

The Time of Your Life

Lesson One

More and more in life, the faster life moves along, we are feeling like chickens with their heads cut off. You've seen that haven't you? The headless chicken runs all over the place fast and furious, accomplishing nothing, and then drops over dead.

Question: What was the chicken missing?

Regarding our time management, what are we missing?

Recently, my daughter Shannon said, "Daddy, I wish we could have more time together." That statement instantly gave me motivation for examining and improving my time management principles.

A college professor once clarified the issue simply:

"We all have the same number of hours per day, whether we are the President of the United States or an inmate in a penitentiary. It is not the amount of time that is the issue. It is the way you use it."¹

The value of this time management study is that it will force us into difficult choices that will add purpose and priority to our use of time.

Our theme verse: Ephesians 5:16 *Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*

Take a few moments now to memorize that verse.

The question we must answer is this: How can we manage our time so that we can have the time of our life?

Our goal: Determine what the Bible says about time management and develop strategies to implement that truth.

We will develop for strategies for the time of our life.

Strategy Number One

I. Prepare your heart

(Prov 16:1) *The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD.*

(Prov 4:23) *Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.*

¹Ken Smith, *It's About Time*, (Wheaton, Illinois, Crossway Books, 1992), xiii

Abraham Lincoln said in 1858, “If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could better judge what to do and how to do it.”

What do we mean by “prepare your heart.”

To prepare the heart means that you settle on a “mission statement” for the day.
The more easily comprehended the better.

Which of these questions best addresses mission?

*What am I doing?

*What am I doing right?

*What am I getting done?

Do you remember the old program called “Mission impossible.” The agents would find a quiet place, listen to the tape, and hear, “Your assignment is... this tape will self destruct in thirty seconds.”

Your mission statement for the day then is what God wants you to get done that day!

How do I gain clear picture of what God wants me to get done?

(Mark 1:35) *And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.*

(Mark 1:36) *And Simon and they that were with him followed after him.*

(Mark 1:37) *And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee.*

Peter urges the Lord to hurry back, there was much to do that day, many people needed him.

(Mark 1:38) *And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth.*

What did Christ gain in that early morning prayer session?

A mission statement for his day! That mission statement kept him from hurry, stress, and distractions.

(Mat 6:33) *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

In order to determine your mission statement from God each day, we will need to ask ourselves two questions:

1. Am I listening to God’s voice today? Am I listening to what God has for me to do today?

2. Am I obedient to God's voice today? Am I willing to adjust and do what God has for me today?

(James 1:22) *But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*

(James 1:25) *But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.*

Ken Smith has a book on time management called, *It's About Time*. He starts with a chapter on obedience. Why would he start with obedience in a time management book? His starting point for time management is summed up in one statement: "The bottom line is obedience."²

Apply these suggestions for discovering your mission statement for the day.

1. Start your day with God – 45 second prayer
2. Do whatever is necessary to be awake and alert. (Coffee, Cold water on the face, etc.)
3. Invest **ten minutes** in Basic Devotional Bible Reading
4. Focus your attention for **ten minutes** of prayer – Adoration, Agreement, Asking
5. Meditate for **ten minutes** on God's plan for your day.
 - Listen quietly for the Holy Spirit's prompting
 - It may have nothing to do with work for that day.
 - It may have something to do with what you have just read, or prayed over.
 - It may be low on your priority list, but high on God's priority list.
 - It may be something God has prompted you to place on your priority list (yet to be addressed).
6. In your notebook or journal which you keep with you throughout the day, write out your mission statement for the day.

God's mission for me today is _____

You will discover several benefits for having a mission statement for your day:

1. You will find Focus – purpose for the day.

²Ibid., xvi

2. You are relieved of the stress of not getting everything else done in that day.

“The ultimate reward for obedience on this side of eternity is what the Bible calls “the peace... which transcends all understanding” (Philippians 4:7) I call it ‘freedom from anxiety.’ I’m not going to tell you that I will face everything in the future without anxiety, but I can tell you that since I began to identify and practice (heart preparation principles) I have been totally free from anxiety – and that has been more than fifteen years. This comes from a person who once thought he had an obligation to worry, and if I had nothing else to worry about, I’d worry that there was nothing to worry about.”³

3. You will find that distractions no longer pull you completely off course.

4. You will have a sense of accomplishment.

5. You will insure that the urgent does not replace the important.

Watch out for the mission limiters.

