

*“Whole Life Stewardship”**Pastor Randy Orndorff**“Using My Time Wisely”**Sep 30, 2018*

Key Texts: Ecclesiastes 3:1-14

I. Introduction: From Distractions To What Truly Matters

Why is it important for us to consider using our time wisely? Because God knows there are oodles of things in life that can distract us from what truly matters.

A number of weeks ago we used this same passage of scripture to talk about “Getting Unstuck from an Unbalanced Life” and to recognize we are all going to go through different seasons of life and to not get caught up in living in one season. Today we get a little more specific and bring it from seasons to how you and I are using our time each week and each day. In using our time wisely, how are we, as Paul says in both Colossians 4 and Ephesians 5, “making the most of every opportunity” that God gives us. Is our speech always full of grace, seasoned with salt—in other words, flavored with kindness, respect, and care, especially toward those we don’t know? (v 5-6)

Paul says in the Ephesians letter. “Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.” As we understand and do God’s will we are way more likely to be using our time wisely, versus doing our own thing. Paul follows up. “Don’t be drunk on wine which leads to debauchery—which is excessive indulgence in sensual pleasures; instead be filled with the Spirit.” (vs 15-18) Living a sinful life is not a good use of the time God gives us, though that’s the battle isn’t it? Making the most of the time we have or wasting away the time we have.

Paul in Romans 13:11 tells us, “Understand the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber....”

II. Whole Life Stewards and Time’s Place

If we are to practice Whole Life Stewardship and become wise managers of all God has given to us, thinking about and managing our time has to be a big piece of that puzzle. If we become more intentional and focused we won’t tend to squander away time and, because of idleness, tend to fall into bad habits or into sin that separates us from God and family, and snatches the joy of life away from us.

Paul follows his “time to wake us from our slumber” message by saying “the night is nearly over, the day is almost here, let’s put aside our deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light”. (v 12)

That’s what we are called to do as disciples of Christ. So, how are you using the hours in your day? How are you using the minutes in your day? We get 24 hours a day, that’s 1,440 minutes a day, 86,400 seconds a day.

What fills a typical day for most people? And one thing I hope we can think about is how can we move from merely existing to truly living.

We sleep--7-8 hours,

Work—8 hours,

Exercise/Play—1 hour,

Eat—2 hours,

Watch TV/Attend sports events—2 hours,

Devotions/Prayer—10 to 15 minutes,

Spend time with friends/family—Maybe eating/playing—1 hour,

Planning your day/month—10 minutes—but how important is it to plan your day or month if you and I are going to use our time wisely? Know what I did on our flight to hike Mt. Whitney? Spent 4 hours planning for the next 6 months.

Rest—1 hour—everyone needs a little time to rest. To get up from your desk and walk a bit, or catch a short cat nap, or even a Sunday afternoon nap.

III. The Issue of Sabbath Rest

And how about Sabbath Rest? Is that part of how you are using your time wisely? Does Sabbath even factor into that equation, or that planning? Six days God created. On the seventh God rested, and we are given those same instructions. “To honor the Sabbath and keep it holy” (Ex 20:8). Jesus said, “Don’t get legalistic about that”. If your donkey, or car, or truck or RV gets stuck in a ditch or creek don’t leave it there. Get it out!

We’ve learned in Disciple Bible Study that Sabbath does not mean sitting around doing nothing. Even our Jewish friends start Sabbath—Friday night dinner, with Shabbat with a family meal around candles, food, wine. Sabbath can include time for worship and prayer, time with family and friends, recreational activities, arts and crafts, visiting with family, friends and neighbors. Just try to refrain from working. Rest! God did. God does. Do things that fill you up and replenish your soul.

Bake cookies or bread, do puzzles, read a book. Don’t just get mad at the Redskins, Nationals or your favorite sports team on Sunday. It’s a game! But, oh the emotions that can get wrapped up in a game! Trust me, I know. I sit next to my wife watching football!

Practicing Sabbath gives us time to rest, worship, relate, reflect, develop relationships with God and others. If we do not think about this, Sabbath will get away from us and then important pieces of our lives lose focus and begin to fall apart. We get into a rut. That happens until it is either too late or we recognize we have to get back to the basics of life.

IV. Being Intentional In How We Use Our Time

What can you or I do to be more intentional about how we use our time? I normally take time Saturday evening to think about my coming week or month. I have a calendar and plot in details related to worship, work, time with family/friends, appointments, building ministry teams, time for exercise, haircuts, doctor appointments, time off and time for vacations. If I did not take some time to plan, then in all likelihood, I’d be planning to fail. I liken this to Financial Peace University. If you are in debt and it cripples you, you will never get out of debt until you have a plan. Most people who develop a plan and stick with the plan can get out of debt. And do you know what happens when you get out of debt? It will tend to lift the burden and give you more time that can be used for the more important things in life because you are not killing yourself working all the time to make money to pay the bills.

