

TIME MANAGEMENT

Let me start by thanking the Pastors for giving me this opportunity to talk to you. I also want to acknowledge the web site, Bible.org and Pastor James Merritt for much of the input to this sermon. Ok so our topic today is Time Management within the context of Christian Stewardship.

So to start us off, what is time? Time is free but it's priceless. You can't own it but you can use it. You can't keep it but you can spend it. Once you've lost it you can never get it back.

There are many inequities in this world but one thing that **all** humanity shares is the amount of time there is in each day. God has given us 24 hours or 1,440 minutes or 86,400 seconds in each and every day. Perhaps, because we are all products of an increasingly fast paced society, we tend to think and act as though God short changed us when it comes to time. How often do we hear comments like, 'there just isn't enough time in a day to do everything I need to do' or 'I just don't know where the time goes' or 'let me make time for you'. Most people feel pushed for time, we are all far too busy. We talk of the rush hour, we regularly use words such as urgent, priority or pressing, we tell our families to hurry up as we don't have all day.

In the good old days a telegram was the way to do things quickly but as technology has evolved, the pace of life has increased and we are sucked into this vortex of endless hurry. Instead of technology making our lives easier we have allowed ourselves to be conned into being ever busier, no time, no time, no time!! Indeed many Christians are worse off than others. We tend to take our work more seriously and also place a high value on family obligations as well as being in the forefront of church, community and charity organisations and therefore we are always on the move and in many cases late! At which point I feel obliged to mention that as Christians, we are supposed to love and respect one another yet how many meetings start on time? How many of us turn up even half an hour or more late! Is that showing love and respect for others? Please, please let us turn up to meetings on time.

We have become a performance oriented society, activity that produces some kind of result is placed at a premium and time is viewed from a functional standpoint. Unless we can see some obvious need, the time spent is viewed as wasted. Whatever we do must be accomplishing something tangible, even down to our time spent in worship. Work is or has already become our major source of identity. The answer to many questions is purely 'work harder'. The problem we face in our society today is not the amount of time that God has given us but our view of time and life itself and how we use that time.

Time is indeed a resource and a unique one at that in that we cannot accumulate it like money or raw materials, we are forced to spend it whether we choose to or not and all of us must spend it at a rate of 60 seconds to the minute and 60 minutes to the hour, it cannot be turned on and off or replaced, it is irretrievable.

As the Eternal One, God is not limited by time as we are. He is the sovereign of time. In ([1 Tim. 1:17](#); cf. [2 Pet. 3:8](#)) it says that With Him one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. He sees the past, present, and the future as one. But unlike God, temporal and finite man is confined to twenty-four hours each day and to a certain number of days in the life which God allots him.

This does not mean, however, that man's temporal life is meaningless and without eternal consequences. True, the Bible teaches us that time is a resource and a stewardship for which we are all responsible before God. But if we are not careful, we can fall into the trap of the western mind-set which sees time strictly from the practical standpoint where performance and accomplishments or doing something productive is the all-important goal. When this happens, we lose the capacity to simply enjoy God, people, and the life God has given us. Again, as is the case in all of life, we need a biblical balance. Without this balance we become feverish, legalistic joy killers, and will destroy our capacity to be the people God has called us to be.

Rather than a friend, we have turned time into a tyrant. And we have allowed this tyrant to invade and dominate our lives. If you look carefully at our society, you can easily see the decline in our social life and in our relationships with people brought on by the tyranny of time and by our failure to grasp the meaning of time from a biblical perspective.

Consequently our encounters with others are becoming more and more limited and instrumental. We associate rather than interrelate, hold ourselves back rather than open ourselves up, pass on or steal by one another rather than pause and linger awhile. The number of our close friends drops and the quality of our married life diminishes.

Developing vital relationships with people is tremendously time consuming and, because of our utilitarian or production-oriented mindset, our tendency is to economise our commitment to spending the time needed to develop deep relationships with family and friends.

