

CHAPTER 18

Offering My Time

KEY IDEA

I offer my time to fulfill God's purposes.

KEY VERSE

Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. – Colossians 3:17

BEGIN BY RECITING THE KEY VERSE AND THE KEY IDEA TOGETHER AS A GROUP.

LESSON

INTRODUCTION:

God's gift of time is a treasure. We need to learn to trade the time he gives for that which will last for eternity in his kingdom.

> Submitting to God's will for our lives affects the daily choices we make about how we spend our time.

Time is a mystery. We sense its passing in our consciousness. We measure its progress. We mark its flight through the years and read the record it leaves behind through history.

FROM BILLGRAHAM.ORG

The Bible teaches that time and life are tied together. It seems that the whole universe is organized for measuring time. Nature is like a huge clockmaker's shop in which thousands of timepieces are ticking. Pulse beats indicate the fleeting moments; the rotation of the earth marks the passing of day and night; the phases of the moon, the moving on of the months; the revolutions of the planets, the march of the years.

Geology studies the wrinkles written by time on earth's brow. Astronomy studies the clockwork of the heavens. Archaeology, peering about among the relics of the ancient past, traces the footprints of time in the ages gone by. ... But time is a thief. Time steals strength from our muscles and youth from our faces. Time robs us of our health and strips us at last of everything that we have.

As negative as the last three sentences of this quote seem, is there truth to it? How does this make you feel?

PARAPHRASED FROM *THINK, ACT, BELIEVE* BY RANDY FRAZEE

Most of us consider Monday morning to be the start of our week, and Sunday night the end. The rotation of the clock continues for us all.

- > Here is an interesting fact about our time: We all are given the same exact amount of this gift.
 - < There are seven days in a week and there are 24 hours in each day — $7 \times 24 = 168$.
 - < We all get 168 hours every single week.
 - < We have no choice. We can't buy or barter for more time, and we can't decide to take less.
 - < We do, however, have the choice of how we use each hour.
- > Time is a precious commodity, as well as an equalizing factor, for all mankind.
 - < None of us can offer any excuse for productivity or any priority for having less or more time than anyone else.
- > So...how do we use this finite resource called time?

THE MEANING OF TIME TO CHRISTIANS

To the Christian, time has a moral significance and a spiritual meaning.

Time is a trust:

- > We have to realize that our time is not our own, it is God's time; and we need to honor him with ours.
 - < Too often we think that our time is ours to use however we wish.
- > God has given us the freedom of choice regarding how we use our time, but he also teaches us through his Word that nothing we have is our own, it is God's, we are managers.
 - < God owns everything, and God distributes it to us according to his wisdom. Whether it is our job, our money, our abilities, our personality, and even our time, it is a gift from God.

Time is a test:

- > Time past is time over which we have no power, but time to come gives each of us the possibility of moral and spiritual choices.
- > Time in itself is neither good nor bad--it is what we make it.

FROM BILL GRAHAM.ORG

As life goes on, there are billions of events happening in every moment of historic time. To those billions of events we contribute our quotas. What is the next contribution that you will make? In the next instant you can tell a lie or commit other sins, or you can choose to use that time to serve God and to lay up treasures for eternity.

How do you feel you are doing on this "time test"? Are you passing?

Time is an appointment:

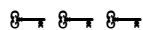
- > Time has been given to us for the purpose of glorifying God in this life.
- > Time in an appointment with Christ. (2 Corinthians 6:2) ² *In the Scriptures God says, "When the time came, I listened to you, and when you needed help, I came to save you." That time has come. This is the day for you to be saved."*

< No matter how famous or wealthy a person may be, nor what their contributions to the arts and sciences, if he/she has not come into a conversion experience with Jesus Christ, then that person has lived in vain.

< We can come out of time and enter eternity with Him.

God has given us 86,400 seconds every day (do the math!). Even if we subtract eight hours for sleep, it is still 57,600 seconds/day. These seconds are not transferable to the next day, you can't take them with you. You get one shot to use them. When they are gone, they are gone, you can never go back and relive them again.

