

Lesson 8: Stewarding Our Time

I. Introduction

Time is precious, isn't it? Time is one of those things that you're only given once. If you misuse your money, you can always earn more back. If you eat poorly and don't exercise and end up in poor health, you can often make choices that can reverse that state of living. If you don't apply yourself and learn no skills, you can always decide to apply yourself and learn them. But time keeps on ticking, seemingly faster and faster the older you get. Once a moment is gone, it's gone forever.

That means that how we steward our time is extremely important. How we prioritize what we do, and when we do it, and why we do it, is a gospel issue. The way we use our time reflects the One we believe it ultimately belongs to. Moses understood this urgency when he prayed in Psalm 90:10, **"The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away."** He follows that sobering truth with this plea in verse 12, **"So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom."** Verse 12 is the heart of what we're after in this class, a heart of wisdom about the time God has given us. The culture around us offers confusing, actually contradictory messages about the time we have. I've had people tell me, "Life is short," but I've had just as many people tell me that I have "plenty of time." Which is it? I've had just as many people tell me that I need to "Get the most out of life, because you only live once," as I've had people tell me to "slow down and smell the roses." There truly is a self-proclaimed authority in our culture on how we approach the time we're given. If I could oversimplify, I think people outside of the gospel fall into one of three default views of what our time is for:

- 1) **The hedonist:** For the hedonist, time is about fun. Leisure is the goal. Life is about maximizing our experiences, making memories, and finding joy and satisfaction in where we've been and what we've done. How many of us have fantasized about a four-day work week, or retiring at 50 to travel the world? Less work and more play sounds incredible to most people. To be clear (in case you wonder where I'm going in this lesson), God is not opposed to pleasure. Psalm 16:11 says, **"In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore."** But the hedonist's error is making pleasure the main thing. As 1 Timothy 5:6 warns, **"She who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives."**
- 2) **The productivity addict:** For the productivity addict, time is about achievement. Your calendar becomes a scoreboard. You're not valuable *unless* you're producing. Henry Ford once said, *"Work is the salvation of the human race, morally, physically, socially."* Henry Ford viewed work as a spiritual and social duty rather than just a way to earn money. He fiercely believed that a society built upon discipline and hard work would naturally cure its social ills. My point isn't to dissect the intention of Henry Ford's heart, but rather to see how we as Christians have taken that thought and ran with it. That sentiment gets baptized into Christian productivity, where worth is measured by how much we accomplish "for God." But as we saw seven months ago in our previous lesson on rest, that's not how the Bible teaches us to view our worth. Ephesians 2:10 tells us, **"We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works"**, but notice, those works were **"prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."** God isn't impressed by your hustle. He's inviting you to walk in what He's already prepared. You were made to reflect the glory of your Creator (Genesis 1:27). That includes meaningful work, but also worship, joy, rest, and fellowship.

- 3) **The survivor:** For the survivor, time is simply about making it to tomorrow. The survivor thinks they were robbed of any fun, and they were robbed of the ability to be productive. All they do every day is suffer and survive. Maybe this is you right now. You're weary. You're in a hard season. You don't have time to reflect. You're just trying to hold it all together. If that's you, I want you to know that God sees you, and He cares. God still has good purposes for your time. Matthew 6:31-32 reminds us, **"Do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?'... For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all."** God cares for your burdens.

Which of the three categories best describes you? By nature of being here this morning, you have time remaining before you. In a room this large, it's probably not far-fetched to think that some in this room have far less time on their hands than they think. Nevertheless, why has God given us whatever time He has? These cultural views: hedonism, productivity, and survival, aren't entirely wrong. There *is* joy to be had as the hedonist thinks (just ask John Piper). There *is* meaningful work to be done. And yes, sometimes life *is* just hard. But none of those things explain the full picture. The Bible offers us a thought process that is much better than those categories, thoughts that are anchored in Christ.

Here's where we're headed in this lesson: First, we'll ask, *Who owns your time?* Then we'll explore His purposes for your time. What does He want it to be used for? We'll look at the biblical boundaries He's given us, what we might call "ground rules" for godly goals. After that, we'll examine some common obstacles to using our time well, things like distraction, worry, and misplaced priorities. And finally, we'll wrap it up with some practical encouragement for living this out faithfully.

But before we move on, let me ask: What will you have to show for your years when you **"fly away?"** (Psalm 90:10). Will they testify to God's greatness? Or to your own comfort and convenience? Romans 14:12 says, **"So then each of us will give an account of himself to God."** That doesn't need to be a fear-inducing statement. For those in Christ, it's an opportunity to live for something eternal. Colossians 4:5 says, **"Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time."** Let's learn how to do that together.

