idea
Ancient Hebrew / Jewish tradition	Seeking God, wisdom, or one’s responsibilities early demonstrates devotion and priority.	“In the morning...” and seeking God early
Ancient Greek	Early action and preparation were connected with discipline, virtue, and taking advantage of opportunity.	The idea that opportunity should be seized when it appears
Ancient Roman	Rising early was associated with productivity, duty, military readiness, and responsible citizenship.	Aurora (dawn) represented the beginning of activity
Chinese traditions	Early rising has traditionally been associated with discipline, harmony with nature, and productive living.	Rising with the sun

Japanese culture	Early beginnings can represent discipline, freshness, responsibility, and making good use of the day.	Asa (morning) as a fresh beginning
Indian traditions	The early morning, especially <i>Brahma Muhurta</i> , has traditionally been viewed as an especially favorable period for spiritual practice, study, and meditation.	Rising before sunrise for prayer or meditation
Islamic tradition	The early morning has strong spiritual significance, particularly through the dawn prayer (<i>Fajr</i>).	Beginning the day with prayer
African traditional cultures	In many communities, dawn and early activity have been connected with communal work, preparation, responsibility, and connection to natural rhythms.	Beginning work with daylight
Native American traditions	In many Indigenous traditions, dawn can symbolize renewal, gratitude, spiritual awareness, and a new beginning, though practices vary greatly among nations.	Sunrise as renewal
Ancient Egyptian culture	Sunrise represented renewal, order, and the daily triumph of light over darkness.	The rising sun as rebirth
Christian tradition	Early morning has often been associated with prayer, resurrection, renewal, and seeking God before the day's activities begin.	"Early in the morning" as a time of prayer

Celtic traditions

Dawn and seasonal beginnings could symbolize renewal, transition, and the return of light.

Sunrise and seasonal cycles

Across cultures, early tends to carry several recurring ideas:

- Early = preparation
Getting started before circumstances force you to act.
- Early = priority
Giving something your attention before competing demands take over.
- Early = opportunity
Being present when an opportunity first appears rather than arriving after it has passed.
- Early = discipline
The person who rises, works, studies, or prepares early is often portrayed as self-controlled.
- Early = renewal
Dawn represents a new beginning—the opportunity to start again.
- Early = wisdom
Many traditions associate beginning one's education, spiritual development, responsibilities, or life's work early with gaining wisdom over time.
- Early = alignment with nature
Before electric lighting and modern schedules, human activity naturally followed sunrise and sunset. Consequently, early rising became connected with living according to the rhythms of the natural world.

Chapter 9 – The Early Principle and Acquiring Business Skills

How does the early principle apply to acquiring business skills?

Let's first examine some famous people who were early entrepreneurs or had early in business connections at relatively young ages:

Person	"Early in business" connection
Bill Gates	Began programming and experimenting with computers at a young age; co-founded Microsoft at 20
Steve Jobs	Became involved in electronics and entrepreneurship as a young adult; co-founded Apple at 21
Walt Disney	Started drawing and pursuing commercial creative work relatively early
Oprah Winfrey	Began broadcasting professionally as a teenager
Richard Branson	Started his first business, a student magazine, at 16
Warren Buffett	Demonstrated entrepreneurial and investment activity as a child and teenager
Mark Zuckerberg	Created Facebook while a college student
Michael Dell	Began selling computers while a college student and founded Dell at 19

Coco Chanel Entered the millinery business and gradually developed the enterprise that became Chanel

Madam C. J. Walker Built a business around hair-care products and direct sales

How is the early principle in acquiring business skills reflected in other cultures?

Ancient Jewish tradition

The traditional emphasis on teaching children practical skills and a trade is often associated with the principle that a person should be capable of supporting themselves through productive work.

Ancient Chinese culture

Traditional Chinese thought, particularly Confucian teachings, places considerable emphasis on discipline, education, diligence, thrift, and long-term preparation—qualities that can support commercial success.