> When we wake up in the next morning we know that, God willing, we have 86,400 more seconds to use. How will we choose to use them? How will we spend our time, or how do I manage my time, my 86,400 seconds in a way that brings honor and glory to God.



Giving God Our Time

In essence, we cannot talk about “our” time since all time belongs to God. Every moment we have is a gift from him. It is because of this fact that we are called to use that time to honor our Father. The prophet Jonah learned this the hard way. God called Jonah to redirect his time from the popular job of serving Israel to the unpopular assignment of traveling to Nineveh to give their enemy a chance to repent and be saved by God.

See Jonah 1:1-2:20 (pgs. 283-285 BELIEVE).

The Story Summary

The book of Jonah is an Old Testament story which tells about how the prophet Jonah refused to follow the Lord. Through some supernatural events, God convinced him to obey and carry out the Lord's plan and Jonah eventually did what he had been asked to do.

Jonah received a call from the Lord to preach repentance to the people of Nineveh. Instead of obeying and going straight to Nineveh, he went to Joppa to board a ship to the city of Tarshish. Nineveh was inland from where Jonah lived and Tarshish was across the sea.

His disobedience brought punishment upon himself and others around him. After he boarded the ship to Tarshish there was a great storm. During the storm the men working on the ship began calling upon their gods to deliver them from whatever punishment was being given. The workers found Jonah in the bottom of the ship asleep. They woke him up and asked him to pray to his God to protect them.

The men cast lots to see who had brought this punishment upon them. The lot fell upon Jonah. He confessed that he was a Hebrew and was running away from God. Jonah asked the men to throw him overboard. Instead they tried harder to bring the ship to land. Jonah finally convinced them that he was the one who had brought judgment from God. The sailors agreed to throw him into the sea.

As soon as Jonah was tossed into the water the storm broke and everything was calm.

Jonah went into the water, but not to be killed by drowning. Instead he was swallowed by a great fish (Jesus called it a whale in Matthew 12:40). He was in the whale's belly for 3 days and 3 nights.

Jonah awoke in the belly of the fish and cried out to God. He confessed his disobedience and told God that he would accomplish the task that the Lord had called him to. God then instructed the whale to vomit Jonah out onto dry ground.

Rather than using his time as God had intended, Jonah tried to take matters in his own hands, resulting in disobedience and a time of stress for Jonah and others.

> God had called the Israelites to be a blessing to all nations, but whenever the Jews were out of the will of God, they brought trouble instead of blessing.

< Jonah brought trouble to himself and to the sailors by ignoring God's call.

SERVING GOD'S PURPOSES

Not only are we to give our time to God, but we are also to use that time to serve his purposes, which can mean many different things. Like Jonah, God's people often needed reminders about this. When the first exiles returned to Judah from captivity in Babylon, one of their first priorities was to rebuild the temple and restore worship to the one true God. In 536 BC, under the leadership of Zerubbabel, the building project began. When opposition from the Samaritans and other neighbors intensified, the people got discouraged and the building came to a complete halt. For ten years the project laid dormant. The prophet Haggai delivered a chilling and effective message from God encouraging the people of God to reconsider how they prioritized their time.

Haggai 1:1-15 (CEV)

¹ On the first day of the sixth month of the second year that Darius was king of Persia, the LORD told Haggai the prophet to speak his message to the governor of Judah and to the high priest.

So Haggai told Governor Zerubbabel and High Priest Joshua ²⁻⁵ that the LORD All-Powerful had said to them and to the people: "You say this isn't the right time to build a temple for me. But is it right for you to live in expensive houses, while my temple is a pile of ruins? Just look at what's happening. ⁶ You harvest less than you plant, you never have enough to eat or drink, your clothes don't keep you warm, and your wages are stored in bags full of holes. ⁷ Think about what I have said! ⁸ But first, go to the hills and get wood for my temple, so I can take pride in it and be worshiped there. ⁹ You expected much, but received only a little. And when you brought it home, I made that little disappear. Why have I done this? It's because you hurry off to build your own houses, while my temple is still in ruins. ¹⁰ That's also why the dew doesn't fall and your harvest fails. ¹¹ And so, at my command everything will become barren—your farmland and pastures, your vineyards and olive trees, your animals and you yourselves. All your hard work will be for nothing."