II. The Master

If you've been part of this class from the beginning, you probably already know the answer to this question. I'll ask it anyway: *Who owns your time?* God does! Every minute of 'your' time belongs to Him. What a deeply personal and practical truth! 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, **"So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."** Even the simplest, most mundane moments of your day are meant to reflect His worth.

In 1 Corinthians 4:7, Paul asks a piercing question, **"What do you have that you did not receive?"** That includes your time. Doctors and Nutritionists and Personal Trainers will attempt to convince you that you can earn yourself more time if you make better choices, and while making better health choices is a godly decision (and is the entire point of our next lesson), it doesn't buy you more time. Humanity, for all its brilliance, has figured out how to split atoms and land on the moon, but we can't make time. Time is God-given. Every moment you've ever lived was written by Him before it came to pass. Psalm 139:16 says, **"In your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them."**

Time is a gift. But like every gift God gives, it comes with purpose. Hebrews 4:13 reminds us, **"No creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account."** It's a sobering thought that one day you and I will stand before the God who gave us time

and answer for how we used it. The same God who gave us grace, who forgives our wasted years, also calls us to steward the years ahead with renewed purpose.

In this lesson we're after living with joy. The One who owns your time is also the One who loves you the most. God is not standing over you today ready to scold you. Rather, He is walking beside you with compassion, freeing you to live with eternity in view. Ecclesiastes 3:11 says, "**He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart.**" You and I are wired to think about forever. And forever changes how we live right now.

If God owns your time, then that should affect the way you see your calendar. It should shift how you evaluate your priorities. It should cause you to ask not, "What do *I* want to do with my time?" but, "What would *God* have me do with it?" Ephesians 5:15-17 puts it this way, "**Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.**"

Before we go any further, let's stop and reflect for a moment. I want to ask you a question: *What are some implications of the fact that God owns your time?* Take a minute to think about it. How might that truth change the way you wake up each morning? How might it change the way you view your schedule this week? Or your weekend plans? Or your retirement? We live in a world that tells us our time is our own. "*It's your life. Your time. You do you.*" But the gospel gives us a better story. Romans 14:7-8 says, "**For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.**"

You are not your own. And neither is your time. What a gift that is! You don't have to be the master of your schedule anymore. You have a better Master who knows your frame (Psalm 103:14), who numbers your steps (Job 14:16), and who promises to complete the good work He began in you (Philippians 1:6). So as we move forward in this lesson, let's begin there. With the freeing truth that every second we have belongs to God.

III. The Mission

God will one day call us to account for how we've spent His time. That's a weighty thought, isn't it? We often speak about "my time," "your time," "family time." But if we're being biblically honest, all time is *God's time*. He made it. He measures it. And He has entrusted it to us temporarily. So, the question naturally follows: *What will He evaluate us by? What's the mission we're meant to fulfill with the time He gives?*

To answer that, let's return to the verse we looked at earlier, 1 Corinthians 10:31, "**So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.**" That's our aim. The mission is to use our time to magnify the glory of the Lord. Every hour you live is an opportunity to glorify God, to live in such a way that others would say, "*What kind of God must they serve, to live like that?*" So how do you do that? What does it actually look like to glorify God with your time?

It starts by *imagining Him*. Genesis 1:27 tells us we are made in the image of God, designed to reflect Him. That means that when you show love, when you speak truth, when you create something good, when you offer hospitality or stand up for what's right, you are reflecting the character of the Creator. You glorify God by being like Him. That's what Jesus meant in Matthew 5:16 when He said, "**Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.**" Your good works don't exist for your own applause; they exist to direct others to *Him*.

Second, you glorify God by *enjoying Him*. We glorify God by adoring Him, treasuring Him, seeing Him as our greatest reward and highest delight. Psalm 16:11 says, **“In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”** When you enjoy God and truly find your satisfaction and identity in Him, you make a powerful statement to the watching world by saying *“God is enough. He is better than whatever I could do with this time on my own.”*

Reflecting God’s glory to others and delighting in God are connected in such a way that I don’t know if you can do one without the other. The more you delight in Him, the more you will reflect Him. It’s the cycle of grace-fueled transformation. 2 Corinthians 3:18 describes it this way, **“And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.”** Time well spent is time that causes you (and others) to behold and savour Jesus more.

