

Time Will Tell

By Daryl Wingerd

How do you spend your discretionary time? In other words, what do you choose to do when you are free to do anything you want?

Consider the Apostle Paul's instructions about the use of time:

Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. (Eph. 5:15-17)



Paul was not necessarily implying that Christians should spend less time sleeping, quit their jobs, stop pursuing an education, cease from maintaining their homes, or completely forego other activities such as physical exercise, recreation, bathing, or eating. His instruction simply directs believers to make the most of their time (literally, to “redeem the time”)—to use each moment for the best possible purpose.

We should remember that our time belongs to God, just as our financial and material resources are His. To use our time wastefully or unfaithfully is, as Paul says, “unwise” and “foolish.” With this in mind, we should not only be concerned about how we use the time we presently think of as “free,” but should also remain open to the possibility that the Lord would have us spend less time doing some of the things we presently consider “necessary.” To put it another way, perhaps we could spend less time doing the things which offer no promise of eternal reward, and more time doing the things directly connected to the advance of Christ's kingdom. For example, bodily exercise is important for maintaining physical health, but the Bible tells us that it is “of little value” when compared with the godliness produced by the spiritual disciplines of prayer, Bible study, fellowship, and so forth (1 Tim. 4:7-8).

Here are a few suggestions for making the most of the free time you have. Perhaps you will even be moved to create more free time by re-examining and re-prioritizing some of the activities you presently consider necessary.

Pray. You probably pray before meals or when you are gathered with the whole church, but when was the last time you spent a solid hour (or even thirty minutes) praying by yourself? When was the last time you found a place to be alone, or with your spouse, or with one or two other Christians—when you put away your schoolwork and hobbies, when you turned off your TV, computer, radio, and cell phone, and simply poured out your heart to God? When you consider the various

activities you have planned for today or later this week, which of them would God have you set aside for the purpose of spending time in prayer?

Study the Bible. Many Christians seem to find time for every other use of their free time (for example, social networking, surfing the internet, playing video games, watching TV, going to movies, shopping, or pursuing other interests and hobbies), yet they can't seem to find the time to delve deeply into the study of Scripture. This trend is even more puzzling when the Christian is a young person who lives at home with comparatively few responsibilities and a relatively large amount of free time. To finish the whole Bible takes the average reader about seventy hours, which amounts to 1/125th of a year (about twelve minutes each day). And yet many who say they love God and His Word have never even read through the Bible once. Do you not have one hour each day (1/24th of your time) or even thirty minutes (1/48th of your time) that could be redirected toward getting to know God better through studying His Word? Surely you have more time for this than you have been allowing.

Serve others. What needs are you aware of in your church? Are there elderly people or single mothers who need your companionship or your practical help around their home? Are there fatherless children (such as the children of divorce) who need someone besides their single parent to spend time mentoring them? Are there some who would benefit from spending an evening enjoying your hospitality, fellowship, and godly influence? How about serving your community in ways that would provide the context for evangelism? These would all be excellent ways to redeem the time.

Pursue important topics in conversation. Most people spend a significant amount of their free time in conversation with others, but how much of that time is essentially wasted on idle chatter or focused on frivolous or worldly topics? I'm not saying it is always a waste of time to talk with a friend about a shared hobby or interest. But discussing these kinds of topics is unarguably less profitable than discussing the great truths of God and the way they are (or should be) impacting your life. Why not arrange time with your spouse, your children, your Christian friends, or even a willing unbeliever, for the express purpose of discussing what you are learning in the Bible? For instance, why not use family meal time or lunch breaks at work for discussions about the Bible? Remember, the time you spend in conversation is not exempt from the words “make the most of your time.”

You have 168 hours in front of you this week, and as they say, “time will tell.” The way you use it will speak volumes about whether you are being wise or unwise—whether you are being foolish or walking according to the will of God.

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