

THE DASH

“Glorifying God in the Brevity of Life”

Part 2

Opening SCRIPTURE

King Solomon, when reflecting this brief life we live, wrote...

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.” (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8)

Prayer of Blessing

ENGAGING the Audience

As I prepare to turn forty years old in a few weeks, I’ve been thinking a lot about “time.” Did you know that the average life expectancy for an American male is 75.65 years? The average life expectancy for an American female is 80.69 years.

One day, while sitting in my office, I starting tinkering around with this statistic and I came up with some startling figures. If, by God’s grace, He has numbered my days like the average American male, I have thirty-five years of life left. That translates into...

- 420 months
- 1,826 weeks
- 12,783 days
- 306,803 hours

Now, that may seem like a lot of months, weeks, days, and hours of living I’ve got left. But, those numbers do not factor in sleep. Do you want to consider something startling?

- If I were to sleep seven hours per day (the recommended daily allowance by medical doctors) for the next thirty-five years, I will have slept away a staggering 3,728 days. Do you know what that means? That means I will have slept away *ten* years of my life. Thus, instead of thirty-five years of living, I've actually got twenty-five years of living.

How about television? Since television and media play such a huge role in our living, I thought I should factor in my television and internet habits. Consider this...

- If I were to consume two¹ combined hours of television and internet per day for the next thirty-five years, I will have watched and surfed away 1,065 days of my life. That means I will have spent three full years of my life staring at a screen. So, instead of twenty-five years of living, now I'm down to twenty-two years of living.

As a soon-to-be 40 yr. old man, I've got (with God's grace) twenty-two years of living left based on these figures. That's not a lot of time, is it?

Here are some additional figures that may help many of you ponder the importance of God-glorifying time management. Based on seven hours of sleep and two hours of media consumption per day...

- If you are a 50 yr. old male, you have 16 yrs. of living left.
- If you are a 55 yr. old male, you have 12 yrs. of living left.
- If you are a 60 yr. old male, you have 9 yrs. of living left.
- If you are a 65 yr. old male, you have 6 yrs. of living left.

Women, are you ready? Based on seven hours of sleep and two hours of media consumption per day for the rest of your life...

- If you are a 40 yr. old female, you have 25 yrs. of living left.
- If you are a 50 yr. old female, you have 19 yrs. of living left.
- If you are a 55 yr. old female, you have 16 yrs. of living left.
- If you are a 60 yr. old female, you have 13 yrs. of living left.
- If you are a 65 yr. old female, you have 9 yrs. of living left.

Pondering our lives thru the lens of these statistics is quite sobering, isn't it?

¹ According to the Nielsen Company, the average American adult watches 4.6 hours of Television per day and surfs the web 1.25 hours per day.

Making the CONNECTION

Benjamin Franklin once wrote...

“Dost thou love life? Then waste not time; for time is the stuff life is made of.”

According to Benjamin Franklin, when we waste “time” we waste life. Put differently, Benjamin Franklin reminds us that one of the most (if not *the* most) valuable gifts God has entrusted to our stewardship is **TIME**.

Here’s a question I’ve been exploring in my own life recently – ***“How am I managing and investing God’s time for His glory and His Kingdom?”***

How would you honestly answer that question?

Let’s face it; we’ve all wasted God’s time at some point in our lives. I don’t know about you, but just the thought of how much time I’ve wasted during the last forty years is embarrassing and convicting. I know this, I have no desire to waste the next twenty-two years of my life – or however long God grants me life this side of heaven. My desire is to manage and invest however much time God has determined for me for His glory, His fame, and His Kingdom. How about you?

The truth is, whether you are a child, a teenager, a young parent, or a retiree; wealthy, middle class, or poor; educated or not; the priceless gift of time is something we have all been called by God to manage and invest for His glory and His Kingdom.

We all are managers and investors of God’s time. Time does not discriminate based on age, wealth, or education. God has given each of us a predetermined number of days. We cannot add to them nor can we take away from them.

Thus, the question is not - *“How many days do I have left?”* This is the wrong question. There’s no way to know our number – only God knows.

The right question is this...

“How am I going to manage and invest the days God has blessed me with?”

It is impossible for us to influence the number of days God has determined for us. However, it is within our power to make the most of those days. It is within our power to use God’s time as a faithful manager and investor.

This morning, God wants to show us how we can manage and invest His time for His glory, His fame, and His Kingdom.

Exploring the SCRIPTURE

Turn in your Bible to Ephesians 5:15-21.

God says and Paul writes...

*“Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, **making the best use of time**, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”*

When it comes to God’s call on our lives to manage and invest His time, there may not be a clearer text of application than this text right here. The focal point of this text is time. Paul commands the Ephesians **“to make the best use of time...”**

Laid out for us in this text are three time management principles that, if practiced regularly in our daily living, will radically change our lives. If you desire to be a faithful steward of God’s time then implementing these three timeless principles is a must.

Three Key Principles for Managing & Investing God’s Time

PRINCIPLE #1

Intentionally and consistently examine your life and it’s direction with eternity in mind.

To begin with, Paul charges the Ephesians to **“look carefully then [on] how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise...”**

When instructing the Ephesians to *“look carefully,”* Paul uses an imperative Greek verb which means that Paul is giving an urgent command that he expects will receive immediate attention and action. By using the imperative mood of the verb, Paul is communicating a sense of urgency. Immediate action is required!

