

## ***Stewardship of Time Putting First things First***

*“making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.  
Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.*

**Ephesians 5:15-16**



**Make it count! Are you making the most of the time?**

- Are you always busy, but never quite able to get important things finished?
- Do you sometimes waste time in ways you cannot even remember?
- Do you neglect to fulfill important commitments and obligations?
- Do you have a hard time saying “no?”
- Do you tend to leave things for the last minute?

Which of these questions rings most true for you? (Choose one)

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***Do you make time for that which is important?***

*Note below one activity that if you were to do it with greater consistency it would radically improve your effectiveness in life.<sup>5</sup>*

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*Why do you not do it consistently? (Circle the appropriate answer below)*

I think it is not important --- I do not want to do it --- I don’t have time

Which did you circle? If you chose the third option, *this lesson is for you!* We neglect so many important activities in life because of our inability to appropriately manage our time.

***Our Goal is to consider ways to organize our time more effectively and wisely, in a way that reflects our mission statement and the priorities of the kingdom of God.***

***We consider...***

- *What it means to “steward” our time?*
- *How self control is critical in our ability to manage our time?*
- *How the urgent in life drives us, often at the expense of that which is truly important in God’s eyes.*
- *How to plan to do that which is truly important from an eternal perspective.*

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<sup>5</sup> Stephen Covey. Putting First things First.

## ***Self Control – The Key to Making the most of our time***

### ***Who is the captain of your boat?***

*Self control* demonstrates the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives. God is our supreme commander in life, but he commissions each of us to “*captain*” the ship of our individual lives. With the anointing of the Holy Spirit empowering us, we possess the holy duty to direct our own lives, planning how to use our time and resources to accomplish the mission God has given us.



### ***If we do not control our time – others will!***

*Without planning, we do not accomplish what we set out to do!*

How many of us know that “intentions” alone are insufficient – We must *execute!* -

<sup>13</sup> ...for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.  
**Philippians 2:13**

### ***Example: The discipline of prayer.***

We all want to pray. 99% of the time, we neglect to pray not for lack of desire or intention, but for lack of proper *organization*. *We do not pray because we do not plan prayer.* Can you say with certainty, *when and where you plan to pray during each day of this week?* If not, most likely by this time next week you will have prayed very little. One must *plan* when and where to do that which is important in life!

### ***We must “steward” our time – Our time is not our own!***

We do not “own” our time! God has graciously given us a certain number of hours and minutes to fulfill His calling in our lives. He will one day call us to account for how we used each moment – for good or ill!

### ***Wasting time = Wasting life***

Time is life. Each moment presents us with a holy decision: Will I use this moment to accomplish something of eternal significance? Will I use this moment to advance God’s kingdom and purposes in my life? Managing time well determines our “success” in every sense – spiritual, emotional and physical. If we fail to make the most of the time, we waste the “stuff” of our lives. *If we fail to plan, we plan to fail.*

## ***We all will give account for our use of time***



*“We have each been entrusted with sufficient time to do the whole will of God and to fill out His perfect plan for our lives.... The problem is not that of needing more time, but of making better use of the time we have. Let us face the fact squarely that each of us has as much time as anyone else in the world. The president of the United States of America has twenty-four hours to his day, and so have we. Others may have more ability, influence, or money than we, but they have no more time.... Although we cannot be held responsible for our capacity, we are responsible for the strategic employment of our time...”<sup>6</sup>*

This is to say, wasting time is sin!

## ***How do we invest our “free” time?***

*“After making a generous allowance of eight hours a day for sleep and rest – and few really need more than that – three hours a day for meals and social intercourse, ten hours a day for work and travel on five days, there still remain no fewer than thirty five hours unaccounted for in each week. What happens to them? How are the extra two days in the week invested? The whole of a man’s contribution to the kingdom of God might well turn upon how those crucial hours are employed. They will determine whether his life will be commonplace or extraordinary.”<sup>7</sup>*

## ***Full Time Christians – 100% for God! No “part-timers!”***

**Part Time Christianity** -- relegates God to the “religious” compartment of our lives.

***The part time Christian divides his or her time into compartments:***

1. Church activities ... *For God*
2. Work .... *To earn money*
3. Personal time.... *To fulfill my desires and be entertained*

***The part time Christian considers himself to be the master of his own time***

He says...

