

Be Intentional with the Use of Time

Ephesians 5:15-16

Introduction:

Christ makes the maximum life possible!

In John 10:10, Jesus said, He “came that they (His sheep) may have life and have it abundantly.”

In recent studies, we have discovered what we are to do while living on Earth, the proper source for our values, the unique form and function God has given each person, the commitment to Christ that is needed, the mission, a vision, and some goals to help us reach our desired destination for eternal life, and there is more to come.

How will we have time to focus on all these improvements?

Stewardship is a biblical teaching.

Our time is our life.

How we spend our time is how we spend our life?

In some way, we will spend every minute we are given to live.

We have got to maximize our time.

Ephesians 5:15 and 16 was the requested reading for this lesson. [All the men who read are appreciated.]

Consider a few words of that reading closely.

“Therefore be careful (Lit. look carefully) how you walk (live, behave), not as unwise (or foolish) men but as wise (or skilled), making the most of your time, because the days are evil.”

The NASB says, “making the most of your time.” The NKJV has, “redeeming the time.” The ESV reads, “making the best use of the time.” The NIV says, “making the most of every opportunity.”

The same Greek phrase shows up in Colossians 4:5, “Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity.”

We are to live as wise people!

We are to apply the wisdom gained from a study of God’s word to the practical matters of conduct or living.

Jesus said, as recorded in Matthew 7:24, “Everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock.”

We must give constant care to walking in the teachings of God’s Word.

The Greek participle that is variously translated, means “to buy up for one’s self.”

The understanding by context is “to be wise in the use of every opportunity, because the days are evil.”

Evil abounds, opportunities to do good are aplenty, and time is ample.

All we can do with time is use it.

We must pay close attention to how we use our time.

William Boyd “Bill” Watterson II is the author of the Calvin and Hobbes comic strip.

In one of these cartoon drawings, Calvin turned to Hobbes and said, “God put me on earth to accomplish certain things. Right now, I’m so far behind, I’ll never die.”

Do we ever feel this way?

I. Symptoms of Mismatched Time

One symptom is messiness.

Organization requires investing a little time, but it pays huge dividends.

Do our lives show we are organized?

How do we take care of our home, our yard, and our vehicle? Are we able to keep up with things, or are we constantly losing them?

Is the way we keep up these things reminiscent of how our spiritual lives are organized?

When a job is complete, what do we do with all the tools?

My dad would say, "Clean up after yourself."

There is no telling how many times he told other people, "If you'd put things back where you got them from, they would be there the next time you needed them."

There is always much to do but being too busy can be a dangerous thing.

Disorganization causes more trouble than the momentary pleasure of laziness is worth.

Another symptom of mismatched time is forgotten appointments, messages, and deadlines.

These things occasionally happen to the most organized of people.

But for the disorganized, every day brings broken commitments, lame excuses, and a seared conscience to even care about missed responsibilities.

Client Baggett, a former High School principal, would say, "If you can't be on time, be early."

We should commit to giving God our best.

Lack of productivity is a symptom of mismatched time.

Do we find ourselves spinning our wheels?

Do we find ourselves doing small, boring, insignificant tasks at the end of the day so we can feel like we got something accomplished?

A compelling goal, as we discussed last week, will bless us with focus and drive.

We ought to keep an eye open for the next time to take a step toward a goal.

Credit to whom credit is due, "You can't finish if you don't start."

It is much easier to get started when we know what needs to be done now.

The better we manage our time the more productive we will become.

Poor or low self-esteem can be a symptom of mismatched time.

Disorganized people tend to feel poorly about their work.

Problems with the self-esteem of this nature can be both a cause and an effect, such that they become a vicious cycle.

Charlie Batch is credited with saying, "Proper Preparation Prevents Poor Performance."

A symptom of mismatched time is a poor quality of personal relationships.

Building significant relationships requires a lot of time.

How often are we engaged in significant conversation?

Many people need significant conversation the way they need hugs, gifts, time, acts of service, or affirmation.

From an unknown author comes a weak, but somewhat humorous pun: "The best vitamin for making friends is B1."

Messiness, forgotten appointments, messages, and deadlines, lack of productivity, poor or low self-esteem, or poor quality of personal relationships CAN be symptoms of mismanaged time.

Do these symptoms sound familiar? Some of them? All of them?

If you are experiencing these symptoms, seek help, because they are affecting your maximum life.

There are many more symptoms of mismanaged time, but one is particularly important, a lack of intimacy with God.

Disorganized Christians want to feel close to God, but they seldom do.

They already know they need more Bible study and prayer; they see they are not doing enough of the right disciplines for their relationship with God, and deep down they know they simply will not do the necessary things for a better relationship with God.

We must invest time in our relationship with God because James 4:8 instructs, “draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”

II. 7 Spiritual Laws for Good Stewardship of Time

Here are seven spiritual laws for good stewardship of time.