Japanese culture

The concepts of kaizen (continuous improvement) and disciplined craftsmanship provide a useful cultural parallel: beginning with small improvements early and continuing consistently can produce substantial results over time.

Protestant work ethic

Historically, the Protestant work ethic emphasized diligence, vocation, thrift, responsibility, and disciplined labor. These ideas became influential in Western attitudes toward entrepreneurship and commercial activity.

Early in acquiring business skills can therefore represent more than simply being young. This concept can be represented as:

Early exposure → early learning → early initiative → early opportunity → accumulated experience → greater potential later.

This idea is closely related to the principle of compounding. Someone who begins developing business skills, relationships, knowledge, capital, or a reputation earlier has more time for those assets to grow.

As we discussed with money, what is started early has more time to develop, grow, and compound.

Chapter 10 – The Early Principle and Money

The early principle as it applies to money and investing is:

Early saving → early investing → more compounding periods → greater potential growth → greater financial flexibility later in life.

There have been volumes written about time and money. Simply stated, being early in your finances and investing can create advantages that become increasingly powerful over time. The biggest benefit is not necessarily earning more—it is giving your money more time to work.

Compound growth has more time to work

When investment returns are reinvested, future returns can be earned on previous returns.

For example, assuming a hypothetical 8% average annual return:

Starting age	Monthly investment	Approx. value at 65
25	\$500	~\$1.75 million
35	\$500	~\$761,000
45	\$500	~\$306,000
55	\$500	~\$113,000

The major benefit of compound interest over time is that your money can begin earning returns not only on what you originally invested, but also on the returns that have already accumulated. That makes time one of the most powerful variables in investing.

How compounding works

Suppose you invest \$10,000 and hypothetically earn an average 8% annually, with the return reinvested and no additional contributions:

Time invested	Approximate value
Starting amount	\$10,000
10 years	\$21,589
20 years	\$46,610
30 years	\$100,627
40 years	\$217,245
50 years	\$469,016

Notice what happens in the later decades. It takes roughly the first 30 years for \$10,000 to grow to about \$100,000, but during the following 20 years it grows by roughly another \$369,000.

That's the compounding effect becoming increasingly significant.

Why starting early matters so much

Consider two people who each have \$10,000 available to invest at the same hypothetical 8% annual return.

- Person A invests at age 25. By age 65, the \$10,000 would hypothetically become about \$217,000.
- Person B waits until age 45. By age 65, the same \$10,000 would become only about \$46,600.

Same starting investment. Same assumed return. The major difference is 20 additional years of compounding. This shows the power of early and its companion principle of compounding.

Chapter 11 – The Early Principle and Famous Early Risers

Were there famous people who rose early and understood this principle?

Yes. There are several famous and highly accomplished people who were known for rising early while also maintaining a reasonably adequate amount of sleep. The important distinction is that an early riser is not necessarily someone who sleeps very little.

Famous early risers who prioritized sufficient sleep

Person	Typical wake time	Approx. sleep	What they did in the morning
Benjamin Franklin	5:00 a.m.	~7 hours	Prayer/reflection, planning, study, breakfast
Tim Cook	~4:00–4:30 a.m.	~7 hours	Emails, exercise, planning
Georgia O’Keeffe	Around dawn	Not precisely documented	Walks, nature, creative work
Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson	~3:30–4:00 a.m.	Reported ~7–8 hours	Coffee, exercise, planning
Howard Schultz	~4:30 a.m.	Reported ~7 hours	Exercise, walking dogs, time with family
Anna Wintour	~5:00–6:00 a.m.	Often reported ~7–8 hours	Tennis/exercise and preparation for work

1. Ben Franklin

Ben Franklin is one of the clearest historical examples. His famous daily schedule called for sleep from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m.—seven hours—and rising at 5 a.m. His first hours were devoted to washing, breakfast, reflection, planning his day, and study.