¹² Zerubbabel and Joshua, together with the others who had returned from exile in Babylonia, obeyed the LORD's message spoken by his prophet Haggai, and they started showing proper respect for the LORD. ¹³ Haggai then told them that the LORD had promised to be with them. ¹⁴ So the LORD God All-Powerful made everyone eager to work on his temple, especially Zerubbabel and Joshua. ¹⁵ And the work began on the twenty-fourth day of that same month.

*In the sixth month, on the first day of the month...*In the past the Jews regularly celebrated the appearance of the new moon on this date.

> The celebration had always been at the Temple, but there was no longer a temple.

< (Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed it when he conquered Jerusalem.)

God's name in verse 2 (God All Powerful/Lord of Hosts/Lord of Heaven's Armies/Lord Who Rules Over All/Lord Almighty -- depending on the version) is often used for the leader of armies of Israel, but sometimes refers to the Leader of the heavenly armies. It emphasizes God's power.

> He is the power behind Israel. He can do all things, overcome all opposition, and carry out his plans and purposes until everything he desires is done.

> This is what Haggai wanted the people to understand: If God wanted the Temple to be rebuilt, nothing could stop it.

After Cyrus issued his decree to let the Jews return to Jerusalem, Zerubbabel led nearly 50,000 people back to Jerusalem.

- > The people returned to a scene that was different than they had expected.
 - < Instead of their old occupiable houses, they found that most had been destroyed.
 - < Instead of finding farmable land, they found that weeds and shrubs had taken over.
 - < Instead of returning home to friends and family, they found the land occupied by hostile foreign squatters who had settled on some of the land.
- > There was so much to be done before they could begin work on the temple that they believed they had made a mistake returning and should delay the rebuilding of the Temple.
 - < Food needed to be found, land needed to be cleared, houses needed to be rebuilt, and squatters needed to be evacuated.

As God begins to speak in this first message (vs. 2), it is important to note that the people--not God--have been saying that it is not time to rebuild the Temple.

> The people were using hard times as an excuse for not rebuilding the Temple.

FROM SMART GUIDE TO STUDYING THE BIBLE: RETURN FROM EXILE

Some people who face opposition today say, "It's just not God's will. The Lord is just not in it." The Jews gave up before they had even begun. God's people must not be dissuaded from doing God's work just because it doesn't happen to be convenient for them at the time.

In verses 3-4 we see that the people lived in "paneled" houses ("expensive" houses in CEV). Paneled houses were not cheap in those days--they were expensive.

- > God was doing more than asking questions, he was pointing out that the Jews were just making excuses when they said the time was not right.
- > There is nothing wrong with the Jews wanting to provide a good place to live for their families. But there is no good excuse for not doing God's work.
 - < When people have their priorities in the right order, God's work comes first.
- > Noteworthy is that the Jews were not saying they wouldn't do it, they just didn't want to do it now.
 - < They were not quite ready to offer their time to the Lord's work.
 - < They allowed their own personal cares to get in the way.

In verses 5-6 we see God asking the people to take into consideration what was happening to them.

- > They were planting large crops, but they were not producing very much.
- > They were eating and drinking, but they did not have enough to fill them.
- > They were buying clothes, but they weren't good enough to keep them warm.
- > They were working all the time, but still lived in poverty.

Love and discipline are not opposites with God.

> God's people should support God's work. Those who withhold from him may really be withholding from themselves.

< God let the Jews suffer poor crops, famine, poverty, and unproductive hard work as a means of discipline. They would not prosper without the blessings that come when people do things his way.

When we look at the world around us we may not be able to see that those who withhold from God may really be withholding from themselves. There are several people who do not serve God, but still seem to prosper. But we must remember that this is for God's people, not the people that still belong to the world. With this in mind, what are your thoughts regarding the above statement?