So what does this look like on a Tuesday afternoon or a Saturday night? It means asking the question: *Is what I’m doing with this moment helping me or someone else see more of God?* Whether you’re doing laundry, fixing a sink, rocking a baby to sleep, meeting a deadline at work, attending a funeral, or hosting friends for dinner, the question remains: *How can I reflect and enjoy God here?* Your duty in stewarding your time is to *drum up as much delight in the goodness of God as you possibly can*. That’s your mission. You are an image-bearer of the Most High King. You are His ambassador (2 Corinthians 5:20), His workmanship (Ephesians 2:10), and His witness (Acts 1:8). That purpose ought to govern *everything* you do, including your work, your sleep, your chores, your screen time, your parenting, your recreation, your worship (which is technically everything), your driving, your weekends. Colossians 3:17 says, **“And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”** That’s all-encompassing. There’s no such thing as neutral time for the Christian. Every minute you spend will tell someone else what you believe and trust about God.

Ask yourself: *What is my time telling others about who God is?* Does it really say that He’s worthy? That He’s wise? That He’s satisfying? Or does it say to people that He’s optional, He’s inconvenient, and that He’s easy to ignore? Remember that the stewardship of our time is not about stuffing every second with activity. It’s not about burnout for the kingdom. It *is* about being so shaped by the glory of God that it overflows into the way you plan your future, and work, and play, and rest, and interact with others. Psalm 90:14 prays, **“Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.”** That’s the heart of a good steward: to be so satisfied with God, that our days are filled with joy. Discover and display the goodness and glory of God. God has given you time. Don’t waste it.

IV. The Ground Rules

Let’s imagine for a moment that God gives you another 20, 40, maybe even 60 years of life. You may have decades of choices and challenges ahead of you. The Lord may have only given some of us a few years or less to glorify Him with the time we’ve been given. Considering all that’s ahead of us is a bit like staring at an enormous, untouched canvas. The possibilities are endless. You can live for God in so many different ways: serving others, building, creating, teaching, parenting, counseling, learning, encouraging, enduring. It’s exciting and overwhelming at the same time. You might wonder: *How do I know what’s best? How do I avoid wasting my time? How do I make sure I’m doing what really matters most?*

Paul’s words in Ephesians 5:15-16 are helpful here. He writes, **“Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.”** In other words, pay attention! Be deliberate about all that you do! Don’t coast through life on auto-pilot! These days are full of shiny and noisy distractions, full of temptations that will pull us away from what’s truly good. That phrase, **“making the best use of the time”** can feel overwhelming. Not just *use* your time. Not even *use*

your time wisely. But make the *best* use of it. My mind is prone to paralysis at the thought of it. How can you possibly know what is best? What if you get it wrong? What if you miss something crucial? The good news good news is that God hasn't left you to figure it all out on your own. He hasn't taken His hand off the seat of the bike and yelled from behind, "Good luck."

Every command in Scripture is a step forward in helping us know how to best use our time. God's Word is a gift to us of His wisdom, it lights our path (*Psalms 119:105*), and restores our soul (*Psalms 19:7*), and equips us for every good work (*2 Timothy 3:16–17*). If you want to know how to use your time well, you start by listening to what God has already said. Which brings us to the first ground rule for stewarding our time:

1. Obey the Master

Stewardship always begins with obedience. God has already given you various roles and responsibilities simply by virtue of your life circumstances, whether you're married or single, a parent or childless, working a job or caring for a home. Each of these roles comes with clear instructions in Scripture. And following those commands is how you begin to make the best use of your time.

Obedience is aligning your life with the purposes of God. I remember my Mom reminding me that the rules in the house weren't suggestions. Neither are God's commands random, they are lovingly designed to guide you through life in a way that reflects His character and brings you joy. Deuteronomy 10:13 says that God's commandments are "**for your good.**"

If you have children, for example, Scripture is clear about your responsibilities to raise them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). That means your time investment in your kids is faithful stewardship. If you're part of a church, Hebrews 10:25 says not to neglect meeting together. That means your Sundays belong to the Lord. If you're a worker, Colossians 3:23 calls you to work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men.

Some roles are permanent, like being a citizen (Romans 13:1) or a church member, yes, I used the word permanent. Others might change, like your job, your location, your children grow up, your marital status. And those changes can bring with them a new perspective for how to steward your time. But in every season, you start by asking: *What has God already told me to do in this role?* Your job is not to figure out from scratch the absolute "perfect" way to spend your time. That's too much weight for you to carry. You're not the general plotting the whole war, you're the foot soldier entrusted to carry out your assigned post. Your role is faithfulness. God only calls you to obedience.