The life of the church is detrimentally impacted by these time pressures. There are too many meetings, programs, organizations, and other constraints calling the body of Christ to go, go, go, and do, do, do. The results are crippling to our relationship with God, to one another, and for the time needed to think, meditate, and grasp God's truth. In this rat race of always being on the go, we are failing to grasp who we are, why we are here, and where we are really going. We are like the bus driver who told his passengers, "I have some good news and then some bad news. The bad news is we took a wrong turn and are on the wrong road. But don't worry, the good news is we are making great time." It's as though the going itself, the movement at a fast pace, is its own reward regardless of where it takes us. We have fallen in love with speed for the sake of speed itself. We want our computers to run with the speed of light. If it takes ten seconds to save a thirty-page file, we become impatient and complain. We want it done in a split second. But doesn't it seem only logical that the traveller, if he is unsure of the route, should stop and ask where he is and where

the present road is taking him rather than continue on in the same direction regardless of his speed?

There is a passage in Mark that speaks powerfully to this very issue of being preoccupied with activity or *how much we have and can accomplish*. We are told in [Mark 6 from v 30](#) that the disciples, having returned from a very busy time of ministry, gathered around the Lord Jesus and began to inform Him about all that they had done and taught. Literally, the text reads, “Then the apostles gathered around Jesus and told him everything they had done and taught.” But then in verse 31 we read these very interesting and thought provoking words from Jesus, “He said to them, “Come with me privately to an isolated place and rest a while” (for many were coming and going, and there was no time to eat).” This was not just a problem of time, but of the responsibility to deal with the use of time in a way that would enhance the time that they had had. They needed to rest and reflect on what they had done.

We need to try to take more of a God Like perspective about our lives – we need to see our lives not just as this short time where we are mortal, but to look, as God looks, at eternity. Try to imagine that eternity is a piece of rope that goes from here westwards towards Voi, then Nairobi, Kampala, Kinshasa and across to Brazil, Colombia etc and on and on forever, round and round the equator without end. What is the scale of this lifetime of ours on that sort of scale? I put it to you that it is about this much, Hold up fingers.....think about it a rope without end yet our mortal life represents maybe only 6 inches! Yet we spend so much time and effort pouring ourselves out on the altars of work and success and worldly pleasures and we miss the eternal perspective and we do that at our peril.

Let’s take a quick view of the one who managed his time better than any other.

The Lord Jesus who only had about three years of ministry on earth could have been totally frustrated, but He never appeared to be in a dither over time and tasks. A study of the Saviour’s life shows that while He was tremendously busy and often exhausted at the end of the day, His life was never feverish or rushed. He always seemed to have time to love and minister to people, sometimes spending an extended time with just one person like the woman at the well. He would accept interruptions in His schedule as God’s opportunities. A case in point is found in [Mark 6:30-44](#) and the feeding of the five thousand. The plan was to get away to a secluded place to rest awhile, but when He saw the people who followed, He was filled with compassion because they were like sheep without a shepherd. He used the situation as an opportunity to both teach them and give an object lesson to His disciples.

Yet, consider this about the Saviour’s ministry. He cared deeply about people and their hurts. He was full of compassion, yet for every hundred he healed, there were thousands He did not heal or minister to. Was it because He did not care? Of course not. It was because He knew the need did not constitute the call. He constantly walked in dependence upon the Father and His time and ministry were regulated by the Father’s direction or will. Perhaps the most obvious illustration of this is found in [Mark 1:32-39](#) which says:-

When it was evening, after sunset, they brought to him all who were sick and demon-possessed. 33 The whole town gathered by the door. 34 So he healed many who were sick with various diseases and drove out many demons. But he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. 35 Then Jesus got up early in the morning when it was still very dark, departed, and went out to a deserted place, and there he spent time in prayer. 36 Simon and his companions searched for him. 37 When they found him, they said, "Everyone is looking for you." 38 He replied, "Let us go elsewhere, into the surrounding villages, so that I can preach there too. For that is what I came out here to do." 39 So he went into all of Galilee preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.

