

We continue this morning with our series called *Human Resources*, where we're considering how to view and what to do with all the resources God has given us. This morning we are going to talk about the resource of time. I believe time needs its own week because it is unique among all the resources. It's the only resource you and I have an equal amount of each day. It's also the only resource we spend whether we like it or not. We have 1,440 minutes per day, and the clock never stops ticking, which means we never stop spending it. And it's a resource that is diminishing. The rest of our lives are getting shorter with every passing second.

I often start with a story or illustration, but this morning I simply want to start with a confession. Of all the areas we'll discuss in this series, this is the one I struggle with the most. And when I do, it comes at a cost. When I poorly steward my time, the area that suffers most is my connections. I struggle to maintain a regular quiet time with the Lord. My interactions with Martha feel like a quick business meeting as we pass by one another on our way to the next thing. My kids can get very little of me. I had one meal with my family this week. Our staff sees me only if we have a meeting, I can't spend as much time with you, my health takes a hit and, at some point, stress increases so much that I've begun to lose my hair. Perhaps the best way to say it is that my schedule may be full, but my heart is empty. My guess is I'm not the only one.

In my observation, time is the resource we are mishandling the most. Almost every person I know is busy and exhausted. We are an overcommitted, overstretched, overheated people, and our effectiveness and joy in living out our calling as the people of God hangs in the balance.

So I want to have a challenging conversation with you this morning, but I also want you to know I'm preaching to myself first. We're going to talk about the stewardship of time not so we can figure out how to fill our life with more activity, but to fill our life with the right activity. My prayer for all of us isn't a more full calendar, it's a more full life.

It's time to remember we don't have much time. You and I are going to live forever, but there will be a certain end to this life, and that truth should impact how we live.

[Psalms 39:4-6 HCBS] ⁴“LORD, reveal to me the end of my life and the number of my days. Let me know how short-lived I am. ⁵You, indeed, have made my days short in length, and my life span as nothing in Your sight. Yes, every mortal man is only a vapor. ⁶“Certainly, man walks about like a mere shadow. Indeed, they frantically rush around in vain, gathering possessions without knowing who will get them.

David is old and thinking about his end. He's not asking to know the specific date. He's asking God to remind him of the brevity of life, that the end will get here sooner than maybe he expects, and that it would affect how he spends his final years.

David's prayer is one all of us should pray. Do you ever think about the end of your life? Not morbidly, but the reality that we are all moving nonstop towards the same destination. Our lives are like vapor. Think about how long you can see your breath on a cold day. It's gone in an instant and, in the context of eternity, that's about how long our lives last on earth.

I read about an exercise someone completed to give a sense of where we are in the span of our life. They compared the average lifespan to a single day. If you look at an average lifetime, it starts at 7:00 AM and ends at midnight. That means, if you are 15, it's 10:25 am. If you are 25, it's 12:42 pm. If you are 35, it's 3:00. If you are 45, the time is 5:16. If you are 55, it's 7:34 pm. If you are 65, it's 9:55 pm. And if you are 70, the time is 11:00 in the evening.

Does that get your attention? As of Friday, I now have two high schoolers. I just had a parent pass away. I'm coming up on my 30th high school reunion. And as a child of the 80's, the clothing of my youth is making an unfortunate triumphant comeback, so it's a new era for sure. What in your life catches your attention and makes you realize how quickly time is passing you by? Does it give you a sense of urgency? That's what David is asking God to remind him of.

But as he asks God to help him think of the brevity of his own life, he also makes an observation of how people are spending their time. If you didn't know better, you might think he was talking about us. He says everyone is frantically rushing around. Other translations use words like disquieted, in turmoil, busy, rushed about, making an uproar. Sound like anybody you know?

If I asked you to describe the pace of your life in one word, would it sound something like that? See, a conversation about the stewardship of time can include some very practical ideas and instruction, but it has to start with why we are living our lives so frantically. Until we get an understanding of that, we'll struggle to steward our time in the way God calls us to.

In David's day, he observed a frantic pace to accumulate possessions. For us, I believe the root of our overcommitted lives is a misplaced desire for significance, really an idolatry of self. Many of us have accepted the philosophy "He who is busiest wins", and we believe it's the answer the questions: What do I think of me? What do others think of me? What does God think of me? We have a fear of missing out, so we don't miss out on anything. We gauge success by what we see on social media and become captive to comparison and competition. **Time is no longer a resource to steward but is instead a trophy case to display.** "Look at all I'm doing with the time given to me." The result is that we have replaced the priority of purpose with the pursuit of prolific productivity and pace.

And you know how much all of that is worth? Nothing. So many of these things we are chasing after are of no eternal value, and they often come at the expense of that which is. So what do we do? We have to make a change. Since we don't have much time...

It's time to resolve how we spend our time. We want to spend our time on things that are worthy, not worthless. But how do we make that distinction?

[Ephesians 5: 15-17 ESV] ¹⁵ **Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise,** ¹⁶ **making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.** ¹⁷ **Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.**

Paul says we are to look carefully at how we walk. There's an intentional assessment of how we are spending our time. Do you know what you are spending your time on? My guess is many of us would be shocked if we took an inventory of activities we spend our time on.