When questions arise: *Does it really make sense to be in church every Sunday when I've got a high-powered job and precious little free time?* The answer isn't based on what seems most efficient or successful. The answer is: what has God said? That's the decision that matters. He has already given you the green light for worship, for gathering with His people, for setting aside time for rest and spiritual nourishment. Or maybe you wonder: *Should I spend so much time with my own kids when there are so many other children in the world who need love?* Again, start with what He's made clear. Love your kids. Shepherd them. That's your first stewardship. That doesn't mean you don't also have space to love others, but it does mean you start with obedience in what's already in front of you.

So often we agonize over big, abstract questions: *What's the most meaningful use of my time? What legacy am I leaving? What should I be building?* But most of the time, the path forward starts with: What has God already asked me to do? Start with that, and trust that it's enough. Obeying God's commands in

each area of your life isn't always glamorous. It might not trend on Instagram or lead to a promotion. But it pleases God. And that's the definition of a well-spent life.

2. The Master is in Control

One of the most common things you'll hear in conversation today is this: *"There's just not enough time."* It seems like the older we get, the faster that time goes. I often wonder if we feel that way because we gain first-hand experience for how quickly 40, 50, 60 years go by. It seems like 24 hours in a day goes by in 8 most days. In many ways, the passage of time resonates with our everyday lives, deadlines we can't meet, people we don't get around to seeing, goals we keep pushing to next week. The thought that I want us to gravitate towards is: There's *precisely* the right amount of time before us. God, in His perfect wisdom and goodness, has given us the precise amount of time to do what we need to do.

Psalm 31:15 says, **"My times are in your hand."** Job 14:5 tells us, **"His days are determined, and the number of his months is with you, and you have appointed his limits that he cannot pass."** That means the calendar of your life is set. God has deliberately appointed your timeframe and your limitations. It was *God's* idea to make 24-hour days. The whole system of time (God's creation) existed before sin even entered the picture. Genesis 1:14 says, **"Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years."** God *built* time into the very structure of creation, and then called it **"very good"** (Genesis 1:31). So when you hit your limit, when you've reached the end of your bandwidth, when you feel like there's just not enough time to get it all done, it's not because God failed in His design. It's because we've forgotten how to trust Him within that design.

Often, our frustration with time has less to do with what God has asked us to do, and more to do with what we've added on top of it. God hasn't given you enough time to do *everything* that you want to do, but He has given you time for *what's essential*. Ecclesiastes 3:1 says, **"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven."** Your job isn't to stretch yourself to do what He hasn't asked. Your job is to be faithful with what He *has*. This changes how we approach our schedules. It helps us accept the boundaries of a day, or a week, or a lifetime, with gratitude rather than anxiety. When we say, "I just don't have time," we should ask: *Time for what?* If it's for something God hasn't called us to, then praise God, we're free. If it's for something He *has* called us to, then we can be confident He's given us enough hours to walk in obedience. So, when you're feeling overwhelmed, it may be time to pause and ask yourself, not, "How am I going to get this all done?" but, "Am I trusting the One who gave me these hours?" You are limited Christian, but those limits are a gift to remind you that you are not God.

3. Time is Short

The phrase *"time is short"* is one we've all heard. It's true, but there's a subtle danger in how we interpret it. For some, it sounds like panic: *Hurry! Rush! You're running out of time!* For others, it breeds fatalism: *What's the point of resting or being still if time is so limited?* But "time is short" doesn't mean life is meaningless. In fact, in Scripture, the shortness of time is one of the very reasons why life *matters* so much. Psalm 39:4-5 puts it beautifully and bluntly, **"O LORD, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am! Behold, you have made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing before you. Surely all mankind stands as a mere breath!"**

Your life in the eternal sense is but a moment, and then it's gone. James 4:14 echoes the same thought: **"What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes."** That reality is meant to wake us up. That's why Moses prays in Psalm 90:12, **"So teach us to number our days that**

we may get a heart of wisdom.” The more we realize how brief our lives are, the more carefully (and wisely) we’ll choose to live them.

Older folks have seen how fast life passes us by. You blink and another decade is behind you. I am amazed at how fast my kids grew up, how my hair turned gray, how those years came and went. Younger folks may not quite understand what I’m talking about, but don’t let your youth delay the application of wisdom to your life. Let the Word of God teach you what your life experience hasn’t. Ecclesiastes 12:1 says, **“Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth.”** Don’t wait until time has passed to realize how valuable the time God gave you is.