His model was essentially:

Go to bed early → sleep adequately → get up early → use the quiet morning productively.

His schedule is the source of the famous association between early rising and productivity.

2. Tim Cook

Apple CEO Tim Cook has famously been associated with waking around 3:45–4:30 a.m. and beginning his day with email and exercise. Reports have also described him as getting approximately seven hours of sleep, meaning his early rising is paired with an unusually early bedtime rather than simply cutting sleep short.

This is an important modern example: 4:00 a.m. isn't inherently unhealthy if the person goes to bed early enough to obtain sufficient sleep.

3. Georgia O'Keeffe

Artist Georgia O'Keeffe was explicitly an early riser. She said she liked to get up when dawn came. Her mornings were strongly connected with walking, observing nature and beginning her creative work.

4. Dwayne Johnson

Dwayne Johnson is another well-known early riser. He has long described beginning his day extremely early, often getting to the gym around 4 a.m.

The most interesting point is that early rising and adequate sleep are not opposites.

For example:

10:00 p.m. → 5:00 a.m. = 7 hours

9:00 p.m. → 5:00 a.m. = 8 hours

8:30 p.m. → 4:30 a.m. = 8 hours

A person can therefore be an extremely early riser without being sleep deprived.

Chapter 12 – Application Framework

So, how do we apply this early principle to various parts of our daily habits and lives? I will suggest this framework as a starting point. If you are not pleased with your results, simply try again until you find the right combination of techniques, actions and habits that provide you with your desired outcome.

First Step – Ask a Question

Before one can begin applying the early principle, one has to first ask what aspect of the early principle one wants to apply. As we have examined in this eBook there are many facets of early. Do you want to apply the early principle in your daily habits, schoolwork, business, spiritual practices, etc. You must first choose which aspect of early you want to apply. This is the first crucial step. Trying to implement too many facets of the early principle all at once may become overwhelming. Instead, choose one aspect so one can then focus and master before attempting another aspect of the early principle.

Second Step – Do an Assessment

Where are you currently at in applying any aspect of the Early Principle? Do an honest assessment of where you are and what behaviors you are desiring to change. Take a 7-day challenge to document where you are in any aspect of our life. Useful tools to document include:

- Doing a daily journal of your actions and timelines of your routines over this 7-day period.
- Spending time at the beginning of the day or at the end of the time without distractions. Turn off all phones, TV, notifications from your apps, etc. to develop a distraction free time period so you can focus, pray, reflect and ponder. Use this quiet time to jot down your thoughts, emotions, goals, insights, etc.

- Once you develop some clarity on what you want to change, develop or master, that is the first step towards implementing whatever aspect of the Early Principle.

To implement any facet of the early principle is a behavior change. There are many behavior change models one can follow. The key fact is that one needs a system rather than just will power to affect a behavior change. I will suggest a couple of behavior models for you to consider.

Behavior Change Model One

Behavior Change = Identify the Target Behavior + Understand the Current Behavior and Context + Set Clear and Achievable Goals + Increase Awareness and Motivation + Develop an Action Plan + Build Support Systems + Implement and Monitor Progress + Reinforce and Reward + Maintain and Prevent Relapse + Evaluate and Sustain

1. Identify the Target Behavior

- Clearly define the specific behavior you want to change or adopt.
- Make it measurable and observable (e.g., “exercise for 30 minutes daily” instead of “exercise more”).

2. Understand the Current Behavior and Context

- Analyze the existing habits, environmental factors, and triggers.
- Identify what encourages or discourages the current behavior.
- Understand internal motivations and external influences.

3. Set Clear and Achievable Goals

- Establish specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals.
- Break down goals into smaller, manageable steps to avoid overwhelm.

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4. Increase Awareness and Motivation

- Use education, information, or emotional appeals to raise awareness about the benefits of change.
- Connect the behavior to personal values or long-term goals.
- Highlight the positive outcomes and potential negative consequences of not changing.