This Greek verb *“look”* literally means to examine, investigate, and contemplate something with great care and diligence. Paul is exhorting the Ephesians to not waste their lives by wasting God’s time. Paul wants them to give immediate, careful, and thoughtful reflection on the direction of their lives.

Becoming a faithful manager and investor of God's time demands that we intentionally examine our life and its current direction on a regular basis. Our lives, and how we walk, should be directed aimed at nothing other than eternity.

Would you like to make the most of the time God has entrusted to you? Begin practicing the regular discipline of self-examination. As you do so, ask yourself one key question – ***“Am I maximizing God's time with eternity in mind?”***

The truth is this; the moment we lose sight of eternity, we begin squandering and wasting the time God has entrusted to us.

When is the last time that you have cleared your overloaded schedule and given careful examination to the direction of your life? When is the last time you've turned off the television, cell phone, and any other distraction and simply allowed the Holy Spirit of Jesus to examine your life and its direction? Is it possible that you have lost sight of Heaven? If so, then more than likely you are not investing God's time in a manner that brings Him glory and fame.

Time waits for no man! Start managing and investing God's time wisely by practicing the discipline of self-examination.

PRINCIPLE #2

Determine thru prayer and Scripture meditation what the will of the Lord is for your life!

Next, Paul exhorts the Ephesians to *“do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”*

If I asked you to write out God's will for your life, how many of you could clearly articulate God's specific calling and will for you?

Listen carefully!

What the Apostle Paul writes here is a nice way of saying, *“If you are living life without a clear understanding of God's specific will, you are living the life of a fool.”*

Do you know what a fool is? A fool is someone who lacks judgment. A fool is someone who has been tricked and deceived into acting stupid and ignorant. To live life without a clear vision for God's will for you is to live the life of a fool.

God has a specific will and plan for your life – a plan that He wants you to discover thru an intimate relationship with Him. The Bible says...

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for wholeness and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will hear you. You will seek Me and find Me. When you seek Me with all your heart, I will be found by you, declares the Lord...”
(Jeremiah 29:11-14)

Many Christians have memorized verse 11. Unfortunately, most Christians have neglected verses 12-14. It is these three verses that reveal the key to knowing the will and plans of God for our lives. We must pray and seek God with all of our heart. When we do that, God promises that will find Him. And, when we find God thru prayer and Scripture meditation, we will find His will for our lives.

I hear Christians constantly say, *“I just don’t know what God’s will is for me?”* My response is simple...

“Are you seeking God, thru prayer and Scripture meditation, with all of your heart?”

Don’t live the life of a fool! Start managing and investing God’s time wisely by seeking and knowing, thru prayer and Scripture, what the specific will of God is for your life.

PRINCIPLE #3

Refuse to live under the influence of anything or anyone other than the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ!

Our third principle is found when Paul exhorts the Ephesians to *“do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit...”*

One of the keys to managing and investing God’s time for His glory is living a life that refuses to be under the influence of anything or anyone other the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Many of us have regretful stories of times when we have allowed our lives – our minds, hearts, and bodies – to become influenced and controlled by people and things other than God. That’s exactly what it means to be drunk. By using the illustration of wine, Paul is not highlighting alcohol per se. Rather, Paul is teaching a broader principle of life and the stewardship of time.

God created us and redeemed us to live under the influence and control of the Holy Spirit – the Comforter, the Helper, the Friend, the Advocate, and the Convictor of sin and unrighteousness.

Do you know what “debauchery” means? Debauchery means “wasteful and reckless.”

When we allow God’s time to come under the control of anything or anyone other than the Spirit of Jesus Christ, we are choosing to live wasteful and reckless lives.

Who or what is controlling your time? Are you living a life that is under the influence of something or someone other than the Spirit of Christ and the Word of God? If so, God says you are living a wasteful and reckless life.

In Galatians 5:16, Paul says...

“Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.”

What does walking in the Spirit look like? Well, Paul tells us in the remaining verses of our passage. Paul writes...

“And do not be drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

Notice three specific aspects of a life that is controlled by the Holy Spirit.

1. A life controlled by the Holy Spirit is a life that invests its time in fulfilling the Great Commandment, which is to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. **Are you living a life of worship?**
2. A life controlled by the Holy Spirit is a life that invests its time reflecting and giving thanks for the blessings that God, thru Christ Jesus, has lavished upon you. **Are you living a life of gratitude?**
3. A life controlled by the Holy Spirit is a life that invests its time in modeling Christ by putting the needs of others ahead of your own. **Are you living a life of servanthood?**

To live any other way is to invest God’s time in wasteful and reckless pursuits.

Start managing and investing God’s time wisely by living under the influence of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

Closing

An anonymous author once wrote...

“Every morning you are handed 24 golden hours. They are one of the few things in this world that you get free of charge. If you had all the money in the world, you couldn't buy an extra hour. What will you do with this priceless treasure?”

John Dryden, a famous 17th Century British poet, once said...

“Time is the most valuable coin in your life. You and you alone will determine how that coin will be spent.”

How are you investing the coin of God's time?

One day, we all will kneel before the Lord Jesus Christ and we will give an account for how we managed and invested the time He blessed us with.

Don't waste God's time!

Make your “dash” count for the glory and fame of God and the furtherance of His Heavenly Kingdom.