

Time

Introduction

You've heard the phrase "Use it or Lose it". Sometimes it can be applied fairly loosely. But for the subject of this lesson, it is definitely use it or lose it. Today's lesson is about time. Time is an unusual topic, something that science can measure quite precisely, but in the end can't really tell you what it is. In this lesson, I'll focus more specifically on what the Bible says about using our time.

Give an Account

First a reminder about our lives.

Romans 14:10-12 10 But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. 11 For it is written, As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall give praise to God. 12 So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.

Each of us must give an account of ourselves. A sobering thought. What kind of answer we'll we give?

2 Corinthians 5:9-10 9 Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

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Time is Limited

Time is a gift from God that we have been given in a limited amount.

James 4:14 14 Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then we will vanishes away from this world.

Our time here is brief, we're here just a little while and then we'll vanish away. Some certainly will have more time than others, but all must give an answer.

Psalms 90:12 So teach us to number our days, That we may present to You a heart of wisdom.

Psalms 39:4 "Lord, make me to know my end And what is the extent of my days; Let me know how transient I am.

We need to learn to number our days to show a heart of wisdom. We have a limited amount of time and considering that, need to use it wisely.

Time

Steward

Romans 12:1-2 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Our time as Christians is not our own. We have chosen to present ourselves as living sacrifices. We need to be careful how we use God's time and not steal it back for ourselves.

Although we often use the following parable as telling how we should use the skills we've been given (although actually the talent referred to was a sum of money). I want us to look at it now as teaching us the importance of stewardship of what God has given us. Particularly, for this lesson, the time he has given us.

Matthew 25:14-30 "For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. 15 To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. 16 Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. 17 In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more. 18 But he who received the one talent went away, and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. 19 "Now after a long time the master of those slaves *came and *settled accounts with them. 20 The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, 'Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.' 21 His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your [c]master.' 22 "Also the one who had received the two talents came up and said, 'Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.' 23 His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.

24 And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. 25 And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours. 26 But his master answered and said to him, You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed. 27 Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. 28 Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents. 29 For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. 30 Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The servants were given varying amounts. So it is with the time God gives us. Some may live long lives, some have very short times on this Earth. Plus, even though we like to say "everyone has the same 24 hours in a day", even that isn't really the same. Does a single widow working two jobs to support children, really have the same time resources as a comfortably retired person. But the focus of the parable isn't really the quantity they were given. The focus was on what they actually did with what they were given. This is especially noted in that, at the end, each servant had to give an account of his stewardship. Take a moment to think how you've used your time. When you give an account of your stewardship, what kind of answer will it be. Will we be reduced to vain excuses for answers of how we used our time.

Time

Affects Others

Colossians 4:5-6 5 Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. 6 Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

We need to be careful with the time and opportunities given to us. A common old saying is that “opportunity only knocks once”. Every day we are around outsiders and need to conduct ourselves wisely. We need to be careful not to be so caught up in the things of this world that we fail to notice the opportunities around us. The consequences of how we use these often brief opportunities could have an eternal impact. Will an account of how we handled opportunities be a joy to deliver?

Romans 14:7-8 7 For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; 8 for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s.

How we use our time, affects not only ourselves but those around us. Yes, even when we still have time for Bible studies we can be depriving others. Consider how wasting time on facebook, youtube or computer games affects your families. Does someone in your family spend much of their time covering things you should be doing. Does that take away from time they should be spending on more spiritual tasks.

Use Wisely

We are particularly admonished to use our time wisely.

Ephesians 5:15-17 15 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, 16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil. 17 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

We need to make the most of our time. Most of us would certainly agree the days are evil (although we often seem to think our generation has been especially singled out). We need to understand what God’s will is. What does he want us to do, so that we do make the most of our time. With the world in the evil state it is in, we can see the great need for us to be a good influence upon it in whatever way we can.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven

Look back over your last week. What have you accomplished. Have you used the time wisely. Would you be happy to give an answer for how you used the last week.

Time

Idleness

One of the greatest dangers in using our time is idleness. It isn't that we used our time for some obviously evil purpose. Satan's often more devious approach is having us trade the valuable time we've been given for what is in effect nothing.

We'll look briefly at a series of verses to remind us of how God feels about idleness.

Proverbs 31:27 She looks well to the ways of her household, And does not eat the bread of idleness.

Ecclesiastes 10:18 Through indolence the rafters sag, and through slackness the house leaks.

Proverbs 12:24 The hand of the diligent will rule, But the slack hand will be put to forced labor.

Proverbs 12:27 A lazy man does not roast his prey, But the precious possession of a man is diligence.