In verses 7-8 God tells the people to do four things:

- 1) They were to put their priorities in place--God first.
- 2) They were to just get up and do it.
- 3) They were not to wait for others to do the work. They should do it themselves.
- 4) They were to finish the job.

When all these things were accomplished the blessing of God would return to them.

In verse 9 we see that the Israelites looked for material things without doing spiritual things.

> God told them that they couldn't have the material blessings without first being a spiritual blessing.

The Jews were disappointed because God would not allow their materialism to interfere with their relationship with him. Do you think it is the same today? Are today's Christians wanting God to not interfere with their material lives?

> Putting off what we know God wants us to do not only offends God, but also harms us because God always has our best interest in mind when he requires something of us.

< He will often withdraw his hand of blessing to get our attention.

When we get to verse 12 we see that the leaders and people finally responded to God and did three things:

- 1) They obeyed the voice of the Lord.
- 2) They obeyed the words of God sent by the prophet Haggai.
- 2) They exercised reverent fear at the presence of God.

Verse 13 brings the comforting words from God that he is with his people.

> Now nothing could keep them from building the temple, all they had to do was repent and serve God.

There are times when things are not working out. It is easy to get discouraged and wonder why God is not revealing himself. Could it be that there needs to be a renewal of commitment to the Lord and his work?

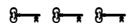
- > God is not opposed to people having worldly goods and pleasures. He is the source of these things. But people who try to find their peace and contentment in these things will find they are not satisfied.
- < Making God our first priority always yields the greater blessings and yields greater fruit for the benefit of ourselves and others.

One person who never needed reminding of the fact that his time was to be dedicated to God was God's Son, Jesus. After attending the Festival of Passover with his earthly parents, Jesus made the decision to stay a little longer and spend some time in the house of his heavenly Father. Even at the young age of twelve Jesus understood how best to use his time.

See Luke 2:41-52 (pgs. 286-287 in BELIEVE).

Luke 2:49 -- ⁴⁹*Jesus answered, "... Didn't you know that I would be in my Father's house?"*

- > Jesus gives a sense of obligation to God that is controlling his life.
- > By saying that he must be in his father's house indicates that, at age 12, he was clearly aware of being the Son of God.
- < He also understood that teaching would be central to his ministry and that his first priority was to serve his heavenly Father.



MANAGING OUR TIME

Managing our time involves discovering God's rhythms and balance. He desires for us to be replenished and renewed to face the assignments that lie ahead. One of the Ten Commandments instructed God's people to set aside the Sabbath as a day of rest. Christians today have sincere disagreements concerning whether or not Sabbath-keeping is obligatory. But before God gave the Israelites the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai, he gave them a command and a lesson regarding the Sabbath and collecting manna. God clearly designed people with the need for regular and deliberate rest.

See Exodus 16:1-30 (pgs. 287-289 in BELIEVE).

In verse 23, the Sabbath is mentioned by name for the first time in Scripture. The Jews had been taught to observe the Sabbath even before the law was given to Moses.

- > It is obvious that it was important to God to observe a Sabbath and that it should be kept.
- < He even changed the natural properties of the manna to accommodate the Sabbath.
 - ^ It did not spoil for the second day, as did the previous days of manna.
 - ^ It did not appear on the Sabbath as it had on the other days. If God was going to demand a Sabbath, he still was going to provide their needs.

The Sabbath was important for the people. (Exodus 16:29-30) They needed rest and they needed worship. ²⁹*Bear in mind that the LORD has given you the Sabbath; that is why on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Everyone is to stay where they are on the seventh day; no one is to go out.* ³⁰*So the people rested on the seventh day.*

> God made a Sabbath day because he knows human tendency is not to rest, nor is our tendency to focus on God. He created the Sabbath for two reasons:

< First, the Hebrews apparently didn't know how to rest. It would seem probably that as slaves to the Egyptians, recreational and rest time was not available.

< Secondly, God wanted a day of worship set aside for him. If the people were to remain faithful and continue in blessings, they needed to concentrate on the source of those blessings, this was done through worship.

^ When worship ceased, the people began to forget the God who blessed them and they suffered.