Take control of your time.

Parkinson’s Law is one of the most renowned rules of time management; it says, “Work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion.”

If we give ourselves a day to complete a task, most can be done in a day or less.

If we give ourselves a week to complete a day’s task, it will take all week to get it done.

Time must be budgeted.

As worded in the ESV, David wrote in Psalm 90:12, “Teach us to number our days, that we may get a heart of wisdom.”

If we knew how short our lives would be, we would spend our days seeking God’s wisdom.

One day we will give an account for how we spent our time.

We need to pay attention to God’s ways each day and appreciate the life we have been given.

Have you noticed how we give priority to scheduled events?

We will structure our whole day around important appointments.

Do we schedule our days around important goals that will glorify God?

Schedule time for what is most valuable; take control of your time.

Start with God.

1 Corinthians 10:31 reads, “whether then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

Luke 6:38 instructs, “Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over.”

This principle is not merely about money, we will never out-give God in anything.

God will not short-change our spiritual blessings if we invest in eternal matters while on earth!

Good budgeting of time will reveal extra time by more efficient use of time.

Plan your day around your goals.

Do not put things on a to-do list for the sake of staying busy.

Live a purpose-driven life; daily activities should reflect the goals we have.

1 Corinthians 9:24 asks, “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, BUT ONLY ONE RECEIVES THE PRIZE? Run in such a way that YOU MAY WIN.”

Paul followed this teaching, in verse 26, with his statement, “Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim.”

The ESV is clearer, “So I do not run aimlessly.”

Then, he penned, “I do not box as one beating the air.”

What is the aim of our day? What are we trying to accomplish? Are we setting out to win?

How can we take advantage of the opportunities of each day?

Plan the day around your goals.

Focus on the important over the urgent.

Yes, the urgent can often be important, but some things can wait, some things can be omitted.

Unfortunately, for most people, their days are filled with urgent but not important matters that are deceptive.

Paul was not talking about time in 1 Corinthians 10:23, but the principle is true; “all things are lawful, but not all things are profitable.”

Important matters should be done before not important matters, THEN the urgent versus the not urgent should be weighed in.

Dwight D. Eisenhower said, “What is urgent is seldom important and what is important is seldom urgent.”

To say “yes” to one thing, we are saying “no” to other things.

If we are not clear on what our priorities are, we will spend our whole day doing only good things.

Do not ignore important matters; your salvation is the most important and most urgent matter!

Spend time on your strengths.

The maximum life is largely predicated or founded on doing more of what we are shaped to do.

We should spend more time doing what we are good at.

“For we are [God’s] workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).

Are we doing what we have been created by God to do?

Budget time in advance.

Proverbs 21:5 coaches, “the plans of the diligent lead surely to advantage, But everyone who is hasty comes surely to poverty.”

If we do everything in haste, we are going to have problems.

We should be budgeting time for spiritual disciplines (like prayer, study, fellowship, worship, and ministry—service).

How much advance notice does secular work require?

How much advance notice should we require before altering spiritual disciplines?

Family time and relationships must be budgeted some time.

Work and even recreation time, as well as free time, should be budgeted.

Unscheduled free time can quickly take over a schedule.
We should be asking, when can I best make time for each undertaking or assignment?

Budget time in advance to control time, rather than letting time control you.
Busier does not mean better.
Being busy can keep us out of some trouble, but it may cause more significant problems.

Our behavior should not be determined by our schedule.
In Exodus 18, Moses was overworked and overstressed in overseeing the personal matters of the Israelites (v. 13).

Moses' father-in-law told him, "You will surely wear out, both yourself and these people who are with you, for the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone" (v. 18).

Jethro taught Moses to delegate because good time management lends itself to more effective activity, more involvement, more intentional acts of kindness, and more endurance (vv. 23-24).

Our schedules should be manageable, productive, and satisfying.

Application:

We all have just enough time to do God's will.

We must be intentional with our time, being good managers and stewards, who build our schedule around the goals, vision, and mission we have in life.

Conclusion:

Our Lord knew His purpose on the earth was to glorify and please God.

He knew His values came from God and His word.

Our Lord understood the form and function God gave Him, thus He lived in obedience.

Our Lord was committed to doing God's will.

He used goals to help Him reach His vision and mission.

Thus, our Lord was intentional with His time.

The Lord Jesus Christ wants everyone to be saved (Philippians 3:20) and have the abundant life (John 10:10).

Brothers and sisters, time is of the essence for us to fulfill our call to godly living.

"Knowing the time" our "salvation is nearer to us than when we believed" (Romans 13:11).

To have the maximum life Jesus wants us to have, we must listen to Him (Luke 10:16), believe in Him (John 11:25), repent of sin (Mark 1:15), confess Him (Matthew 10:32), be baptized into Him (Galatians 3:27), and live faithfully to Him (Galatians 2:20).

Be intentional with the use of this time and opportunity to "draw near to God."