God has entrusted you with enough time to do exactly what He has planned for you. Not more. Not less. So don’t delay what matters most, and don’t assume you’ll get around to it later. The goodness and glory of God deserve your time now. It doesn’t mean that you’ll do everything you want, but it ought to mean that you’ll do the *right* things that reflect His character and prioritize His kingdom. Matthew 6:33 says, **“Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”**

Comment or Questions?

V. Obstacles

As we think seriously about the obstacles that keep us from stewarding our time in a way that reflects God’s glory, let’s keep in mind what we’ve already said: time is short, and time is His. We are called to use our time in a way that puts His goodness and providence on display, trusting both His commands and His control. But that’s easier said than done, isn’t it? Life gets busy, we get tired. And our hearts begin to build roadblocks, or obstacles that distract us from the proper stewardship of our time. We will consider four major obstacles to faithful time stewardship, and we’ll start with one of the most common and yet most misunderstood: laziness.

1. Laziness

If you’ve spent any time in the book of Proverbs, then you’ve met the “ sluggard.” He’s a recurring character in the wisdom literature, and not a flattering one. Proverbs 6:9-11 says, **“How long will you lie there, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man.”**

Tim Challies, in his book *Do More Better*, gives a helpful and sobering description of the sluggard, *“As you study the sluggard throughout Proverbs you will see that he is a man who refuses to begin new ventures, a man who will not finish what he has begun, a man who will not face reality and, through it all, a man who is restless, helpless, and useless. His life is chaotic because his soul is chaotic.”*

Let’s read that last line again, *“His life is chaotic because his soul is chaotic.”* How many of us have tried to fix laziness by managing our schedules better? We buy a day-planner, download a time management app, read productivity articles on the internet, ask our mother-in-law for her opinion. And yet the real issue remains unresolved. Why? Because laziness is a faith problem. The sluggard is lazy because he lacks belief in what God has said about time. He *doesn’t* live like time is short (*Psalms* 39:5). He *doesn’t* trust that God rewards faithful stewardship (Matthew 25:21). He *doesn’t* believe that what he does today really matters in the grand scheme of eternity. At its core, laziness is a theological issue. It’s rooted in a distorted view of who God is, who we are, and what time is for.

Let me introduce what might sound like a strange idea: we fight laziness with rest. That might seem backwards but hear me out. The sluggard's problem isn't that he rests, it's that he chases *false* rest in escapism, or disengagement. What Scripture invites us into is *real* rest that's grounded in faith. Hebrews 4:10-11 says, **"For whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from His. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest."** Striving... to rest. That's the paradox of Christian effort: we work *for* rest.

All laziness is, is allegiance to the wrong master. We must learn to rest in God's promises. When laziness says, "nothing you do really matters", we answer with Revelation 14:13, **"Blessed indeed, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!"** What we do in faith lasts forever. When we're tempted to quit after setbacks, Romans 8:28 reminds us that **"for those who love God all things work together for good."** Even our failures have meaning. When we wonder if God is worth serving, Psalm 34:8 calls out, **"Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!"**

Let's not underestimate how we must work hard and make many decisions every day to combat laziness. Talk to a young mother and ask where her exhaustion comes from: physical demands, a million questions per day from the kids. Every day requires hundreds of small choices. And her temptation, especially when she's tired is to say, "I don't want to decide anymore!" We've all been at the point where we're up against the wall with life's pressures. So we delay decisions. In fact, we retreat into a corner to find rest or comfort. But faithful time stewardship often means doing the hard thing first (even when you're not 100% sure it's the right thing) and then trusting God with the outcome.

It's important that we understand that we steward our time in faith. Even if we're tired and unsure about whether we're making the best decisions, or perhaps the third best decision, Proverbs 3:5-6 calls us to **"trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths."** God's Word promises to guide us in the path that were walking down.

We must recognize laziness for what it is, because that internal lawyer that lives inside of us wants to bend the truth and call laziness what it isn't. So let's call it what it is: sin. Laziness goes all the way back to Genesis 3, where Adam stood by silently as the serpent tempted Eve. He abdicated responsibility. And that's exactly what we do when we let time pass without stepping into our roles. When we put off decisions. When we wait for others to take the lead. James 4:17 says, **"Whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin."** We all carry this passivity in our flesh. And one of the ways we grow in grace is learning to face our sin head on in repentance, and to replace it with Spirit-empowered decisions. Remember this Christian, you have far less time here on Earth than you think you do, God has been very good to you to give you His word. His promises are true, so resolve not to waste your lives in laziness. Trust Him, don't lean on your own understanding, and acknowledge Him in everything.