Time and priorities go hand in hand. God wants our time to reflect the priorities he has given to us. In fact, I don't think we will ever be truly satisfied with our management of time until our schedule reflects God's priorities. --SERMONCENTRAL.COM



KEY QUESTION: HOW DO I BEST USE MY TIME TO SERVE GOD AND OTHERS?

Clearly, God's Word, the Bible, contains stories and flat-out advice that illustrate healthy and godly time management. For example, the Israelites' needs were daunting after they escaped from Egypt. Living together in the harsh wilderness created an overwhelming docket of conflicts that needed refereeing. As the leader of the community, Moses tried his best to deal with each and every case on his own. Apparently Moses sent his wife, Zipporah, to her father with the news that the Lord had blessed his mission and that he was in the vicinity of Mount Sinai. When his father-in-law came to visit, he was deeply concerned with what he saw and gave Moses a lesson in time management.

See Exodus 18:5-27 (pgs. 289-291 in BELIEVE)

In this passage we see the description of the camp of Israel as a quiet place of family fellowship and daily business. But there were basic regulations for the camp.

- > The nation had elders, but they didn't seem to be assisting Moses in the daily affairs of the camp.
- > Because Moses was the leader, management of the codes fell to him. With a group reported to be 2,000,000 people, this was a difficult, time consuming undertaking, that would soon lead to burnout.

Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, who sees the need to make a change, steps in with some advice for Moses. He knew that Moses' leadership was crucial for the future success of Israel, but by trying to handle it himself he was draining his energy and wasting time on simple matters that could be better spent. The work was too much for Moses.

- > Jethro's suggestion was to first find capable men. Men of good character who would be honest and ethical.
- > Then he told Moses to make divisions of 1,000, 100, 50, and 10 with the people. Men were appointed to manage the assigned groups. If the manager of the 10 needed help he would go to the man with 50 etc.
- > Moses should only make time for decisions that no other leader could handle.
- > Moses took this plan to the leadership (see Deut. 1:9-18) and set up this mode of government.
 - < This allowed Moses to manage his time much better.

MANAGING OUR TIME

Busyness has become a status symbol in the United States. Even Christians fall into the trap of over-scheduling, over-doing and over-committing their time and resources.

> Time is our most treasured possession, but we often act as if it's not.

When thinking of how we view time and time management, we should start with Jesus.

> We must try to help people view time in light of eternity.

> We need to make the connection between how we spend our time today and what the result of that time spent will be in eternity.

WHY SHOULD WE MANAGE OUR TIME?

As Christians we should be managing our time because it is not ours. Time management is important because God calls us to be good stewards of all that he has entrusted to us.

> Some people have the mistaken idea that time management is all about cramming more stuff into an already overloaded schedule. That's not good time management.

< Good time management is all about finding the right balance in all the different areas of life.

> Remember, our time is limited.

< We have been given a certain amount of time here on earth for our lifetime.

< Our most valuable possession is our time.

> When we have the right view of time, that it belongs to God, then we can see how we fill that time in a different light.

> Ask two simple questions when thinking about committing your time to anything.

< What will be the result of this activity in five years?

< What will be the result of this activity in eternity?

> Time management includes saying "no." We are balancing our time between jobs, family, church and friends. This can be a daunting task.

< Before taking on any project, stop, pray, and wait to say either yes or no until you have given it some time for consideration.

< Keep in mind that every opportunity--no matter how good or helpful it may be to others--is not necessarily right for you at this moment.

> Managing your time also means scheduling a day off.

< Jesus demonstrated the need for rest in order to restore our energy.

< God established rest and restoration in his law regarding the Sabbath.

IN GOD'S TIMING

Jesus kept God as his focus in everything he did, including how he managed his time. When Jesus' ministry was in full swing, the demands on his schedule were intense. At this time in his journey, his brothers did not embrace his position as Messiah. With tongue in cheek they suggested Jesus make his way to Judea in time for a major Jewish festival to expedite his "campaign." Jesus informed them of an important principle of his life — he managed his priorities according to the timing of God the Father.

