

Investing Time Wisely

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

INTRODUCTION:

Lesson Text: **Ecclesiastes 3:1-8** – “To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven:

- A time to be born, And a time to die;
- A time to plant, And a time to pluck what is planted;
- A time to kill, And a time to heal;
- A time to break down, And a time to build up;
- A time to weep, And a time to laugh;
- A time to mourn, And a time to dance;
- A time to cast away stones, And a time to gather stones;
- A time to embrace, And a time to refrain from embracing;
- A time to gain, And a time to lose;
- A time to keep, And a time to throw away;
- A time to tear, And a time to sew;
- A time to keep silence, And a time to speak;
- A time to love, And a time to hate;
- A time of war, And a time of peace. ”

The Bible teaches that time is important. Good time management techniques will save a person at least an hour a day, probably two but the real question is, “What will you do with those extra two hours?” Take on another project and get frantic all over again? All around us we see frazzled parents, exhausted workers, and families juggling multiple hectic schedules.

England’s Buckinghamshire has a topiary boxwood hedge made into a living sundial. In a sense, each one of us is like that—a living time-piece. Life records the passing of the years on our faces and in our

bodies. It passes too quickly to waste any portion of it. To make the most of our time, we must use each day for good purposes.

The chances are that what we do today is a good summary of what we will do this week; what we do this week would be typical of what we do this month; what we do this month is about what we will do this year; and what we do this year is a good sample of what we will do this decade.

Thus, what we do with a day is important. If I want to change my life, I must change my today. If is all I have to work with. What should we be sure to include in each day? What bases should we make sure to cover?

WE MUST MAKE TIME FOR GOD

True time management starts with seeking God first (Matthew 6:33) and setting our affections on things above (Colossians 3:1-2). The average person spends forty-eight minutes a week in a religious or spiritual activity. Seven minutes a day is not enough! Just attending the four week-public church services would average 34 minutes a day. We should never be too busy, pressured, or tired to give God His due. God manages the whole world, and He is never too busy for us. (Matthew 13:22; Luke 10:40-41; Philippians 4:6). Since “the LORD is in his holy temple,” we should “keep silence before him” (Habakkuk 2:20). He commanded, “Be still, and know that I am God” (**Psalm 46:10**).

Mark Littleton asked, “Are all the activities that scream for my time really essential? Am I missing the burning bush for trying to keep the lawn cut’?” We cannot do everything we want to do, but we can do the important things that God expects us to do. We can make time to read the Bible and pray; we can make time to teach our families God’s Word; we can make time to praise God for His goodness; we can make time to teach sinners the way of salvation; we can make time to help those in need.

WE MUST MAKE TIME FOR CHURCH ACTIVITIES

Less than half of Americans attended any church services last Sunday (last year the figure averaged 43 percent). Some excuse

themselves by saying they don't have time. All of us, without exception, have 168 hours in each week. The 10 percent stewardship principle most try to use in financial giving can be applied to time too. Could we not give God 10 percent of our time? That would be about 17 hours (16.8) per week. If we allow five hours for church assemblies, allowing a few minutes for visiting before and after (Hebrews 10:25), then we would still have an hour a day for Bible study, meditation, and prayer (Psalm 1:1-2). With the remaining five hours, we could visit the sick and shut-in, participate in various service groups within the church (e.g., young adults, singles program, seniors activities), attend area singings and gospel meetings, and still have time to set up studies to teach others the truth (Mark 16:15). It is easy to look at someone else at a different stage of and say, "They have more time to go to church than I do." Actually, we all have enough discretionary time to attend—if we choose to do so. As we begin to incorporate a time-saving approach into our lives, let us set aside some time for church activities.

WE MUST MAKE TIME FOR FAMILY

Peter Lynch, former manager of the Magellan Fund, left his job in 1990 to devote time to his family and his favorite Boston charities. He was 46, the age his father was when he died. At the time, Lynch said, "Nobody on his deathbed ever said: 'I wish I'd spent more time at the office.'" It is possible to heap up riches and know "not who shall gather them" (**Psalm 39:6**; cf. Luke 12:20-21).

Our time with our mates is short (1 Corinthians 7:29), even if we reach the golden anniversary. It is even shorter with our children, since they will likely have their own children by the time we get firmly established in our careers. It takes time to dwell with a spouse "according to knowledge" (**1 Peter 3:7**) and to nurture and admonish children (Ephesians 6:4). One survey found that an average father spends twenty-eight minutes a week in conversation or teaching his child. Four minutes a day is hardly enough to say a bedtime prayer—much less teach the child about God and how to live in His world. It takes time to care for aging parents and to attend family events

(1 Timothy 5:16; cf. John 2), but let us make time today and avoid any regrets tomorrow.

WE MUST MAKE TIME FOR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT/REVITALIZATION

Isaac took time by himself to meditate in a field (Genesis 24:63). David learned to use a sling, a harp, and a bow on those lonely hillsides watching his father's ewes (1 Samuel). Paul wrote letters to encourage churches, while he was locked in a prison cell (Ephesians; Philippians).

Jesus developed in wisdom, stature, favor with God, and favor with man as a boy in Nazareth (Luke 2:52). As an adult, He tried to keep a low profile at times (Mark 1:45), and at least once attempted to give the crowd a slip in order to have some time to Himself (John 6:1), but they caught up to Him (6:2). Jesus encouraged His disciples, "Come ye apart into a desert place, and rest a while," because people were making too many demands on them "there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat" (Mark 6:31). He must have noticed them "browning" (on the way to "burning") out. If it takes putting your personal time on your calendar to make room for it, then do so. You can tell others that you have an appointment at 7:00 P.M.

During your personal time, pursue a hobby. Read a novel or a favorite magazine. Go to the gym or tennis court with a friend. Share an afternoon at a museum with your child. Watch a movie or a sports event with your wife. Go for a run at the track, a walk in the woods, a jog in a park, or a ride in a boat. Plant something in your garden, or build something in your workshop. Mow your grass, trim your shrubs, or wash your car. Do something that is the opposite of work for you. (Provided it is wholesome, others do not have to understand.) Find something that relieves tension and/or makes you a more complete person.

Depending on your personality, this may seem like wasting time. If not kept within specified limits, it would be, but no one can work all waking hours for an extended period without negative results. One

study found that executives who did not fill every single time block—in other words, those who took time for themselves—were more productive. So pace yourself. Life is a twenty-six mile marathon, not a hundred-yard dash. Have an “on/off switch.” When you work, work. When you relax, relax. Focus completely on one task at a time. Don’t try to relax while you work or work while you relax. If you do so, you will do neither very well.

WE MUST MAKE TIME FOR CAREER! EDUCATION

Students often do less than their best because they focus on “EC” (extra-curricular) the first twenty-four weeks of a semester and “LMC” (last-minute cramming) the last two. By setting a time goal of studying an hour or two a day, they could have had plenty of time for social functions, made better grades, and been far better prepared for life “AC” (after college).

Most adults have career-related ambitions. We want to make a larger salary to better support our families or do more good for God. We want to master a craft or develop new skills. We want to own our own business or manage another’s company. By visualizing where we want to be, praying for God’s will to be done, and budgeting time daily to take the steps to get there, it may be within our 10- or 20-year reach.

Forbes magazine researched the subject of success and failure and found that the number one factor for success was good time management. What is true in the business community is also true among Christians seeking spiritual maturity. “Time is such a powerful force that it is given to us only in small doses.” Use today’s portion wisely.

God’s Plan for Man’s Salvation