That there was tremendous need with the people clamouring for His ministry is obvious in this passage. Simon tells us that everyone was looking for Him, but He was never driven simply by the needs or by His own compassion or abilities or sense of importance, though He was the very Son of God Himself. Instead, He prioritized His life: He put first things first. He took time to get alone with the Father (vs. 35), sought the Father's will and enablement from the standpoint of His humanity, and did the Father's will. Simon's behaviour in this passage is so typical of people and gives us a good example of our problem. While Simon would never have thought of the Lord as uncaring, the implication is that Simon saw the Lord's absence or time alone in prayer as unproductive, perhaps even as a sign of wrong priorities when in reality it was just the opposite. Simon looked only at the needs. Jesus saw the needs, but He saw them through the Father's will. Simon was maybe impressed by a sense of their importance with so many flocking after the Lord and His disciples. After all, it was at the home of his wife's mother, but the Lord was not so impressed. Simon was perhaps driven by a desire for obvious results, numbers of people healed, but not the Lord.

Certainly the heart of Jesus was burdened with all the pain He saw at the home of Simon's mother-in-law. Certainly He took this to the Father. But the result of His time in prayer was to walk away from these needs and continue on to the nearby towns to preach. Why? "For that is what I came for," He said. He knew God's will for His life and He refused to be deterred no matter how much He was burdened by the needs He found all around Him. It was a matter of priorities according to God's will for Him. Though the world was still full of people with needs, at the close of His earthly ministry, just before the cross, He could pray in ([John 17:4](#)), "I glorified you on earth by completing the work you gave me to do". God had given Him enough time to do what He had called Him to do and that was what mattered. There were no big bags laden down with unfinished tasks over the shoulder of Jesus.

It doesn't matter who we are or how gifted or how able or strong, we will never be able to meet every need around us nor accomplish all that we see needs to be done. However, we can find time and the ability to do what God is calling us to do.

So what is Time Management? – the definition that took my eye was this one -

“Time management” is the process of organizing and planning how to divide your time between specific activities. Good time management enables you to work smarter – not harder – so that you get more done in less time, even when time is tight and pressures are high. Failing to manage your time damages your effectiveness and causes stress.

It seems that there is never enough time in the day. But, since we all get the same 24 hours, why is it that some people achieve so much more with their time than others? The answer lies in good time management. The highest achievers manage their time exceptionally well. Good time management requires an important shift in focus from activities to results: **being busy is not the same as being effective.** (Ironically, the opposite is often closer to the truth.) Spending your day in a frenzy of activity often achieves less, because you’re dividing your attention between so many different tasks.

So what can we do about this dilemma, how can we get our lives back onto an even keel, where we are effective without becoming burnt out?

I would like to propose that the **Principal** that we should adopt is this one:- **The most important use of your time is spending most of your time on what is most important.**

Let us take Psalm 118:24 as our starting point in this, it says – this is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. So as we dissect this statement I’ll give you three simple steps to take every day of your life and I believe that if you follow this advice, when you’re going to bed in the evening you can look back at your day and say ‘I got the most out of this day that I possibly could, I got the most productivity, the most pleasure, the most joy, the most happiness, I made this day the best day that I could’. So here we go:-

Step 1 – Approach every day thankfully. The psalmist starts with this is the day the Lord has made – that is true of every single day, rain or shine, winter or summer, good day or bad day, the Lord creates each and every day of your life. Approach every day with thanksgiving because it is a gift from God. Every day that God is good enough to allow us to wake up and see is given to us by Him and we should be thankful for it. What do we call yesterday? The past. What do we call tomorrow? The future and what do we call today? The present, do you know why? Because every day is a day that God gives to each one of us as a present. We should not care what sort of day it is but realise that God created it, it is a gift from Him so we should be thankful. Moses said in Psalm 90:12 teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom. We need that wisdom so that we will number our days we will understand that our days are indeed numbered, we’re not going to be here forever, so every day that we get we should be thankful for that God given day. So approach every day thankfully.