FROM John 7:1-16 (CEV)

¹ Jesus decided to leave Judea and to start going through Galilee because the Jewish leaders of the people wanted to kill him. ² It was almost time for the Festival of Shelters, ³ and Jesus' brothers said to him, "Why don't you go to Judea? Then your disciples can see what you are doing. ⁴ No one does anything in secret, if they want others to know about them. So let the world know what you are doing!" ⁵ Even Jesus' own brothers had not yet become his followers.

⁶ Jesus answered, "My time hasn't yet come,^[a] but your time is always here. ⁷ The people of this world cannot hate you. They hate me, because I tell them that they do evil things. ⁸ Go on to the festival. My time hasn't yet come, and I am not going."⁹ Jesus said this and stayed on in Galilee.

Jesus at the Festival of Shelters

¹⁰ After Jesus' brothers had gone to the festival, he went secretly, without telling anyone.

...¹⁴ When the festival was about half over, Jesus went into the temple and started teaching. ¹⁵ The leaders were surprised and said, "How does this man know so much? He has never been taught!"

¹⁶ Jesus replied: I am not teaching something that I thought up. What I teach comes from the one who sent me.

In this passage we see by Jesus' actions an illustration of divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

- > The Father had a plan for his Son and nothing could spoil that plan.,
 - < Jesus did not rush ahead by going to the feast too soon.
 - < He did not lag behind when the proper time had come for him to go.
- > It requires spiritual discernment to know God's timing.

God's relationship to time is one of the great mysteries of the Bible. Peter tells us, "*With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day*" (2 Peter 3:8). Peter seems to be recalling Moses' words: "*For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night*" (Psalm 90:4).

> We're here today and gone tomorrow. Nothing so short can be truly meaningful, can it? This is why it is so essential for us to place our hope in something that will endure rather than in the fleeting pleasures of this passing world.

< In the verse above, Peter indicates that the opposite is true of God's perspective on time. God, literally, has all the time in the world.

^ He's not in a hurry, nor is he taking his time. He is God, and he will do what he will do when he wills to do it.

- > God, in his sovereignty, has given you enough time to accomplish his purposes for your life.
 - < His plan has been unfolding since the beginning of what we call time. His call is for you to discover his plan for your life and act upon it.

THE REWARDS OF GIVING AWAY OUR TIME

When we give our time to serve the purposes of God, particularly to those who cannot reciprocate, God not only takes notice but may also reward us greatly.

The Bible says Christians are called to serve God by serving others. We are not saved *by* serving, but we are saved *for* serving. The Apostle Paul gives three insights related to this:

- > *First*, the basis for serving others is salvation. Paul says, "*You were called to be free.*" (Galatians 5:13)
 - < You cannot serve God until you've been set free by Jesus. It's the prerequisite for serving.
 - < Until you experience the transforming power of God's grace in your life, you're too enslaved by your own hurts, habits, and hang-ups to think much about others.
 - < Without the freedom of forgiveness, you'll end up serving for the wrong reasons:
 - ^ Trying to earn the approval of others
 - ^ Trying to run away from your pain

- ^ Trying to remedy your guilt
- ^ Trying to impress God.
- ^ Service motivated by these reasons is bound to leave you burned out and bitter in the end.

Second, the barrier to serving others is selfishness.

< Paul warns, *“Do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature.”* (Gal. 5:13)

< The reason we don’t have the time or energy to serve others is that we’re preoccupied with our own agendas, dreams, and pleasures.

Any comments on the above thought? Are we preoccupied with our own agendas?

^ Only a small minority of people use their lives to serve others, but Jesus said, *“If you insist on saving your life, you will lose it. Only those who throw away their lives for my sake and for the sake of the Good News will ever know what it means to really live.”* (Mark 8:35)

> Third, the motive for serving is love. Paul says, *“Serve one another in love.”* (Gal. 5:13)

< This is an important key to building community: *“No matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I’m bankrupt without love.”* (1 Corinthians 13:3 MSG)

< God is far more interested in why you serve others than in how well you serve them.

