

## Christian Stewardship

### Part 10 – Time

ILLUS – If you happen to be an adult of about average weight, here's what you do in 24 hours: Your heart beats 103,689 times. Your blood travels 270 million kilometres. You breathe 23,040 times. You inhale 13 cubic metres of air. You eat 1.7 kilos of food. You drink 1.3 kilos of liquids. You turn in your sleep 25-30 times. You speak 48,000 words. You move 750 major muscles. Your nails grow .015 mm. Your hair grows .5mm. You exercise 7,000,000 brain cells.

All this activity in such a small space of time!

But here's what you're likely to do in an average life-span of 70 years.

ILLUS – 20 years sleeping; 20 years working; 6 years eating (no wonder some people get so fat); 7 years playing; 5 years dressing (that's what you call overdressed); 1 year on the telephone (I think there are lots of girls who have already spent that much time on the telephone a long time before they leave their teens); 2½ years smoking; 2½ years in bed; 3 years waiting for somebody; 5 months tying shoelaces (there's really something to be said for slip-ons).<sup>1</sup>

ILLUS – Studies from the University of Maryland and the California Air Resource Board reveal that for 18- to 64-year-olds their three most popular activities are sleeping, working and watching TV – in that order. Activities in minutes per day are:

Sleeping...461

Working...211

Watching TV...121

Doing Housework...101

Travelling...78

Eating...69

Socializing...48

Recreation...31

Caring for children...28

Dressing...28

Washing, grooming...25

Reading...24

Conversing...24

Thinking or relaxing...9<sup>2</sup>

Here's one of my own calculations: if a girl starts at the age of 15 to spend ½ an hour a day doing her make-up, by the time she reaches 63, she will have spent an entire year – 24 hours a day – just doing her make-up.

Now there's food for thought.

A poll by Priority Management, Inc., calculated that, in a lifetime, the average American will spend:

Six months sitting at stoplights;

Eight months opening junk mail;

One year looking for misplaced objects (Don't you hate looking for glasses, especially when they turn up on your face?);

Two years unsuccessfully returning phone calls;

Five years waiting in line (I think I spent almost that long at the bank last week.).<sup>3</sup>

Why do things like that bug us?

Because time is incredibly important to us.

Even one hour can be precious.

ILLUS – Two men in the USA, William Bell and Jacob Rosenwasser, were under sentence of death by electrocution. Since there was daylight saving, they applied to the warden to have the clock turned back to standard time, so that they could live an hour longer.<sup>4</sup>

Here are some important facts about time.

### **1. Time is the great leveller**

No matter how important or rich or smart or powerful we are, **nobody** gets more than 24 hours / day, 168 hours / week.

You may live longer, but you still get the same amount of time each day.

Alexander the Great and John Wesley did everything they did in 24-hour days.

John Wesley is one of my heroes of the faith – here's what he did with his time.

ILLUS Wesley – He averaged 3 sermons a day for 54 years, preaching more than 44,000 times. In doing so, he travelled by horseback and carriage more than 200,000 miles (320,000 km) – about 5,000 miles (8,000 km) per year. His published works include a four-volume commentary on the Bible, a dictionary of the English language, a 5-volume work on natural philosophy, a 4-volume work on church history, histories of England and Rome, grammars on the Hebrew, Latin, Greek, French and English languages, 3 works on medicine, 6 volumes of church music, 7 volumes of sermons and controversial papers. He also edited a library of 50 volumes known as the Christian Library. He arose at 4am and worked solidly through to 10pm, allowing brief periods for meals. In the midst of all this work he declared, "I have more hours of private retirement than any man in England." At age 83 he was piqued to discover that he could not write more than 15 hours per day without hurting his eyes. At the age of 86 he was ashamed to admit that he could not preach more than twice a day. In his 86<sup>th</sup> year, he preached in almost every shire in England and Wales, and often rode 30 to 50 miles a day.<sup>5</sup>

And everything he did, he did in 24-hour days.

### **2. What we do with our time says something about us**

It reveals the kind of person we are.

Tell me to what you pay attention, and I will tell you who you are. José Ortega y Gasset (1883-1955)

You can tell a lot about a person by how they spend their time.

Their desires, their motivations, their giftings, their values, their priorities, are all made evident by how a person spends their time.

### **3. Time is God's gift to us – we are stewards of it.**

It's been said that time is God's gift to us – what we do with it is our gift to God.

You won't get two bites of the cherry – once it's over, it's over.

ILLUS – A man had a check-up and then went in to see his doctor to get the results. The doctor said he had bad news and worse news for him, which did he want to hear first? The man was a bit nonplussed and said he'd rather hear the bad news first. The doctor said, "The bad news is that you only have twenty-four hours to live." At this the man jumped up, totally flabbergasted and distraught. He paced the doctor's office and complained, "Twenty-four hours to live? I can't possibly get my affairs in order that quickly. I can't believe

this, it is incredible! What could be worse news than this?” The doctor said, “The worse news is that I was supposed to tell you this yesterday but I forgot.”<sup>6</sup>

Time is a gift and we should value it.

This is, of course, often much more difficult for young people to do than older people.

The young think they have plenty of time left; there’s a sense of immortality.

Older people realise that time is brief.

And once time runs out, there’s a time of reckoning with God.

Heb 9:27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,

We get one shot at this life – and then comes the judgment.

So how can we be good stewards of our time?

