

Equipped to manage our time well

How often have you told someone that you “don’t have time” to do something? This can sometimes be an excuse for not wanting to get involved in a particular activity, either because it doesn’t interest us very much or we imagine we’re incredibly busy and think there’s just no way we can fit in the request. As a result, we might miss a great opportunity to be part of something worthwhile. At the other extreme are those of us who habitually say “yes” to others because we don’t want to let them down or we would feel guilty about saying “no”. We then regret taking on yet another commitment and end up carrying a heap of false guilt because we *haven’t* said “no”! Time is a resource that requires good management. It’s also a gift from God. He gives each of us 24 hours every day and 168 hours every week. Here are six principles that I’m learning to take on board and I’d like to share them with you.

Be aware that time is limited. Moses, in writing Psalm 90, makes this request to God: “*Teach us to make the most of our time, so that we may grow in wisdom*”.¹ Are you making the most of your time? Am I? Another psalm reminds us that “*Our days on earth are like grass; like wildflowers, we bloom and die. The wind blows, and we are gone - as though we had never been here*”.² It’s quite sobering to remind ourselves that we won’t live on this present earth forever. We seem to forget we’re mortal and that our days are numbered. Let’s allow this to motivate us to be as productive as possible with whatever remaining time we have.

Spend time with God every day. Most of us are busy people but we can’t afford to let that dictate whether or not we spend time with God. Perhaps it will mean getting up earlier than usual; missing our favourite television programme; giving up that coffee break. Whatever it takes, let’s build time with God into our daily schedule.

Don’t be lazy! Laziness can have serious consequences.³ Perhaps you can add some negative outcomes of your own... Can you think of ways you can minimize laziness from day to day? Why not put these into practice?

Appreciate there are seasons of time. The writer of Ecclesiastes tells us there is a time for everything.⁴ Why not read these verses now and make a note of which ones stand out to you. What do you learn from them? How do they relate to the relationships and events in your life right now?

Take advantage of every opportunity. The apostle Paul was very keen to take advantage of opportunities that came his way to share the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ with those in his sphere of influence. He encourages us to do the same.⁵ I find myself asking, “*What does it mean for me, in my circumstances, to take advantage of every opportunity?*” It takes a conscious decision to spend part of our daily time building relationships with people around us. Like you and me, God has gifted time to people in our family, neighbourhood, or workplace, and it’s no accident that our paths cross. Perhaps God means for *you* to be the one to share His good news of salvation with some of these people.

Guard against becoming overcommitted. In order to manage my time well, I have to tell myself that I don’t have to try to do everything. I am learning to say “no” to some things - even good things. I have to be careful about committing myself to tasks just because someone asks me. I need to guard against being a people-pleaser, or convincing myself that I am super-human. Whenever I’m asked to take on additional responsibility, I like to take time to think through the implications of saying “yes”. If I decide that getting involved is the appropriate thing to do, I might consider letting something else go in exchange for this new challenge. If I don’t, I can quickly find myself becoming overloaded and overwhelmed. As far as possible, it’s a good idea to choose what to say “yes” or “no” to. It all helps in managing our time well!

¹ Psalm 90:12 (NLT)

² Psalm 103:15, 16 (NLT)

³ Proverbs 6:9-11; 10:4; Ecclesiastes 10:18

⁴ Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

⁵ Ephesians 5:15, 16; Colossians 4:5