2. Busyness

At first glance, it might seem like busyness is the opposite of laziness. Isn't the lazy person idle? Isn't the busy person constantly doing something productive? We do tend to think of laziness and busyness as two sides of the same coin, but both can be symptoms of a disordered heart. We can be very busy and still be completely unfaithful to God. In fact, busyness can become a blanket that covers our spiritual apathy.

We live in a culture that wears busyness like a badge of honor. "How's your week been? Busy!" The more jam-stuffed your schedule is, the more impressive your life must be! And while hard work is

commended in Scripture (Colossians 3:23), the Bible also calls us to work that is wise and purposeful. Ecclesiastes 4:6 offers a sobering contrast: **“Better is a handful of quietness than two hands full of toil and a striving after wind.”** You’ve probably heard the phrase, “Don’t work harder, work smarter.” For the Christian, working smarter means investing your energy and time into the things that matter in God’s economy. Ephesians 5:15-17 again comes to mind, **“Look carefully then how you walk... making the best use of the time... therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”**

We cross a line when we start parading our exhaustion, when we brag about the circus of our life, all the things we’re struggling to juggle. Broadcasting overbooked days makes us look ‘busier than thou,’ rendering us uninterruptible, even unapproachable. IOW, don’t ask me to take on more, I don’t have time for whatever your needs are. Even the famed Proverbs 31 woman, who burnt her candles at both ends, still found time for people. Christ himself, who was often clawed-at and pressed-in-upon, who had to board a boat just to speak to the people on shore, made time for others. That’s a mission we forget all too quickly when we allow our calendars to crowd out relationships. You can have a day jam-packed with meetings and still fail to live faithfully. You can be drowning in ministry obligations and still be missing the mark. If Jesus, the Son of God, with three short years to complete His earthly ministry, could pause to touch a leper, speak to a Samaritan woman, dine with sinners, and bless children, then surely our lives must leave space for people, too. So how do we guard our stewardship from busyness?

We start by returning to the idea of faithfulness in your God-given responsibilities. The goal isn’t to do everything in a day that we want to do, but to do what God has asked of us. That means saying yes to what’s expected of you to do and being willing to say no to what isn’t. Galatians 6:4-5 encourages this: **“Each one should test his own work... For each will have to bear his own load.”** You are not responsible for doing *everything*. You *are* responsible for doing your part.

Ask yourself: Of all the things I’m doing, which ones has God *specifically* entrusted to me? Only you can parent your children. Only you can love your specific neighbors. Only you can offer your unique combination of time, skills, and personality. That means some responsibilities are yours simply because no one else can do them in the way God has assigned them to you. You may be called to something based upon the season of life you’re in. You may be called to something now that wouldn’t have made sense ten years ago and won’t make sense ten years from now.

As Ecclesiastes 3:1 says, **“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.”** What God asks of you will shift as your life changes. When you’re a student, you may have lots of time but little experience. In young adulthood, you have tons of energy but more financial pressure. In midlife, you have valuable skills and influence but less free time. And in later years, you may have wisdom and flexibility to invest in others in new, meaningful ways. Ecclesiastes 3:11 reminds us: **“[God] has made everything beautiful in its time.”**

One of the great dangers of busyness is that it tricks us into thinking that doing more is the same thing as living for God. Scripture never equates busyness with faithfulness. Martha was busy, so busy preparing and serving that she missed the better portion of simply being with Jesus (Luke 10:38–42). Jesus wasn’t impressed with her multitasking. He was drawn to Mary’s undistracted focus. Busyness can become a smokescreen that hides a restless heart, a way to avoid intimacy with God and people.

Let me say this as clearly as I can: you can glorify God in your rest just as much as in your labor. You can reflect His image by enjoying Him during a morning walk. You can reflect His kindness while enjoying a coffee and listening to the birds on a quiet morning outside. You can proclaim His wisdom in choosing *not* to overload your schedule. Until you grasp how every area of your life (work, rest, family, ministry, errands, and stillness) can glorify God, you will always feel torn and uncertain about how to

spend your time. But once you anchor your days in His priorities, you'll be able to release the need to prove yourself through productivity. You can simply be faithful.

Beware of the trap of performance-driven time management. Busyness may look impressive to others, but if it's not rooted in obedience, it won't last. 1 Corinthians 3:13 says, **"Each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it."** We sing the hymn "Only One Life", and I love the lyrics in that says "Only one life, 'twill soon be past; only what's done for Christ will last." Only what's built on Christ will endure. Make room for what matters. Make peace with what doesn't. And remember: your goal is to glorify Him in the time you've been given.