What limits your ability to prepare your heart?

(Consider these limiters: Fatigue... newspaper... T.V. Children... work)

“If my private world is in order, it will be because I am convinced that the inner world of the spiritual must govern the outer world of activity.” Gordon McDonald

Commitment:

I will, with God’s help, spend at least _____ minutes in heart preparation five days per week.

I will begin this discipline on _____.

Assignment:

1. Purchase a loose leaf calendar notebook to which you can add pages.

2. Add a section in your notebook for:

*10 minute devotional insights (verses or thoughts impressed upon your heart by God).

*Prayer Journal as described above.

*Develop a section to write your daily mission statement (probably coinciding with your calendar).

2. Establish your heart preparation routine.

³Ibid, xvi.

Time of your Life

Lesson Two

Review:

Prepare the heart

(Prov 16:1) *The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD.*

(Prov 4:23) *Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.*

Your objective in heart preparation is to identify your _____ for the day.

If I get nothing else done in this day, it will be a success if my mission is fulfilled!

Ten minutes in Bible reading

Ten minutes in Prayer

Ten minutes in meditation, looking for your mission statement.

While you are meditating... Relax!

What does relax mean? Look up the definition of relax in your dictionary. Apply that definition to the worries and concerns you have. Let Biblical meditation release the stress of our American anxious lifestyle.

In sports, in music, in driving, learning to relax is absolutely essential!

The same is true of the productive Christian life.

Strategy Number Two

II. Plan your mission

“The man who plans knows where he is going, knows what progress he is making and has a pretty good idea when he will arrive. Planning is the open road to your destination. If you don’t know where you are going, how can you expect to get there?” Basil S. Walsh

“People don’t plan to fail. They just fail to plan.”

Suggestion:

Set aside 1 hour a week 1 afternoon a month 1 week a year designated for planning.

What should you plan?

A. Plan your projects

Project – Specific responsibilities that address your mission.

You should develop a long range mission. You will need to develop the habit of focusing on a

daily mission as well.

Your projects then should help you accomplish your daily mission statement.

When establishing projects we need to ask our self an important question.

Are we driven or led?

Are you driven by a

Fear

need to please

desire to succeed

accomplishment that will boost your “self esteem.”

Or, are you led by the Spirit?

A great resource for time management principles is the book *Ordering Your Private World* by Gordon MacDonald (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson).

MacDonald lists several symptoms of a “driven person.”

1. A driven person is most often gratified only by accomplishment.
2. A driven person is preoccupied with the symbols of accomplishment.
3. A driven person is usually caught in the uncontrolled pursuit of expansion.
4. Driven people tend to have a limited regard for integrity.
5. Driven people often possess limited or undeveloped people skills.
6. Driven people tend to be highly competitive.
7. A driven person often possesses a volcanic force of anger.
8. Driven people are usually abnormally busy.⁴

MacDonald also lists the marks of the Spirit led person

1. He has power [no burn out]
2. He accomplishes more than he ever dreamed possible
3. He manifests the fruit of the Spirit
4. He is capable of changing his goal
5. He stays on course with the Spirit led goal.

Think of Paul. How did each of these five marks of a Spirit led man show up in his life?

⁴Gordon MacDonald, *Ordering Your Private World* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 1985), 31-36.

How do you make Spirit led goals?

(Luke 2:49) *And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?*

(John 4:4) *And he must needs go through Samaria.*

****Seek cleansing**

I John 1:9

**** Pray**

1. Pray “not my will but Thine be done.”

2. Pray James 1:5

**** Listen**

Prompting from the Holy Spirit bringing Scripture passages to mind.
Confirmations

B. Plan your lists

Three different kinds of lists to keep:

*Master list

Projects that eventually need to be done.

*Daily list

Projects from your master list you intend to do today.

* Step by Step lists

Break projects down into bite size efforts.

One day at our dinner table I jokingly said to our youngest daughter who was four at the time, “Just think, Hannah, when the girls are grown, you’ll have all the jobs to do.” The thought sunk in and instantly the overwhelming tears began to flow! The thought of all that work at one time was too much to handle!