All uses of time are not equal, and for us to discern the best use requires the wisdom of God. Paul warns us that the days are evil. They are contrary to God's will and purpose. If we are unwise, the use of our time can be evil. We may not think we're spending our time on evil things. We're not breaking the law. We're not being unkind to others. But anything apart from the will of God is disobedient and, therefore, it's evil.

The days are also evil because we have an enemy that would love to keep us far from what God has for us. Might it be that the devil could encourage us to stay busy so that we stay distracted from what God created us to do and be? Might the devil nudge our need for approval and significance and try to convince us that the more commitments we have in our lives, the better?

That's why we need God's wisdom; Spirit-guided skill to make the best use of our time. The KJV is more literal when it says we should redeem/buy back the time. Buy it back from the evil days and the evil ways we have used it. Take it back to use it for how it's intended and align the use of our time with the will of the Lord. We need wisdom from God to determine the will of God because **the fruit of wisdom is priority**. I want to ask three questions to help us carefully evaluate if we are spending our time wisely.

When is the last time you were bored? That may seem like a silly question, but when was the last time you were just sitting around and said "Man, this is boring. I need something to do." We have become a people who are increasingly incapable of sitting still and quiet, with dire consequences. That been exacerbated by the invasion of technology in our lives.

When we have opportunities to be still, we instead insist on being engaged through screens and media. Americans spend, on average, 11 hours/day interacting with media, four hours/day in front of a computer, tablets, or smartphones (granted, a lot of that is for work), and nearly five hours/day in front of a TV. 8-18 years olds spend nine hours/day in front of a screen.

This goes back to the heart cause of all this activity. Because of our frantic lives, we don't want stillness and quiet. We want escape. Media to entertain and inform has become the gateway to get away. Now I totally value the idea of solitude to be revived. But this isn't that. This is self-medicating, not self-care and soul-care. And we miss the benefits of "boredom". After the 72 returned, Jesus took them away for a while to be still and quiet. "Boredom" is white space that allows our brains some room to think, our bodies some room to breathe, and our souls some room to refresh and connect. **If God still speaks in that still, small voice, we need to be still enough and quiet enough to hear him.** So next time you want to reach for your device because you have nothing else to do, don't, and see what happens in your boredom.

When is the last time your priority got your prime time? If we never know what is most important, we'll never steward our time well. But even when we do know, it often doesn't get the best of us. It instead gets leftovers. Recent studies say parents have less than 20 minutes of face-to-face time with their kids daily. This goes back to the idea of wisdom and the priority that comes with it.

I want to encourage you to do something this week. Make a list of the most important things in your life and then look back and see how much time you dedicated to them over the past week,

especially as it compares to other, less important things. Then take one thing and schedule it during your best time. It could require you practicing the spiritual gift of saying “no” to something else. But prioritize a priority and notice the difference.

When is the last time you were fulfilled? When is the last time you had a good time? I don’t mean a little fun. I mean the kind of fulfillment that only comes from living the life God made you to live. Remember, we’ve said all along, stewardship is the means by which we live a flourishing life. It’s using the resources God gives for the purposes God intended. The abundant life is only experienced when we faithfully steward our abundant resources. But how many of us are there? I know dozens of busy people, but I’m not sure how many of them are fulfilled.

I have, on several occasions, told Martha “The pace of our life is stealing our joy.” We are having Instapot moments during what should be crockpot times. Now, some of you just sat up, thinking I’m about to preach heresy about instapots! I like them. They are helpful. But they can’t do in 22 minutes what really takes eight hours. It can be good, but it isn’t the same. That’s the issue with the pace of our lives. We jump from one thing to the next, barely able to soak it in, barely able to connect, barely able to be present, and then we are on to the next thing. We miss moments, deep friendship, and intimacy with our God because of it. Linger in one area of your life this week, even if it means missing out on something else, and see how much more fulfilling it is when you do.

You still have time. If you are here this morning, that means you still have breath in your lungs, and God is not done with you. You may be reflective this morning and realize you’ve been foolish in the way you’ve stewarded your time over the years. There’s nothing you can do about that now, but you can still “buy back” whatever time you have left and devote it to the will of the Lord. But to do that, you’ve got to start in the same place David started.

[Psalm 39:7 ESV] And now, O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you.

If we are going to steward our time well, our hope cannot be in being the busiest, most committed, most active person we know. Our hope is in the Lord and the plan he has laid out for us. As I said at last week’s Family Picnic, we are going to start telling more of our stories here. And this morning I’m excited for you to hear the story of Chris Portman. As you watch this video, I want you to hear of his wrestling match with time, the cost of poor stewardship, and the difference placing your hope in the only place it belongs makes.

My thanks to Chris for sharing his story. Did you hear what he said? Thirty years between college and Fellowship. He did not use that time wisely. But he made a decision to place his hope in the Lord, and when he did, Jesus redeemed him, and because of that, Chris redeemed his time, and the time he now spends is aligned with God’s will and is making a difference. You too can tell that same story. The details might be different, but you can put your hope in the only place it belongs and start a new chapter in the story of your life. Because, remember, you still have time.