3. People-Pleasing

A third (and sometimes tragic) obstacle to the wise stewardship of time is the subtle, often hidden tendency so many of us have toward people-pleasing. People-pleasing can look like helpfulness, service, responsibility, even kindness. But underneath lies a craving for approval, even a fear of rejection, or a deep-seated belief that peace only comes when others are happy with us. Paul challenges that thinking directly in Galatians 1:10, **"For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ."** That's a sobering verse. It teaches us that living for the approval of others puts us in direct conflict with our calling as servants of Christ. And yet, how many of us (if we were to be brutally honest) would admit that our calendars are full of appointments we didn't want to take? That some of our stress comes from trying to keep everyone else happy?

How many of your recent commitments were made from a fear that you'd disappoint a friend, or look bad to your boss, or be judged by the other parents at school. Or maybe, you just couldn't bear the thought of someone being unhappy with you, so you filled another evening, took on another task, squeezed one more event into a schedule that was already gasping for air. Proverbs 29:25 warns us, **"The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe."**

People-pleasing is a trap that keeps you from walking in freedom and obedience to the One whose opinion actually matters. Jesus said in Matthew 6:24, **"No one can serve two masters."** Jesus was speaking about money, but the principle applies just as just the same. You cannot serve Christ and others; you will have to disappoint someone. There's only One to whom you will give an account on the Last Day, and it isn't your coworker, or your friend, or your client, or your child's coach. Romans 14:12 reminds us, **"So then each of us will give an account of himself to God."** If God alone will judge your stewardship, then God alone should determine your priorities.

This is where idolatry creeps in. When we seek someone else's affirmation more than God's, we are functionally worshipping them. Their happiness becomes our goal. Their validation becomes our peace. That is the trap that locks us into spiritual bondage. Take a few minutes this afternoon and review your calendar from the past two weeks. Circle any commitments that were made primarily out of fear of man or a desire to impress. Ask God to reveal the motivations behind your "yes." Were they rooted in love? Was your calendar booked in obedience to what God has called you to do? Or in anxiety? And if they were driven by people-pleasing, confess and repent. And begin learning to say a holy, grace-filled "no". Because a "yes" that dishonors God (even if it pleases others) is still disobedience. And a "no" that is said in humility and trust can be one of the most freeing, faithful choices you'll ever make.

4. Thorns and Thistles

The first three obstacles to stewarding time (laziness, busyness, and people-pleasing) each expose some area of our own sin or misplaced thinking. But the fourth obstacle is different. It doesn't always come from inside us. It comes from living in a fallen world. Sometimes, what attacks your time stewardship is not your own poor decisions, but the brokenness of the world around you. These are the thorns and thistles that God spoke of after Adam's sin in Genesis 3:17-18, **"Cursed is the ground because of you... thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you."**

These are the things you didn't plan for. The furnace broke, the transmission blew, little Joey needs braces, a serious health diagnosis, you lose your job, you get in another argument with your wife, and it's all her fault once again! The crying baby that keeps you up all night. The appliance that breaks the morning of your big meeting. The last-minute schedule changes that throw your week into chaos. These are what Romans 8:20-21 describes as the futility God has allowed in creation as a pointer to hope, **"For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption."**

In other words, God *lets* these interruptions exist. He's not delighting in your frustration, but He is teaching you in those moments that you're not God, and that is very good news. No amount of productivity training, no stack of planners or scheduling apps will ever remove this futility. Every single thing is *God-ordained*. And that means even when you do everything "right," your plans will still fail sometimes. Your best intentions will go sideways. Your goals will be delayed, because God is doing something deeper than helping you hit all your targets. He's shaping you. He's teaching you. He's calling you to rest in Him.

We said in an earlier lesson that God is the only one who gets His to-do list done every day. And it's true. That's His job, not yours. Psalm 127:1 says, **"Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain."** Your job is not to succeed in everything. Your job is to be faithful in whatever He gives and trust Him with the rest. So, when your plans get wrecked, your meeting is missed, or your toddler paints the walls with toothpaste, pause and remember that you are living in a world that is groaning under the weight of sin, but that same world is being redeemed by the goodness of a sovereign Saviour. God is not about fun or efficiency or Instagram-worthy productivity. He's about His glory. He's about showing the watching world how beautiful and powerful He is by redeeming broken people in a broken world. Even the futility of Ecclesiastes has a role in His story. It humbles us, awakens us, and lifts our eyes to something greater.