If you break the task down into bite size accomplishments you can avoid the “overwhelming” burden of your task.

Think of the:

Materials needed

People involved

Step by step strategy

I hate to clean the garage. Yet if I break that task down into bite size projects, after just a short time, the task is completed and I certainly enjoy the benefits of fitting my car into the garage in the winter time.

C. Plan your time priorities.

Charles Schwab, president of the Bethlehem Steel Company, granted an interview to an efficiency expert named Ivy Lee. Lee was telling Mr. Schwab how his firm could help him do a better job of managing the company, when Mr. Schwab broke in to say something to the effect that he wasn't managing as well as he knew how to. He went on to tell Ivy Lee that what was needed wasn't more knowing – but a lot more doing. He said, “We know what we should be doing; now if you can show us a better way of getting it done, I'll listen to you – and pay you anything within reason.”

Lee then said that he could give him something in twenty minutes that would increase his achievements by at least 50%. He then handed Charles Schwab a blank sheet of paper and said: “Write down on this paper the six most important things you have to do tomorrow.” Mr. Schwab did as requested – it took about three minutes. Lee then said, “Now number them in the order of their importance to you and the company.” That took about five minutes. Then Lee said, “Now put the paper in your pocket, and the first thing tomorrow morning, take it out and look at item number one. Don't look at the others, just number one, and start working on it and stay with it until it's completed. Then take item number two the same way; then number three, and so on until you have to quit for the day. Don't worry if you have only finished one or two. You'll be working on the most important ones. The others can wait. If you can't finish them all by this method, you couldn't have finished them with any other method. And without some system, you'd probably take ten times as long to finish them – and might not even have them in the order of their importance.

“Do this every working day,” Lee went on. “After you've convinced yourself of the value of this system, have your employees try it. Try it as long as you like, and then send me your check for whatever you think the idea is worth.”

The entire interview hadn't taken more than a half-hour. In a few weeks Mr. Schwab sent Ivy Lee a check for \$25,000 with a letter saying the lesson was the most profitable, from a money standpoint, that he had ever learned in his life. And it was later said that in five years this was the plan that was largely responsible for turning what was then a little known steel company into the biggest independent steel producer in the world. It also helped make Charles Schwab a hundred million dollars.

One idea! The idea of taking things one at a time, in their proper order. Of staying with one act, until it's successfully completed before going on to the next – of living on day at a time.

With your daily list, determine which job must be done first. Do not move on to the second item on you list until you have finished what came first. What is accomplished at the end of the day is all that could have possibly been accomplished. You will then have a good start on the list for your next day.

Assignment:

Add to your calendar/journal notebook these items.

These lists should be accessible with your daily calendar.

*Start a list for your daily mission statements.

*Start a “Master task list both for home and for work.”

*Start your “Daily lists” on your calendar each day this week.

*Start making your “Step by Step” lists for the complicated tasks to help break the task down to bite sized projects.

The Time of your Life Lesson Three

Strategy Number Three

III. Pattern your life

(Luke 4:16) *And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.*

(Mat 6:9) *After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.*

(Acts 17:2) *And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,*

A. What is “patterning?”

Patterning is the practice of developing a habit with the actions in your daily schedule that become routine so that you do them without having to put thought into the action.

B. What is necessary for a good pattern to develop?

1. Discipline= training

(1 Cor 9:27) *But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.*

(Gal 5:22,23) *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, **temperance**: against such there is no law.*

“The most effective technique that I know of to conquer lack of discipline is to establish some habits and routines in the areas needing the most attention.”⁵

2. Accountability

Illustrations of healthy accountability:

Parent– child

Teacher– student

⁵Smith, 206

One observer recently observed the benefits of accountability:

“People who are accountable by their own choice to a group of friends... or a pastoral counselor, to a study group or prayer group, are people who are serious about changing their behavior, and they find that change is possible.

“Studies done in factories have proven that both quality and quantity of work increase when the employees know that they are being observed. If only God knows what I am doing, since I know He won’t tell, I tend to make all kinds of excuses for myself. But if I must report to another or a group of others, I begin to monitor my behavior. If someone is keeping an eye on me, my behavior improves.”⁶

Advantages of accountability

*When we are regularly accountable, we’re less likely to stumble into a trap.

