



<http://thoughtofthedayme.com/the-greatest-gift-you-can-give/>

The Stewardship of Time

The Bible tells us that life is given by God. But unlike any other gift, it is a gift over which the Giver retains sovereign control. Thus, life (i.e. time given to live that life) is a stewardship from God. The original word translated as “stewardship” literally means the “management” or “administration” of a household.

The practice of stewardship is seen in the context of ancient Eastern households. The head of the house – when his duties and nature of work require him to be away from home – would choose the most qualified and trusted of his servants to serve as his “steward”, to whom he would entrust the entire running

of the household affairs while he is away. Thus, a steward is a man of responsibility and authority. Though a servant, he could exercise authority and make decisions regarding the household in his master’s absence. The steward rules over all the other servants and is often the teacher of his master’s children. And when the master comes home, the steward is asked to give a thorough account of everything. One classic example in the Bible was Joseph during his time in Potiphar’s household. Joseph was so well-favoured by Potiphar that he was put in charge as his steward, with authority over everyone in the house except only his wife.

Accountability Involved in Time Stewardship

Similarly, “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Peter 4:10). A conspicuous characteristic of a steward is he does not own anything, just like a manager of a business does not own the business nor its money but is responsible for managing all the available resources and opportunities for the owner's benefit. As “stewards”, we don't own our time, talents or money. Some are given a long time to live while others very brief. Some are endowed with exceptional talents; others have very modest abilities. Some possess great amounts of money, yet others have to make do with very little. But all are responsible for what God has given them and must one day give an account of how these have been used.

Hence, stewardship is thus the wise and responsible use of one's God-given resources. It involves faithfulness in the use of one's talents, treasure and time, as “moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (1 Corinthians 4:2). And stewardship of time would mean the proper and wise management or administration of our time.

As such, being chronically late is actually careless use of time. This notorious problem of habitual tardiness is unfortunately widely tolerated among us. This mismanagement of time reflects a mismanagement of ourselves to live up to our word. When we promise to come at 10 am, we ought to come at 10 am or slightly earlier. Realise that time (either yours or others' due to waiting) is too precious to be wasted on habitual tardiness. Being considerate is to be disciplined to come on time, especially so when our appointment is with the Lord in the time of worship. Remember, “habitual lateness dishonours God”!

Biblical Applications of Time Stewardship

We have learnt that the word “redeem” means to “buy up” or “make the most of”. Making the most of our time is to “buy up” the golden opportunities that come our way, and not let them pass by unused or neglected. Now, what kind of opportunities is Scripture talking about?

Opportunities for Christian Witness

In the immediate context of Paul's injunction of “redeeming the time” in Colossians 4:5, he spoke of a “door of utterance” (Colossians 4:3). He was speaking of the need to “speak the mystery of Christ”, i.e. the opportunity to preach the Gospel and to enhance evangelism efforts. Biblical stewardship of time is making full use of every opportunity to share the Good News of salvation through Christ, and preach the Word of God. It is never allowing “open doors” to pass by unattended. To neglect such opportunities is to fail in our stewardship, and thereby failure to “walk in wisdom toward them that are without”. Let us, by the grace of God, stand united and support our preachers and church leaders in the work of the Gospel.

Opportunities for Christian Growth

We read of the same exhortation in Ephesians 5:15-16. Again, looking at the immediate context, we see Paul admonishing the Ephesian Christians to build up their Christian character and to promote the purity of the church. “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is” (Ephesians 5:17). Paul was telling them to take every opportunity to grow and mature (both as individuals and as a body of believers) as they discern God's will in their lives. The only way is through knowing God's Word; in other words, read the Bible! Commit

yourself to a systematic study of God's Word – don't skip Sunday School, come for Bible study, attend theological night classes, etc. Redeem the time!

Opportunities for Christian Fellowship

Furthermore, Paul exhorts, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (Ephesians 5:19-21).

Wise stewardship of time includes availing ourselves of every opportunity for Christian fellowship (including worship). Paul here is saying believers are to encourage and edify one another, and even come together for worship. Coming for fellowship meetings, prayer meetings and worship is a privilege and duty that should never be neglected. Proper stewardship of time gives priority to such activities, which are God-ordained means of grace. To become too busy to join these church activities is tantamount to failing in our stewardship. This is corroborated by Hebrews 10:24-25 – "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

Opportunities for Christian Charity

In Paul's exhortation to the Galatians, we find another injunction of "buying up" every opportunity. "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians

6:9-10). Whenever opportunity arises, we are to "do" that which is beneficial and useful to others, especially to fellow believers. Good stewardship of time certainly behoves us to bear one another's burdens, including even extending material or financial assistance to those who are in dire need. Assuredly, in so doing, we would have a sure reward from God "in due season"!

Opportunities for Christian Service

Finally, hear the words of our Saviour Himself while He was on earth: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4). The Lord Jesus was up and about doing the work of His teaching and healing ministries. In this passage, we find Jesus on the verge of healing a man who was blind since birth (John 9:1). He was probably alluding to His impending death when He said these words. While the "day" is the generally accepted time to work and the "night" the time of rest, here the words "day" and "night" refer (figuratively) to the life of Jesus and to His coming death. It is like Jesus was saying: "I must work before my life comes to a close." Hence, good stewardship of time entails the conscientious taking advantage of every God-given opportunity to serve and minister while time permits us and while we still have life (cf. Ecclesiastes 9:10)!

Conclusion

Dear brethren, our time on earth will come to an end one day. And we will be asked to give an account of how we have invested the gift of time given to us. We will be asked how well we did in redeeming the time and making the most of the opportunities God has sent our way – in short, our stewardship of time. What will our answer be?

A New Song Calling Christians to Fast & Pray

Lyrics & Music
Prabhudas Koshy

D G D G A D E^{o7}

1. Fast and pray while your soul longs for the Lord; You shall find Him
2. Fast and pray while your soul is in dire need; You shall have of
3. Fast and pray while your soul needs help from high; You shall find His

6 D G D⁷ G A

if you seek the Lord. Set your heart and soul to
Him that which you plead. Set your heart and soul to
strength as He draws nigh. Set your heart and soul to

11 D G D A⁷ D

call on Him. Let your heart re-joice as you come to Him.
ask of Him; Let your heart have faith as you come to Him.
wait on Him; Let your heart re-joice as you come to Him.

17 A⁷ G A G D A⁷ D

Glo-ry ye in His ho - ly name:
Glo-ry ye in His gra - cious name: Let your heart re-joice in the LORD.
Glo-ry ye in His might - y name:

Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church & Bible Witness Media Ministry
Arranged by Dorcas Koshy