The next time you experience a minor (or major) time-wasting disaster: a flat tire, a ruined plan, a chaotic day, don't panic! Don't despair! Instead, let it be a holy reminder that you are not in control. And that's okay. Because the One who *is* in control is working all things (even interruptions) for your good and His glory. Even your inability to steward time perfectly is being used to showcase the One who never fails!

VI. Conclusion

Let me close with three prayerful and conclusive thoughts as we wrap up our time together:

1. Your Time Is Not Your Own

More than anything else, I pray this one truth has burrowed its way into your mind and heart. Your time has never been your own. Not a single second, ever. Just like your money, your body, your skills, and your health, your time belongs to God. He created it, entrusted it, and will one day call you to account for how it was spent. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 reminds us, **"You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."** Every second in your life is included in the call to glorify God. 1

Peter 4:10 expands this even further, **“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.”**

Time is one of those “varied graces.” And being a good steward means remembering that it’s not yours to hoard or waste, but it’s rather something to be offered back to God in joyful obedience. So ask yourself: *What are God’s purposes for the time He’s given me?* Not just, “What do I want to get done this week?” but rather, “How can I best reflect the heart and priorities of my *Saviour* in the hours ahead?”

2. Be Deliberate with God’s Time

In light of that truth, we are called to be deliberate. We need to remain intentional in all that we do. Live every minute of your life in a worshipful, responsive way. Don’t let your days happen to you. Instead, offer your days to God. You might choose to do this practically, by taking time at the start of each week or day to pray through your schedule, asking God to shape it and redirect it. Ask Him, *“Would you use these tasks to accomplish your will, and would you give me the wisdom to see if anything on this list doesn’t belong?”* What an act of tremendous faith that is! James 4:13–15 warns us, **“Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town...’—yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.’”** Humility in our planning is a declaration that God’s purposes matter more than our plans.

Be deliberate with your heart. Make space to ask God not just *what* you should do—but *why* you’re doing it. Proverbs 27:23–24 says, **“Know well the condition of your flocks, and give attention to your herds, for riches do not last forever.”** In that same spirit, know the condition of your time. If God calls you to care for your flocks and herds with diligence, how much more should you give attention to how your hours are spent? Psalm 90:12 echoes this with a prayer, **“So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.”** Deliberate living is wise living, because it’s not about doing more. It’s about aligning more of what you already do with the purposes of God.

3. Trust the Sovereign Goodness of God

Finally (and this is vital) trust the sovereign goodness of God. It’s so easy to become obsessed with whether we’re making the absolute “best” use of our time. We fret over missed opportunities, delayed projects, wasted minutes. The question isn’t, *“Did I use every minute perfectly?”* It’s: *“Did I live today by faith?”* *“Did I seek to reflect the goodness and glory of God with the time I had?”* If that’s your heart, then you can trust that your faithful (and fumbling) stewardship is not wasted. God is not evaluating you based on a performance chart. He is weaving your faith-filled obedience into His grand tapestry of redemption.

Romans 12:1 exhorts us to present our whole selves (including our time) as a living sacrifice, **“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice... which is your spiritual worship.”** When you offer your time (your days, your seasons, your moments) He receives them as worship. Even if you didn’t check every box. Even if you said no to something impressive so you could say yes to something quiet and hidden. Even if the day went sideways. Philippians 1:6 reminds us, **“He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”** Your life is not a random collection of appointments. It is a portrait, carefully painted by the hand of a sovereign and loving God. If you have lived in faith, with eyes on Him, then you are walking right in the center of His will. And that’s the only place worth being. So rest. Rejoice. Keep going. He is faithful!!!

Father in Heaven,

Thank You for the gift of time. We confess that we often treat it as our own, when it is Yours. We confess that we waste it in laziness, overfill it in busyness, surrender it to people-pleasing, and resent it when it's interrupted by thorns and thistles. Forgive us, Lord.

Teach us to number our days. Teach us to steward them, not with guilt or fear, but with joy and wisdom. Help us to be faithful with the moments You give us, trusting that You are weaving something glorious even through our weakness.

Father, give us eyes to see Your purposes in our calendars. Give us courage to say no to what You haven't called us to, and joy in saying yes to the responsibilities You've placed before us. Help us live not for the approval of man, but for the pleasure of Christ.

And above all, help us to rest, not in our perfect productivity, but in the perfect grace of Jesus, who lived, died, and rose again for us. May our time be spent to the praise of Your glory.

In Jesus' name we pray,
Amen.