< You are most like Jesus when you’re serving others. (see John 13:14–15)

What is your response to this Scripture verse: “Each one of us needs to look after the good of the people around us, asking ourselves, ‘How can I help?’” (Romans 15:2, MSG)

Matthew 25:31-46 (CEV)

³¹ When the Son of Man comes in his glory with all of his angels, he will sit on his royal throne. ³² The people of all nations will be brought before him, and he will separate them, as shepherds separate their sheep from their goats.

³³ He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. ³⁴ Then the king will say to those on his right, *“My father has blessed you! Come and receive the kingdom that was prepared for you before the world was created.”* ³⁵ When I was hungry, you gave me something to eat, and when I was thirsty, you gave me something to drink. When I was a stranger, you welcomed me, ³⁶ and when I was naked, you gave me clothes to wear. When I was sick, you took care of me, and when I was in jail, you visited me.”

³⁷ Then the ones who pleased the Lord will ask, *“When did we give you something to eat or drink?”* ³⁸ When did we welcome you as a stranger or give you clothes to wear ³⁹ or visit you while you were sick or in jail?”

⁴⁰ The king will answer, "Whenever you did it for any of my people, no matter how unimportant they seemed, you did it for me."

⁴¹ Then the king will say to those on his left, "Get away from me! You are under God's curse. Go into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels! ⁴² I was hungry, but you did not give me anything to eat, and I was thirsty, but you did not give me anything to drink. ⁴³ I was a stranger, but you did not welcome me, and I was naked, but you did not give me any clothes to wear. I was sick and in jail, but you did not take care of me."

⁴⁴ Then the people will ask, "Lord, when did we fail to help you when you were hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in jail?"

⁴⁵ The king will say to them, "Whenever you failed to help any of my people, no matter how unimportant they seemed, you failed to do it for me."

⁴⁶ Then Jesus said, "Those people will be punished forever. But the ones who pleased God will have eternal life."

Christ says in Matthew that when we lovingly minister to people in need, we are ministering to him.

> *FROM ESV STUDY BIBLE: The righteous will inherit the kingdom not because of the compassionate works that they have done but because their righteousness comes from their transformed hearts in response to Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom, as evidenced by their compassion for the "least of these." In caring for those in need, the righteous discover that their acts of compassion for the needy are the same as if done for Jesus himself.*

Ephesians 5:15-17 (CEV)

¹⁵ Act like people with good sense and not like fools. ¹⁶ These are evil times, so make every minute count. ¹⁷ Don't be stupid. Instead, find out what the Lord wants you to do.

FROM THE TRANSFORMATION STUDY BIBLE

The Greek here carries the idea of precision and accuracy. "See that you live carefully, with exactness" is the meaning. The opposite would be walking carelessly and without proper guidance and forethought. We cannot leave the Christian life to chance. We must make wise decisions and seek to do the will of God.

Christians must take advantage of the opportunity to do good. And in seeking to do good we must apply God's guidelines for life as found in the Bible.

Galatians 6:7-10 (CEV)

⁷ You cannot fool God, so don't make a fool of yourself! You will harvest what you plant. ⁸ If you follow your selfish desires, you will harvest destruction, but if you follow the Spirit, you will harvest eternal life. ⁹ Don't get tired of helping others. You will be rewarded when the time is right, if you don't give up. ¹⁰ We should help people whenever we can, especially if they are followers of the Lord.

The spiritual principle of giving is not just to meet the material needs of those who are in need. But it is that the givers might get a greater blessing.

< God has ordained that we harvest/ reap (our blessings) what we plant/sow. We receive blessings in accordance with what time, effort, and support we put into it.

PARAPHRASED FROM *THINK, ACT, BELIEVE LIKE JESUS* by Randy Frazee

The Bible teaches in many passages about our use of time. Our daily schedules should look much different now than they did before our salvation: *“Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”* (Colossians 3:17)

> Jesus’ new life in us should change our priorities and how we view the gift of time. Our calendars must be redeemed not long after our souls are redeemed.

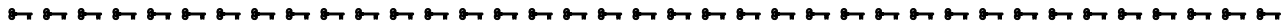
< Why else would anyone want to spend their day off helping a widow down the street with repairs on her house?