*After fulfilling my obligations to God through church related activities, and after fulfilling my responsibilities to my employer at work, I can use my time as I like. I ask myself, “What would I like to do with my free time?”*

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<sup>6</sup> J. Oswald Sanders. Spiritual Leadership, Moody Bible Institute, 1980, pp. 136-137.

<sup>7</sup> J. Oswald Sanders. Spiritual Leadership, Moody Bible Institute, 1980. p.139.

**Full time Christianity** – Use all my time, *whether at church, home or at work*, for God!

***The true disciple dedicates 100% of his time to God***

1. Church Activities... *For God*
2. Work .... *For God*
3. Personal time ...*for God*

***The radical disciple says...***

*I am a “full time” Christian. I do not own my own time. Whatever I do, whether serving in a church ministry, mowing the lawn, working at the computer, playing with my kids or taking a nap... it is all for God! The question I ask for every moment and every activity: What does God want me to do?*

***Sabbath Rest: Busy-ness is not next to Godliness!***

The Sabbath day of rest crowned the creation of the universe itself. God rested! Under the Old Covenant, God commanded his people also to observe a day of rest. While the New Covenant does not include obligations about the ceremonial observation of feasts, festivals and Sabbath days (Colossians 3:16-17), the writer of Hebrews explains that there remains a “Sabbath rest” for the people of God, found ultimately in a relationship with Jesus. By his ultimate sacrifice, we can be righteous before him apart from our own efforts. We can “rest” in his work on the cross. And yet the principle remains from the very creation of the world, that regular, cyclical rest honors God and cooperates with the rhythms of His creation.

If there is one thing that the story of Mary and Martha teaches, it is that holy “leisure” can and does honor God, when focused on Jesus. Especially urban, North American society glorifies a type of busy-ness which impoverishes our soul. Thanks to certain technological developments, we can be interrupted by the demands of our occupations at any time, in any place. We live tethered to our technology, quite literally. Observing “Sabbath” through moments, days, and entire seasons of rest and separation helps us to cultivate wonder and passion in our love for Christ. Such “holy leisure” honors God more than a compulsive drive to engage in constant, frenetic activity. When we cease striving, we recognize that the world spins apart from our own exertions and we remember who truly “makes things tick.”

***Busy-ness can distract us from our true mission. See Mark 1:35-39***

<sup>35</sup> Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. <sup>36</sup> Simon and his companions went to look for him, <sup>37</sup> and when they found him, they exclaimed: “Everyone is looking for you!”

<sup>38</sup> Jesus replied, “Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.” <sup>39</sup> So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

Jesus did not heal everyone! After healing Peter’s mother-in-law and hundreds of suffering people until late the previous evening, Jesus awoke early, before dark, to seek God in solitude and stillness. At daybreak Peter and the crowds found Jesus and demanded his attention. “Jesus, what are you doing here in the middle of nowhere, being so unproductive!? There are more people to be healed and everyone is looking for you!” Jesus calmly informed them that he needed to move on to the next town in order to fulfill the mission God had given him. This moment of solitude and stillness enabled him to reconnect with his calling before his father, and enable him to say “no” to the urgent, pressing needs around him.

As we will see in the analysis below, much of our busy-ness, even when doing something good and positive, can distract us from accomplishing God’s truly important purposes in our lives. We must discern that which is truly important for us to do in order to fulfill God’s purposes in our lives, and resist the temptation to respond instinctively to every urgency that clamors for our attention.

***How are you using your time?***

If we desire truly to live as a disciple, we must evaluate how we use our time. The graphic below, drawn from the work of Stephen Covey, helps us to analyze our use of time through four general categories of activity in terms of importance and urgency.

