

Personal Time Management

by

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Do you have enough time? If your answer is a resounding “NO!”, then you are identifying yourself with the vast majority of people today.

A recent survey dealing with this same topic revealed that only 1 in 100 thinks he has enough time to get done what he feels he needs to get done. When asked how much time they would need , 10 said 10%, 40 said 25%, and the remaining 50 said 50%!

In his book, *The Time Trap*, Alec Mackenzie points out that “time management is actually a misnomer.” “In fact,” states Mackenzie, “in the strict sense one does not manage time, for the minute hand is beyond our control. It moves relentlessly on. Time passes at a predetermined rate no matter what we do. It is a question not of managing the clock, but of managing ourselves with respect to the clock.”

A Biblical Basis

Approaching the subject from a biblical perspective, we first need to see that there is a clear biblical basis for the study and application of time management. Consider the following biblical statements:

“God is not a God of confusion. . .” (1 Cor. 14:33).

“All things must be done properly and in an orderly manner” (1 Cor. 14:40).

“For This reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains . . .”
(Titus 1:5).

From these verses alone we can see that living a godly life also involves living an orderly life which also involves the proper use of our time and other resources.

Our Lord was an expert in time management. How do I know? It’s simple. Look at what He says in His prayer to the Father in John 17:4,

“I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.”

Think of it. In just a little over three years He carried out the perfect plan of the Father – a plan that included presenting Himself to Israel as the promised Messiah; selecting and

training twelve men who, together with Himself, would become the foundation of the Church; accomplishing our salvation; ratifying the New Covenant, etc. And these things are just some of the accomplishments of His life and death. Had He not been an expert in time management, humanly speaking, it never would have gotten done!

And if Nehemiah had not been an expert in planning and time management, the walls of Jerusalem would never have been re-built in 52 days!

Facts about Time

There are certain laws about time. First, it cannot be stopped. When the Houston Rockets are in a tight game and they want to talk things over, they call a time out. At that point the clock stops. After a few minutes the official will blow his whistle and the clock will begin running again. But life is not like that. There are no time outs in life – the clock cannot be stopped!

Second, time cannot be stored. Money can be stored. Food can be stored. Many other material things can be stored. But time cannot be stored.

Third, time cannot be stretched. 24 hours is all there is! Every person has the same amount of time as anyone else – kings, nobles, or peasants.

We need to keep in mind, though, what Solomon tells us: *“To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven”* (Eccl. 3:1). Also, we must understand that God will judge our use of time: *“God shall judge the righteous and the wicked, for there shall be a time there for every purpose and for every work”* (Eccl. 3:17).

The Wise Use of Time

God tells us that we are to use our time wisely. Paul writes, *“Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity”* (Col. 4:5). In the parallel passage of Ephesians 5:15-16, he states it this way: *“Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.”*

The phrases *“conduct yourselves”* and *“be careful how you walk”* both refer to the manner in which we are to live our lives. Both are a reflection of wisdom. And both involve the use of time.

There are two Greek words that are usually translated as time in the English translations of the New Testament. One is *chronos*. It is the word from which the English word chronometer is derived. You and I know chronometer as “watch.” It is a device that measures quantity of time. *Kairos*, on the other hand, is the Greek word that emphasizes quality of time – or opportunity. In both passages the word *kairos* is used. Further, we are told to *“make the most of your time, because the days are evil.”* This emphasizes the fact that demands are being made upon our time -- demands that often take us away from “kingdom business.” To help me better understand the meaning of these verses, I wrote myself a paraphrase of them. It goes like this:

Since notable pressure is being brought against me to “spend my time” in non-beneficial ways, I must exercise great wisdom in choosing how I will use my time in order to accomplish my previously determined, biblically based objectives.

I trust that at this juncture we all agree that time management is not only biblically based, but is a divine mandate to us. The important question now is this: How do I manage myself with regard to time?

How to Manage Yourself with Regard to Time

There are five basic steps to personal time management:

1. Pray for wisdom. (James 1:5-7).
"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and he wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord."
2. Establish objectives.
 - a. We need to know where we are going, or any road will get us there!
 - b. Objectives must be ministry (your life) related.
 - 1). Others: meaningful involvement with family, neighbors, etc.
 - 2). Self: development and growth through increased knowledge of the Word, excellence in job skills, communication skills, and personal management (eating habits, exercise, sleep, etc.).
 - 3). Customary: things that are regular and recurring (household, church, job, etc.).
3. Pick the right activities.
 - a. Activities are the "steps" we plan to take to accomplish our objectives.
 - b. Remember that activity not related to an objective or goal may give one a "sense of accomplishment", but may not in fact be resulting in anything of substance.
4. Schedule the activities.
 - a. List your activities.
 - b. Assess priorities.
 - c. Ask if any are assignable.
 - d. Put the activities into your calendar.
 - 1). Select a "tool" that will do what you want it to do. That is, a mechanical means of scheduling your time.
 - 2). Computer software can be very helpful.

- e. Develop a good follow-up system for things you need to do in the future.
5. Follow your schedule.
- a. Be flexible (willing to make adjustments when it appears necessary -- and desirable to do so).
 - b. Avoid time wasters:
 - 1). Sleeping too much.
 - 2). Watching too much TV.
 - 3). Not planning evenings (especially after 8 p.m.).
 - 4). Talking too long with friends.
 - 5). Chronic visiting (in person or on the phone).
 - 6). Spending too much time on non-essential activities.

There are two vital principles to keep in mind:

- 1. Work tends to expand to fill the time available.
- 2. If you don't control your time, others will control it for you.

Here are some other helpful hints:

- 1. In every activity you do, ask yourself, "Why am I doing this? Is it getting me closer to my objectives?"
- 2. Force yourself to make decisions. Set deadlines for decisions if more thinking is needed.
- 3. Learn to say "no" to others and to yourself. Don't get involved in activities you don't have time to do.
- 4. Maintain a good, overall filing system. It will save a lot of time in looking for misplaced items.
- 5. Use your time twice. Listen to tapes while doing mechanical work or when traveling.