

Stewardship of Time

Ekkehardt Mueller

People today have a problem with time. One hundred and fifty years ago, if a merchant from Chicago had to do business in New York, he may have had to spend an entire week, because it took him so long to get to New York and back again. Today he takes an airplane and arrives there in one or two hours. That means he has gained almost an entire week. But if we look at business people today, they do not have more time. On the contrary, so many people claim, “We have no time.” Such a statement is not entirely true, because an equal amount of time is given to us per minute, per hour, per day, per week, per month, and per year. However, it is true that the enemy who knows that he has only a short time (Rev 12:12) tries to keep us occupied. Nevertheless, we are responsible for how we spend God’s gift of time.

I. Ownership and Stewardship of Time

- 1. Dan 2:21;
Job 14:1, 5** God is the Lord of time. He is in charge, and we are dependent on Him and His decisions.
- 2. Ps 31:15** Time and life are closely related. To spend time with someone means to give that person a part of my life and so time is extremely important. Believers commit their time to God and follow His advice in its use. Time can also be wasted and misused (as humanity did before the flood, Gen 6-7, and Felix who put off a decision for God, Acts 24:24-25).
- 3. Col 4:5;
Eph 5:16** Our task is to make the most of our time by using it wisely. This includes spending time with God and His church, as well as time with family, friends, and neighbors—being there for them and pointing them to Jesus. We can also take time for meaningful work, unwinding and recharging, and physical exercise.

Since God is the owner of our time, we cannot remain unconcerned about how we use it. This fact calls us to prayer and the study of His Word. In Scripture God shares with us principles of how to use time. Details must be discerned through our daily walk with the Lord and by listening to His voice.

II. Some Principles for the Good Use of Time

The following list is not exhaustive but alerts us to some principles involved in the stewardship of time.

1. Prayer

- Rom 12:12;
1 John 5:14-15;
Dan 6:11
- To pray means to seek communion with God and to enter into a dialogue with our Creator. Prayer allows us to step back, to find to find peace in turmoil and stress, and helps us to refocus and

concentrate on what is really important in life. Apart from fellowship with God and a new perspective on life, prayer is also helpful in other ways. Taking time to pray helps us grow in our relationship with God. There may be periods in our lives, when we do not feel like praying, but even then it is good to tell God how we feel and thereby maintain contact with the Lord. Apart from the daily structured time that we spend in prayer, our thoughts may frequently go to God during the day in thankfulness and praise as well as in petition.

2. Reading Scripture

Col 3:16; Acts 17:11;
Josh 1:8

We need to take some time to read Scripture on a regular basis, at least once a day, because through Scripture God speaks in a special way to us, keeping the channels of communication open. Scripture allows us to understand God, to meet Jesus, and to discern what is good and what is God's will for us.

3. Witnessing

Matt 10:32; 2 Cor 5:20

Taking time to share our faith is beneficial to others, for they have a chance to get to know Jesus and/or understand Scripture in a deeper way. We too are blessed because speaking about God helps us to deepen our relationship with Him.

4. Service

Luke 10:25-37; Matt 5:7;
Matt 22:37-39

Part of the Christian life includes serving others: family, friend, and neighbors. Showing love to our neighbors can come in many creative ways, from giving them homemade bread to watching their children and assisting them in difficult times. Service also includes involvement in various activities and responsibilities in the church.

5. Fellowship

Acts 2:46-47;
Heb 10:24-25

Time spent with believers is very important. Typically we are stronger together than we are alone. In Christian fellowship we find support, encouragement, and our faith is strengthened. We can also be a blessing to our brothers and sisters.

6. Work

Gen 1:28; 2:15, 19-20;
1 Thess 4:11

Some consider work to be a curse, but it is a blessing to be able to achieve something. It provides satisfaction and fulfillment. Adam and Eve were involved in meaningful work even before the Fall.

Although work has to some extent become burdensome (Gen 3:17-18), it still has positive aspects. It is even mentioned in the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:9-11) and Paul warns against idleness (2 Thess 3:10).

7. Rest

Mark 6:30-32;
Exod 20:8-11

Scripture also speaks about rest—even an entire day of rest, the Sabbath. Rest is important for our health and for being able to function well. There must be a healthy rhythm between work and rest. The Sabbath is given once a week not only for recuperation but also for communion with God, service for Him, and fellowship with family and friends.

III. Conclusion

One of the most precious gifts we have received from God is time. We belong to God, and our time also belongs to Him. We are asked to use this gift in productive ways. God has also given us guiding principles about how to do this as faithful stewards. By following these principles our lives are enriched and glorify God. We also demonstrate that we are completely committed to the Lord, and that He in turn will guide us into a deeper understanding of Him and His plan for us.

7/09