Proverbs 15:19 The way of the lazy is as a hedge of thorns, But the path of the upright is a highway.

Proverbs 18:9 He also who is slack in his work Is brother to him who destroys.

1 Timothy 5:13 At the same time they also learn to be idle, as they go around from house to house; and not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper to mention.

A variety of ways to look at idleness, but all with the same conclusion. It is something we must avoid. What idleness has crept into your life? Television? Facebook? Naps? Sports? What spiritual return do you get from these activities? Will our answer as a steward be acceptable?

Matthew 21:18-19 18 Now in the morning, when He was returning to the city, He became hungry. 19 Seeing a lone fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it except leaves only; and He *said to it, "No longer shall there ever be any fruit from you." And at once the fig tree withered.

Failure to produce the expected fruit had very immediate results. "The fig tree withered". Why do you think this verse was put into the Bible? Is it a warning to us?

Doing, Not Just Saying

Matthew 21:28-31 28 "But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go work today in the vineyard.' 29 And he answered, 'I will not'; but afterward he regretted it and went. 30 The man came to the second and said the same thing; and he answered, 'I will, sir'; but he did not go. 31 Which of the two did the will of his father?" They *said, "The first." Jesus *said to them, "Truly I say to you that the tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before you.

We need to be careful to not just "talk a good game". It is easy for us to talk about what we're going to do. Even easy to make plans about what we're going to do. But which did the will of his father? Which are we?

Time

Are we doing the will of our Father or are we taking the path of just saying we are doing His will, but not getting around to really doing it.

Judges 18:9 They said, "Arise, and let us go up against them; for we have seen the land, and behold, it is very good. And will you sit still? Do not delay to go, to enter, to possess the land.

When we know what God wants us to do, why would we delay. Do we think he'll change his mind on what he's asked of us? God doesn't change. Don't delay. Do it!

Ease Up In Retirement?

We can easily be influenced by the world around us. Many of you may have heard an acquaintance say something like "I have X dollars in my IRA/401K, enough to last the rest of my life, I plan to retire and just take it easy, maybe travel some". The trouble is it sounds just a little too similar to a verse I remember.

Luke 12:19-20 19 And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry." 20 But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?'

Having enough material goods for the rest of our lives doesn't relieve us of our accountability of how we use our time. If retirement frees us from the day to day job responsibilities, we can realize that we've been blessed with much. But we remember the parable of the servants. The ones given much were able to return more. While we're on this Earth, we don't get to "take our ease". We remain accountable to God for our time. If we're blessed enough to be able to retire, What kind of answer will we give God for how we have used bountiful amounts of time?

Don't Spend Your Life Chasing Riches

The opposite direction also causes problems. Some are busy as can be, but aimed in the wrong direction. We have specific warnings about making riches our aim. First a verse to keep it all in perspective:

Matthew 16:24-26 24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. 25 For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. 26 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

What would YOU give for your soul? Are you making that trade without even really thinking about it?

1 Timothy 6:9 9 But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.

A serious warning. Notice that he doesn't say possibly or might, but gives it as a definite conclusion. If you make riches your goal, you will fall into temptation and snare. How are you spending your time? Is it leading you into temptations and snares?

Time

Leave Time For God and Meditating On His Word

We need to be careful to leave time for God in our lives.

James 4:13-17 13 Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.” 14 Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. 15 Instead, you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.” 16 But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. 17 Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.

We are inclined to make many plans. This verse gives the proper approach in making these plans, “If the Lord wills...” The plans were making for the future. Have we made them based on what the Lord wills, or are they based on what we want?

Sometimes in the quest to be efficient, we can leave our lives to be too busy.

Psalms 1:1-2 How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! 2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night.

Have you left time in your life to really meditate on God’s word?

Don’t Delay Doing What You Should Do

John 4:34-36 34 Jesus *said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work. 35 Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest. 36 Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.

The time is now. The fields are white for harvest. Start doing what God wants now!

2 Peter 3:8-9 8 But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. 9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

Yes, God is patient, not willing that any should perish. But time does eventually run out. When it does those who haven’t come to repentance WILL perish.

2 Corinthians 6:1-2 And working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain— 2 for He says, At the acceptable time I listened to you, And on the day of salvation I helped you. Behold, now is “the acceptable time,” behold, now is “the day of salvation”.

Now is the day of salvation. Now is the acceptable time. Make the decision today to do what God wills. If as a Christian, you haven’t been doing God’s will make that decision now to change. If, on the other hand, you haven’t yet made the decision to turn to God, follow his simple instructions, become obedient and be saved, now is the time. Don’t delay, eventually you can be sure time does run out.