Step 2 – Spend every day usefully. Let's go back to Psalm 118:24 – this IS the day that the Lord HAS made so it's clear he isn't talking about yesterday or tomorrow but today. Why is that? Because the only day that you can ever enjoy is today. You can't enjoy yesterday it's a memory and you can't enjoy tomorrow as it's only a possibility, the only day we can enjoy is today which is why we need to be careful how we spend every single day. We talk of saving time or borrowing time or making time but you can't do those things with time. I'm sure that all of us want to manage our time wisely and get the best out of each day every day, the problem is that most of us don't do it. We waste too much time, we live in constant frustration at things not done. We look back at the day with regret at things we did not accomplish. God however wants us to get the most out of every day, in Ephesians 5:15-16 Paul said 'making the most of every opportunity'. In other words God is saying he wants us to squeeze the best out of every moment of our lives. Now I want to go back to the example of our Lord Jesus who made the best use of His time and accomplished everything that he set out to do in three short years. It takes some of us three years to read a book! So you say how did he do that? The key to His success is found in three words, Important versus Urgent.

What I'm going to share now came from Dwight D Eisenhower a former President of the USA – he said – **what is important is seldom urgent and what is urgent is seldom important**. So here's what Jesus knew, what he did and how he lived – if you studied Jesus life you would find that he never let the urgent dominate the important, he never let the urgent take over the important. As an example his great friend Lazarus was dying, Jesus knew he was dying, word was sent to Him that he was dying, his sisters sent messages to tell Jesus to come quickly and save their brother and His friend. I think that all of us in the same situation would just drop everything and run to help, but not Jesus, he purposely didn't do it. So we see that it was urgent that he went, but for accomplishing His long term goal, it was more important that he didn't go. Jesus never let the urgent take priority over the important.

So you ask what is the difference between what is urgent and what is important? Urgent tasks require your attention right now, things like daily deadlines, possibly a report, an email from your boss or maybe returning a 'phone call, those things are urgent. Important tasks contribute to your long term goals, things such as keeping healthy and physically fit, getting your finances in order, spending time with your family, developing your spiritual life and your walk with God. President Eisenhower was saying that on each and every day we will divide the time we spend into one of four categories:-

Category 1 – Important and urgent – for example, for you Mums out there, if your baby is crying upstairs then that's important and urgent. Handling a crisis at work especially if you're the boss, people are looking to you to provide leadership, then that's important and

urgent, making sure you make the payments on your loans on time – also important and urgent.

Category 2 – this is one area where so many of us make a mistake – Important but not urgent – for example, saving money for your future is important but not urgent. Getting enough exercise, important but not urgent. Getting enough sleep, important but not urgent. Spending time with the family, with your children, important but not urgent. We tend to let these things go because although they are important they are not urgent.

Category 3 – Not important but urgent – booking a flight not important but it may be urgent. Answering a 'phone call, maybe urgent but it's not important. Someone requests a fast response to an email, maybe be urgent but not important.

Category 4 – another area where many of us miss the mark – it's not important and it's not urgent, I know some of you will disagree; however as an example; Checking your Facebook page, not important and not urgent. Checking your Twitter account, not important and not urgent. Eating a piece of cake, not important and not urgent, playing video games, not important not urgent.

Now here's the message – **if the important doesn't get in your diary or your list of things to do, first, the urgent will dominate your time.** If the important doesn't get in your diary or your list of things to do, first, the urgent will dominate your time. **It is important that you do not let the urgent control you but it is urgent that you let the important control you.** If you really want to start being productive in your life and making every day count then list down everything that is really important in your life and make sure that those things are at the top of your daily to do list. As an example, I believe that it is important that all of us read our Bibles every day, but it's not urgent which is why I'm pretty sure that some of us haven't read our Bibles for some time. Anything that's important must be at the top of your daily to do list. In my case I strongly believe that it is important that I start each day with prayer and reading the Bible which I normally manage to do. I also believe that it's important to exercise daily and most days I manage to do that as well.