***Activities can be...***

1. Urgent and important
2. Important but not urgent
3. Urgent but not important
4. Not urgent and not important

Study these quadrants and ask yourself, Which quadrant best represents my life? How am I using my time?

## *How am I using my time – Four types of activity*<sup>8</sup>

- **Quadrant I** - That which is urgent and important
- **Quadrant II** - That which is not urgent, but is important
- **Quadrant III** - That which is urgent, but not important
- **Quadrant IV** - That which is neither urgent, nor important

<p><b><i>I. Urgent - Important</i></b></p> <p><i>This must be done – NOW!</i></p> <p>Emergencies Pressing Needs Imminent due dates Deathbed prayers</p> <p><i>Examples:</i> A sick child The car breaks down An exam for tomorrow The bills are due today</p>	<p><b><i>****II. Not Urgent - Important ****</i></b></p> <p><i>If you don't plan it, you won't do it</i></p> <p>Prevention of future problems Cultivating healthy relationships Taking time to listen to another person Sabbath Appropriate rest Continuing education Caring for health – (exercise) Personal and Spiritual growth Daily prayer and Bible study Studying for an exam next week Some recreational activities</p>
<p><b><i>III. Urgent – Not Important</i></b></p> <p><i>Saying “yes” to everything</i></p> <p>Interruptions Some phone calls, emails and texts Some meetings Some invitations Some commitments</p>	<p><b><i>IV. Not Urgent – Not Important</i></b></p> <p><i>Time wasters</i></p> <p>Meaningless tasks – done for appearances Some calls, emails and texts Some media – tv, radio, etc. Some internet surfing Unedifying or excessive entertainment and recreation Addictions and destructive behaviors</p>

<sup>8</sup> Stephen Covey, The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, p.151. (Adapted)

## ***Our Goal – Maximize Quadrant #2 – Why?***

***Quadrant I – Emergencies!*** Many emergencies can be prevented! Procrastination or poor planning results in many crises which could have been avoided. Through proper advance planning, ie. Level #2 behaviors, we can multiply peace and effectiveness.

***Quadrant III – Interruptions or Side-tracks*** - So many competing concerns clamor for our attention and energy. If we fail to discern that which is important, prioritize and place appropriate boundaries, then these pressing needs can drive our lives. We say “yes” to everything and find ourselves constantly busy without accomplishing God’s calling on our lives.

***Quadrant IV – Time Wasters*** - Many activities lack meaning. We lose ourselves before a screen!

### **Quadrant #1 - Urgent and Important -- Must be done NOW”!**

#### ***The Quadrant of Emergencies!***

##### ***Examples:***

- Exam tomorrow and I have to study!
- Christmas tomorrow and I have to buy presents!
- The car broke down and I have to get it fixed now!
- The bill is due and must be paid today!
- You are sick and must see a doctor right away!



##### ***What happens when we dwell in “the urgent?”***

- *We live in a constant state of emergency*
- *We neglect that which is important in order to attend to that which is pressing*
- *We find ourselves putting out fires without advancing in our life mission*
- *Anxiety and Stress produce an excess of adrenaline, resulting in health problems*
- *We cause some crises that could have been prevented*
- *We neglect prayer and scripture study in order to respond to constant emergencies*
- *We neglect our physical, spiritual and emotional health*

#### ***Procrastination – The sin of quadrant #1***

##### ***Examples***

- *You put off the oil change until the car breaks down*
- *You put off studying until the night before the exam, resulting in an all-nighter*
- *You don’t make time to exercise and eventually suffer preventable health problems*
- *You are too busy to spend time with family, and then when the kids experience problems, there is not a deep enough relationship to intervene effectively.*

***Planning – the key to moving the emergencies of quadrant #1 into the productive activities of quadrant #2***

Note down some emergencies in your life that could be avoided with better advance planning

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

***How to escape from quadrant #1? --- Advance planning!***

**Quadrant #3 – Urgent – Not important**

***The Quadrant of Distractions***

***Saying “yes” to everything! Always busy, but not productive!***



So many things clamor for our attention which are not truly important or significant.