5. Develop an Action Plan

- Plan when, where, and how the new behavior will be performed.
- Identify cues or reminders to prompt the desired behavior.
- Incorporate strategies for overcoming barriers and setbacks.

6. Build Support Systems

- Engage social support from friends, family, or groups.
- Use accountability partners or coaches.
- Create an environment conducive to the desired behavior (e.g., remove temptations).

7. Implement and Monitor Progress

- Start practicing the new behavior according to the plan.
- Track progress regularly through journals, apps, or feedback.
- Adjust the plan as needed based on challenges or successes.

8. Reinforce and Reward

- Use positive reinforcement to encourage consistent behavior (rewards, praise, self-recognition).
- Celebrate milestones and improvements.
- Link rewards to the behavior rather than external factors.

9. Maintain and Prevent Relapse

- Develop strategies to handle lapses without losing overall progress.

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- Continue support and reinforcement.
- Reflect on progress and renew motivation periodically.

10. Evaluate and Sustain

- Assess the impact of behavior change on overall goals.
- Modify the framework for long-term sustainability.
- Integrate the new behavior into identity and lifestyle.

Behavior Change Model Two

Behavior Change = Motivation + Ability + Opportunity + Cue + Reinforcement + Repetition

- Motivation = I want to do it.
- Ability = I can realistically do it.
- Opportunity = my environment allows it.
- Cue = something reminds/triggers me.
- Reinforcement = something makes repetition worthwhile.
- Repetition = I perform it consistently enough for it to become established.

Example

Suppose the desired behavior is getting up early.

You could build the system as:

Why: More intentional morning time

Target: Wake at 6:00 AM

Cue: Alarm at 6:00

Environment: Phone placed away from bed

Preparation: Clothes and breakfast prepared the night before

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Ability: Go to bed early enough to obtain adequate sleep

First behavior: Get out of bed and turn on the light

Reward: Quiet personal time + preferred morning activity

Tracking: Record wake time

Recovery: If sleep is disrupted, adjust rather than abandoning the routine

Identity: “I am someone who starts the day intentionally.”

This example illustrates an important principle: the behavior is engineered rather than merely wished for. This is a key shift to move one from willpower to system design. This is the foundation of a durable behavior-change framework.

Chapter 13 – Conclusion

In this eBook, we explored the benefits of acting early in the morning and across many areas of life, including spiritual practice, family, education, relationships, business, and finances. As noted at the outset, this is not an exhaustive study; many other dimensions of the Early Principle remain to be explored.

The goal was to help you understand the benefits of the Early Principle and encourage you to apply it in both your daily routines and your broader life.

God is the giver of life and the author of time. Because our days are numbered, consider how we can redeem the time we have been given and fully realize the benefits of acting early.

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THE EARLY PRINCIPLE

PREPARE EARLY • ACT EARLY • GROW EARLY

ARRIVE EARLY FOR LIFE.

The Early Principle is a practical philosophy of preparation: begin before circumstances force you to, position yourself before opportunity arrives, and give important decisions enough time to develop.

Craig S Ellis explores what it means to act early across the major dimensions of life—time, faith, health, work, school, family, career, business, money, and personal development. The book also examines early rising, circadian rhythms, longevity, cultural traditions, famous early risers, and the power of starting early enough for experience, relationships, knowledge, and money to compound over time.

At its heart, the message is simple:

ARRIVE EARLY.

PREPARE EARLY.

LEARN EARLY.

BUILD EARLY.

SAVE EARLY.

INVEST IN PEOPLE EARLY.

The goal is not to rush through life. It is to avoid continually being caught unprepared by life. The book concludes with an application framework that turns the Early Principle from an idea into a behavior—one target at a time, supported by clear goals, preparation, cues, reinforcement, repetition, reflection, and sustainable systems.