*When we are regularly accountable, we are more likely to see the whole picture.

(Prov 27:17) *Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.*

*When we are regularly accountable, we are not likely to get away with sinful and unwise actions.

(Prov 27:6) *Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.*

C. What areas need a pattern?

Daily routine

When you rise and shine in the morning

What time you go to bed

Where you place your keys

Where you write things down (Daily reminder, calendar, journal)

Scripture Memory

Prayer

Filing

Church Attendance

[Sunday School Class]

Budgeting of money

Exercise

⁶Charles R. Swindoll, *Living Above the Level of Mediocrity* (Word Books Publisher, Waco, TX), 136 quoting Bruce Larson, *There’s a Lot More to Health Than Not Being Sick* (Word Books, Publisher, Waco, TX), 61.

Assignment:

*Review lessons 1-3.

*Determine which areas of your life need patterning.

*Approach a prayer/accountability partner to answer to on a weekly basis.

*Continue developing your schedule/lists notebook. Add a scripture memory section.

The Time of Your Life

Lesson Four

Strategy Number Four

IV. Protect your time priorities

How can one protect his priorities?

A. Discipline time for Enrichment skills – protects against stagnation

Areas we need to initiate Enrichment Development skills:

1. Spiritual Journal
2. Reading

I don't have time to read!

You are what you read.

Pastor Ed Nelson once said to me, "In order to preach you must read. You will preach no better than what you have read."

Gordon MacDonald said, "When I visit with pastors who are struggling with their own effectiveness, I often ask, 'What are you reading lately?' It is almost predictable that if a pastor is struggling with failure in his ministry, he will be unable to name a title or an author that he has been reading in recent days."⁷

3. Prayer Journal

A sure sign that my priorities are out of line occurs when I realize my prayer journal is being neglected.

B. Delegate Responsibility through organization... protects against burn out.

"The word 'organizing' is one of the most abused and misused words in the English language today. This is perhaps more true in Christian circles than anywhere else.

Organizing is the work performed to identify a job and relate an individual to that job in order that the work might most effectively be performed...."⁸

⁷MacDonald, 107.

⁸Olan Hendrix, *Management Skills Seminars* (Santa Barbara, California, 1975), 74.

Read Exodus 18:13-26. What was the admonition Moses received?

D. L. Moody said that it is much better to put ten men to work than to do the work of ten men.

Discipleship is essentially training others to a routine to do what you are doing.

C. Determine to say no... protects against over commitment.

Mark 1:35-38 Peter came to the Lord and in essence said, "Hurry Lord, the people need you." Jesus responded, "No, today we're going to the next towns."

How do you know what to say no to?

1. Check your priorities.
2. Check with your accountability partners.
3. Check your haste factor.

If I have to make a decision on the spot, generally the answer should be no.

Hurried decisions make for over commitment

John Wesley somewhere along the line said, "Though I am always in haste, I am never in a hurry, because I never undertake more work than I can go through with calmness of spirit."

Series Review:

Prepare the Heart

Plan your Day

Plan your life

Protect your Priorities

Conclusion:

The Nike ads state in three words what each of us must do regarding the discipline of our time. Their theme fits -- just do it!

A newly hired traveling salesman wrote his first sales report to the home office. It so stunned the brass in the sales department because it was obvious that the new salesman was ignorant! Here's what he wrote:

“I seen this outfit which they ain’t never bot a dim’s worth of nothin from us and I sole them some goods. I’m no goin to Chicawgo.”

Before the man could be given the heave-ho by the sales manager, along came this letter from Chicago:

“I cum hear and sole them haff a millyon.”

Fearful if he did, and afraid if he didn’t fire the ignorant salesman, the sales manager dumped the problem in the lap of the president.

The following morning, the ivory towered sales department members were amazed to see posted on the bulletin board – above the two letters written by the ignorant salesman – this memo from the president:

“We ben spendin two much time tryin to spel instead of tryin to sel. Let’s watch those sails. I want evrybody should read these letters from Gooch who is on the rode doin a grate job for us and you should go out and do like he done did.”

Now that you have completed the course for “the time of your life,” recognize that “We be spendin two mooch time talkin bout time savinz. Jus put it to werk what uze noze!”

Just do it!