***Examples***

- The phone rings and we answer automatically, regardless of what this call is interrupting
- A friend invites you out to a movie. You put off studying and go in order not to disappoint her.
- You agree to do certain favors for people in order not to offend them.

***What happens when we live in quadrant #3?***

***\*\*\* We say “no” to that which is truly important!\*\****

- We live with a short term mentality
- We depend too much on the opinions of others
- We neglect long term plans and goals
- We feel like a “victim” in life – out of control
- Important relationships suffer from neglect
- We neglect prayer and private study
- We neglect health and rest

**Question: *What if the “interruptions” are also “important?” Should we not be interruptible to some extent?***

Yes! In one instance, Jesus was pushing through a crowd to get to the home of a synagogue ruler and heal his daughter before it was too late. Yet he paused in the crowd to look for a woman who had touched him in faith and been healed. Then, as if he had all the time in the world, he listened to her story and expressed love for her. He allowed himself to be “interruptible,” even when responding to crises! And yet at other times he said “no” to pressing needs in order to fulfill his overall mission.

More often than not, urgency that clamors for our attention is not frivolous, but important in its own right. One must learn to discern *God’s will* amidst the many important things we can do!

### ***Lack of Boundaries – The sin of quadrant #3!***

***“People Pleasing”*** -- We desperately want to avoid disappointing others, so we make promises we cannot fulfill. We react to the demands of others and scramble to fulfill their expectations.

#### ***Example:***

- Someone invites you to an activity and you say “yes,” and as a result skip your prayer time.
- The phone rings during play time with you son, and you answer rather than giving your undivided attention to your son.

Note below some of the “distractions which clamor for your attention.”

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

***How to escape Quadrant #3 --- Discern God’s will and say “no” to distractions***

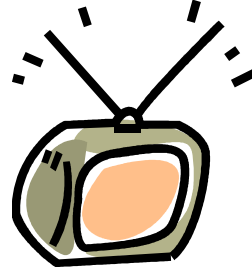
## Quadrant #4 – Not Urgent and Not Important

### *The Quadrant of the “Couch Potato”*

**Time Wasters – Unproductive Activity** Many activities can be healthy and constructive in moderation, but when done in excess, become useless or even counter-productive. The key phrase - “*too much.*”

#### **Examples**

- Sleep too much
- Watch TV, movies or sports too much
- Surf the Net too much
- Talk on the phone too much
- Face book too much
- Hang out in the mall or the gym too much
- Take drugs or alcohol



#### **What happens when we dwell in Quadrant #4?**

- Irresponsibility in life
- Fired from jobs
- Debt
- Dependency on others for our provision
- Neglect of emotional, physical and spiritual health

**Why do we waste time in that which has no eternal significance?**

#### ***Laziness -- “counterfeit rest” – The sin of Quadrant #4***

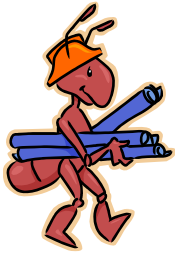
Sleeping, resting, or engaging in leisure activities can honor God when done wisely, with an appropriate theology of Sabbath. When we focus these activities on God we experience “*re-creation*” in our “*recreation.*” True rest energizes us to love God and our neighbor, fulfilling our mission. Counterfeit rest through excessive or unedifying leisure activity dulls our soul, body and spirit. Wisdom will enable us to balance our lifestyle in a way that discerns restorative leisure from time-wasting activity.

What are some unfruitful activities that consume your time? Note them below.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**– How to escape from quadrant #4 --- ;Define your life mission!**

- Avoid activities which do not advance this mission



## Quadrant #2 – Important but not Urgent Stewardship of Time *The Quadrant of Planning*



*We are called to be responsible in life without being “forced”*

*‘ Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! ’ It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, <sup>8</sup> yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest. <sup>9</sup> How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? <sup>10</sup> A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest— <sup>11</sup> and poverty will come on you like a thief and scarcity like an armed man. **Proverbs 6:6-11***

What do we learn from the ant?