V. Dealing With the Unexpected

Let’s also think about those times when we have it all planned out and we get a phone call about a family member or friend’s illness, or separation, or situation with a child. That tends to cause us to alter “our” plans, right? That’s where we have to learn to adjust, be flexible, not to react, but to respond. I just think if we have thought through our week and month that when unexpected things happen we can respond more with grace and not so much with anxiety and angst.

And when it comes to all kinds of unplanned requests that can come up each day. Things that can be distractions, and in the workplace—productivity killers, here is a way to evaluate them.

1. **Does this need to be done at all?** Does this need to be done at all? Some things you may need to learn to say “no” to. This is as important as the things you know you need to say “yes” to and work on.
2. **Am I the only one who can do this?** Ask yourself, “Am I the only person who can do this?” It’s ok to learn to delegate. Moses’ father-in-law, Jethro, comes straight out and tells him what he is doing to try to care for the people was wrong and harming them and besides you’ll kill yourself if you don’t learn to train people and delegate the responsibility. And what I’ve learned, even though I’ve been criticized for sending someone else, is that I hog up all the blessings if I try to do it all. People in the world don’t get this. They think they are getting second best if the lead pastor doesn’t show up. That’s not fair to the pastor, associate, or retired pastors, Stephen Ministers, small group leaders, or church family who care.

If any one of us tries to please everyone we will not have, at the end of the day, used our time wisely, we will not have shared ministry, and people will feel less cared for. None of us can just keep adding to our plate and being good stewards of how we manage our time and lives.

Moses was told to handle the more weightier matters.

3. **How urgent is this?** Ask yourself, how urgent is the task or the request? This helps you determine priorities. Some “urgent” requests may not need to go into your “urgent, got to go meet that need right” now list.

And then again, it might. You just have to ask that question and evaluate it.

Think of Queen Esther. She was one the king’s wives. One of the king’s men was upset with her cousin, Mordecai, who would not bow down to him. This ends up jeopardizing the fate of the whole Jewish people with a plan to kill them all.

Mordecai speaks to Esther who has become one of King Xerxes’ wives and he urges her to go before the king, (at the risk of her own life because the king was to call on you, not you on him) and to beseech the king not to destroy her people, the Jews. And Mordecai asks this very profound and timely question of Esther.

“If you remain silent (and do nothing) relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14)

There are times, moments, when we need to step up and do something because the urgency of the moment and situation calls us to respond now. We might ask of ourselves as a church family “What is it God has brought us to in this moment in time?” That will be our discussion today at 4 at our Town Hall. What will the future of Culpeper UMC be? Congregants in the past have asked, “What is it you want us to do here, God?” What place have you brought us to? Is this our time to do something for Your Kingdom? Your people? Our children, our youth, our older adults? Our families? Are our families in danger from culture’s influence, our culture’s politics? I recently saw

140 children in Germany held a protest because their parents spent more time on their cell phones than they spend playing with their kids. Good for the kids!

VI. Managing Your Time Today and in the Times Ahead

What are you going to do with the time God gives you? If you have used your time unwisely in the past, that's the past. Don't spend too much time there. Ask God to forgive you and make a new plan from this day forward.

I'm kinda driven by the words of Psalm 90:12 "Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."

As stewards we are called by God to wake up from our slumber, use our time wisely and for eternal good. What small step can you or I take towards being better stewards of what God has given us today?

With our resources, our relationships, in our work week, with our calling and life's purpose and with this most precious gift—how we manage and use our time each and every day. Time may or may not be on our side. What I know is "God has made everything beautiful in its time." Take some time to think and pray about how you are making wise use of the time God has given you.

VII. Closing Prayer

Let us Pray:

God, thank you that time is in your hands. Teach us to be wise in how we use our time. Help us think seriously about that, so we are investing our time and energy and influence in to the things that really matter in life. Forgive us when we idle time away, often leading us into sin and dark places. Forgive us when we fail to take Sabbath seriously. Help us learn to not over commit or under commit. Help us awaken from our slumber and set our lives, our focus, on You. Help us realize, and recognize, that our time on this earth is indeed a gift from you, and that, yes, each of us has been born for something. Born for such a time as this.

In Jesus' Name,

Amen.