I want to encourage each one of you today that if you really want to start making the most of each and every day, that you put the important things in your life first. There will be times of course when we want to do the not important and not urgent, like playing golf or watching TV but if you have your priorities right and the important things are already catered for that day, you will find that you have the time to not only do such things but enjoy doing them because you will not feel guilty because there are still important things left undone.

Step 3 – live every day joyfully – Psalm 118:24 part b says, let us rejoice and be glad in it. Please note that there are no conditions mentioned. He didn't say, rejoice on the good days

but not on the bad days and let's face it there are days when things go wrong for all of us but the psalmist is very clearly saying that on each and every day that God gives us we should enjoy that day and the time we have been given. On every day there is always something that we can rejoice about, if we just look for it we can find it. He is saying that we should not let the bad things that can happen on any day, rob us of the joy we should have because of all the good things that happen every day. We all know that days don't always go as planned. Our to do lists get interrupted, we encounter things that we have no control over, the best laid plans of mice and men often go awry. Sometimes the important that's not urgent gets interrupted by the important that is urgent, we will rarely have everything go our way in any given day. The psalmist however is saying that as you wake up and prepare to get up for the day ahead, we have a choice and we can choose **to enjoy** the day that we are about to spend.

Now I hear some of you sceptics out there saying now hold on, how can the people who are in hospital enjoy the day that God has given them, what about those in a wheelchair or in a nursing home and can't even move around, how can they enjoy their day let alone rejoice!

Ok let's look at a few things; we can always rejoice that there is a God that loves us. We can always rejoice that there is a God who is in control of the universe. We can always rejoice that there is a God who says that I don't care what happens to you I'm big enough and good enough to work things out for your good. We can always rejoice that we have been forgiven of all our sins. We can always rejoice that we know that we have eternal life if we know Jesus. We can always rejoice that at least I have seen today and I can thank God and praise God and love God and serve God and worship God and obey God every single day. So there are many things to rejoice about every day.

As an illustration of someone who got his perspective right there was an American Football coach at the University of Alabama called Bear Bryant who was one of the greatest of all time. After he died, his widow found something in his wallet which he obviously read each and every day, a much used piece of paper which no-one knew about and what was written on it was profound. It said:-

This is the beginning of a new day, God has given me this day to use as I will. I can waste it or use it for good. What I do today is very important because I am exchanging a day of my life for it. When tomorrow comes this day is gone forever leaving something in its place that I have traded for it. I want it to be a gain and not a loss, good not evil, success not failure in order that I shall not forget the price I paid for it.

So to conclude, time is very, very short. Eternity is very, very long. What you do with your time in this life will determine the eternity you spend in the next life. Now I don't want to upset anyone or annoy or offend anyone but I believe that every day of your life that you

spend without Jesus as Lord in your life is a wasted day. I don't care what you do on any particular day, how well you do it, how much you accomplish but every day you live without Jesus as the Lord of your life is wasted time. So if you'd like to make the most of not only today but every day that you still have to live, if you'd like to make sure that when time is no more and you've entered into eternity, you're ready to meet the God who created time, then the most important use of your time will be to surrender your life to Jesus Christ and let me tell you why. He is the one who took the time to come to this earth, to die on a cross for our sins, to come back from the grave, so that we could spend time with Him today and eternity with Him tomorrow. If there is anyone here today who doesn't want to waste more time and wants to let Jesus into their lives, please see me or any of the Pastors and Deacons after the service and we will pray with you.

Let us pray. Lord we come before you this morning with praise and thanksgiving and we are asking Lord that you help us to manage our time better. That we get the important things done before the urgent things. That we spend every day giving thanks, that we use every day the best way we can and that we will be joyful every day in all that we do regardless of our circumstances and that you would be glorified in our lives. In Jesus name, amen.