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### *Examples of Responsible use of time*

- Preparing for due dates in advance, and not under pressure
- Taking a Discipleship class!
- Caring for health (before a health crisis)
- Investing in relationships (family, friends, co-workers)
- Praying and reading scripture
- Learning new skills and information
- Observing “Sabbath” rest for personal renewal
- Appropriate sleep
- Setting aside time to plan – both short term and long term

### *What happens when we live in quadrant #2?*

- We cultivate self discipline and self control
- We cultivate emotional, physical and spiritual health
- We feel greater control in life
- We avoid certain crises and are more prepared for genuine ones
- We fulfill professional goals

Note down one important activity in your life that you would like to do with greater regularity.

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### *How we can maximize Quadrant #2*

1. *Define and Refine what is important – your life mission*
2. *Say “no” to distractions (and be willing to disappoint others)*
3. *Discern restorative leisure that reflects the theology of “sabbath.”*
4. *Plan, plan, plan and plan what is important*

## Planning Exercise

*We will do an exercise to develop this discipline, focusing on one specific quadrant #2 activity:*

- 1. Identify one important goal for your life*
- 2. Identify one particular activity that will further this goal*
- 3. Plan when you will do this one important activity*

### **1. Step One – *Identify a personal goal* -**

Note below a personal goal you have (Use your Personal Mission Statement)

*Examples* - Be a good father;  
Be a man of prayer

A Personal Goal you have - \_\_\_\_\_

### **2. Step Two – *Identify an Activity to further this goal***

Using the goal mentioned above, note one important activity that will help you achieve it.

*Example #1 - Goal – Be a good father*  
*Activity – Family Time – spend time playing with my kids*

*Example #2 – Goal – Be a man of prayer*  
*Activity -- Daily prayer times*

Your Personal Goal - \_\_\_\_\_.

Activity -- \_\_\_\_\_

### **Step Three - *Plan it! If we don't plan it, we won't do it!***



### 3. Step Three – Plan one activity to help achieve your goal

*Example: When will I spend time with my family?*

<i>Mon.</i>	<i>Tues.</i>	<i>Wed.</i>	<i>Thurs.</i>	<i>Fri.</i>	<i>Sat.</i>	<i>Sun.</i>
						Attend church as a family 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon
					Family Time 1:00 p.m. on...	
Family Time at night after work	Family Time at night after work	Dinner with family before service 5:30 – 6:30 p.m.	Family Time at night after work	Dinner with family before cell group 5:30-6:30 p.m.	Family Time at night	Family Time at night



***Plan it! Do it!***



***Plan one important activity!***

***Plan it! Do it!***

*Using this Calendar – Plan when you will do the important activity you have identified.*

<b><i>Mon.</i></b>	<b><i>Tues.</i></b>	<b><i>Wed.</i></b>	<b><i>Thurs.</i></b>	<b><i>Fri.</i></b>	<b><i>Sat.</i></b>	<b><i>Sun.</i></b>
a.m.						
afternoon						
night						

***Assignment -- Bring your calendar to the next class.***

***Prayer of Repentance – Let’s pray together...***

*Lord forgive me for the sin of procrastination.*

*Many times I put off that which is important and end up paying the price.*

*Help me to plan ahead!*

*Lord forgive me for seeking the approval of others rather than yours at times!*

*Teach me to say “no” when I feel you want me to!*

*Lord forgive me for laziness – for wasting my time in activities which do not edify me or others.*

*Help me to rest wisely and well! Help me to stay focused on my mission in life!*

*Help me Lord, to live every hour for you, wisely, fulfilling your will for my life. I want to be a faithful steward before you!! Help me make every moment count!*

*Amen.*