## 1. Redeem the time

Eph 5:15-16 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, (16) redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

Col 4:5 Walk in wisdom towards those who are outside, redeeming the time.

To redeem the time means to make the most of your time; to use your time wisely.

But even more than that, according to commentators it means, “to make a wise and sacred use of every opportunity for doing good’ ... taking advantage of the opportunities that present themselves”<sup>7</sup>.

“Snapping up every opportunity that comes”<sup>8</sup>.

To do what? To do the will of God .

Also to win the lost; notice Col 4:5 is in the context of our relationship with outsiders.

## 2. Make time for the things that are important

What sorts of things are important?

Here’s a list of 11 things I believe should be **regularly** included in every Christian’s life:

1. Fellowship
2. Prayer
3. Meditating in God’s Word
4. Sharing your faith
5. Time with your family and friends
6. Work
7. Reading
8. Serving others
9. Resting (not watching TV)
10. Study or learning (Fifteen minutes a day devoted to one definite study will make one a master in a dozen years. Edward H. Griggs<sup>9</sup>)
11. Looking after your body – sleeping, eating, drinking, exercising

And by the way, that list wasn’t in order of importance.

But every one of these is mentioned in Scripture many times.

### **3. Eliminate or reduce time spent on unimportant things**

1 Cor 10:23 All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify.

There may be nothing in the Bible prohibiting some of the things you are doing, but that doesn't mean it's a good thing to do.

Something may even be a good thing to do, but if you spend too much time doing it, it can be a bad thing.

This is true of a lot of things that aren't bad in themselves – TV, sport, exercise, leisure, even work.

### **4. Remember that people are more important than things and events**

Nobody on his deathbed ever said, "I wish I had spent more time on my job."

They think about their family, because people are more important.

ILLUS – Jesus was a very busy man, but He was never hurried. You never see Him saying irritably, "Aw, man! Who touched my coat? Can't you see I've gotta be at Jairus' place in five minutes, to pray for a little girl or she's going to die? What is wrong with you people?"

Somehow He always had time for people.

### **5. Manage your daily routine wisely**

Debra Smith presented these seven classic techniques for daily success at a Time Management seminar sponsored by the Dible Management Development Seminar people (yes, that's Dible, not Bible).<sup>10</sup> They are:

1. Complete daily priorities, central concerns and essentials first.
2. Group together related activities in order to save time as well as create more time.
3. Divide big tasks into workable steps which also helps to maintain confidence. (How do you eat an elephant? One mouthful at a time.)
4. Always construct a timetable.
5. For maximum results, concentrate on and complete one step at a time.
6. To maintain a high energy level, finish each task fully.
7. To prevent procrastination, "do it now."

### **6. Deal with motivational issues**

Let's face it – when it comes to dealing with our use of time, we're dealing with our motivation.

John Lancaster Spalding (1840-1916) – "What we love to do, we find time to do."

Luke 6:45 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

What's in our heart is reflected in our words and our deeds – that includes how we use our time.

It all comes back to our motivation and our attitude.

And this is probably the hardest thing to deal with.

So how do you deal with your motivation?

Here is a major key.

### **Live as if Jesus were coming back today.**

ILLUS – A woman asked John Wesley, "Suppose you knew that you were to die tomorrow night at midnight, how would you spend the time until then?" "Why, just as I intend to spend it. I should preach this evening at Gloucester, and again at five tomorrow morning. After that, I should ride to Tewkesbury, preach in the afternoon, and meet the Society in the evening. I should then repair to the home of my friends who expect to entertain me, converse and pray with my family as usual, retire to my room at ten o'clock, commend myself to my heavenly Father, lie down to rest, and wake up in glory."<sup>11</sup>

Here's a man who was living as if Jesus were coming soon; he didn't need to change a thing. But lots of us are very wary about this sort of thing; Jesus has been coming soon for the last 2,000 years. There are people and cults that make a full-time job out of trying to predict when Jesus is coming back. So could Jesus be coming back today? Wars and rumours of wars, earthquakes, Gospel preached in all the world.

Forget all that!

ILLUS – But think of it this way: if you walked out of here and got knocked down by a bus, guess when Jesus is coming back for you? It could be any time – there are no guarantees.

Time is the deposit each one has in the bank of God and no one knows the balance. Ralph W. Sockman

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<sup>1</sup> Tan, Paul Lee *Encyclopaedia Of 7700 Illustrations* p 1480

<sup>2</sup> Reported in American Demographics, July, 1990. "To Verify," Leadership.

<sup>3</sup> Reported in U.S. News & World Report, 1/20/89. Leadership, Vol. 10, no. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Tan, Paul Lee *Encyclopaedia Of 7700 Illustrations* p 1483

<sup>5</sup> Tan, Paul Lee *Encyclopaedia Of 7700 Illustrations* p 1668

<sup>6</sup> Hewett, James S. *Illustrations Unlimited* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1988), p. 477.

<sup>7</sup> Wuest, Kenneth S. *Word Studies In The Greek New Testament* Vol 1, Ephesians and Colossians p 126

<sup>8</sup> O'Brien, Peter T. *Word Biblical Commentary: Colossians, Philemon* 241

<sup>9</sup> Tan, Paul Lee *Encyclopaedia Of 7700 Illustrations* p 1484

<sup>10</sup> Hewett, James S. *Illustrations Unlimited* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1988), p. 471.

<sup>11</sup> Flynn, Leslie B. *Come Alive With Illustrations* p 213