< Why else would anyone assist a single mom by watching her kids while she goes to buy groceries?

< Why else would anyone want to mentor an at-risk student once a week?

< Why else would anyone want to volunteer in the church nursery?

< These are but a few examples of what giving time back to Christ looks like.



KEY IDEA: I OFFER MY TIME TO FULFILL GOD’S PURPOSES.

Jesus' sacrifice of the cross was for us. We are now set free from living self-focused lives. We can now become engaged in the lives of others.

> Our time is no longer all about us, but is about Christ.

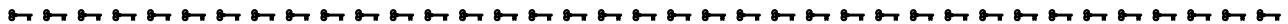
> Our time is not ours, but God's and his love motivates us to devote our schedule to serving his priorities.

We must not only offer our time to God, but we are to use that time to fulfill God's purposes, not our own or someone else's.

> As Christians, fulfilling God's plan and purpose with our time is crucial.

> We learned in the previous chapter of BELIEVE that God has given us spiritual gifts. Those gifts are to be used for others and for the glory of God.

> *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.* (Galatians 2:20)



KEY APPLICATION: WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES THIS MAKE IN THE WAY I LIVE?

FROM *THINK, ACT, BELIEVE LIKE JESUS* by Randy Frazee

While offering your time to fulfill God’s purposes is a straightforward concept, here are some suggestions to help you plan and prioritize.

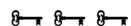
> **Keep a log of your schedule for a week.** ... At the end of the week, honestly answer these questions:

- ✓ Does my schedule reflect how God wants me to use my time?
- ✓ What adjustments should I make?
- ✓ Where am I allowing room for temptation or sin?
- ✓ Is there an activity I believe God is calling me to stop or delay?
- ✓ Is there an activity I believe God is calling me to add to my schedule?
- ✓ Where can I make more room for the use of my spiritual gift?

> **Seek out a ministry opportunity during your lunch hour or some other block of time that you could consistently make available for serving others.** Look for small blocks of time you might not even realize you are wasting, which could easily be used for kingdom purposes.

> **Unite the practice of prayer with the practice of offering your time.** Ask God to show you how to use your time wisely and in such a way that it brings glory to him.

- As you pray for God's guidance, he will help you *manage* time. The author of Ecclesiastes writes, "*There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.*" (3:1) As a steward of your life and manager of all God has given you, placing your calendar on the altar and offering it to the Lord is a great step of obedience to true lordship. His omniscience allows him to know exactly where you are and where you should be, what you are doing and what you should be doing, the people you are with and the people you should be with. All this he can tell you at any moment of the day. Giving him full access to speak to you at any time regarding your calendar will make all the difference as you serve in his name in your little corner of the world.
- As you pray for God's guidance, he will help you *multiply* time. In the book of Proverbs, we read, "*Wisdom will multiply your days and add years to your life.*" (9:11) God has an amazing way of multiplying any resource given to him (remember the feeding of the five thousand!). In a way similar to what happened when the boy offered the loaves and fish, the more you commit your hours to him, the more your life will count and have an impact on people. Just as time spent with no regard to God is quickly and easily wasted, time surrendered to him is made to count for all eternity.
- As you pray for God's guidance, he will help you *maximize* time. The author of Job tells us, "*A person's days are determined; you have decreed the number of his months and have set limits he cannot exceed.*" (14:5) While multiplying and maximizing may seem similar, multiplying is completely up to God. You give; he multiplies. Maximizing your time is a joint and synergetic effort between your focused obedience and his favored omniscience. What if every morning or each night you prayed, *Father, my time is yours. Show me, lead me, speak to me about what you want me to do, about how to use this precious gift wisely, and then you listened, trusted, and obeyed?*



More than 300 years ago, François Fénelon, a 17th century cleric, understood how valuable time is. He wrote: **Time is precious, but we do not know yet how precious it really is. We will only know when we are no longer able to take advantage of it.... Liberal and generous in every way, God in the wise economy of his providence teaches us how we should be prudent about the proper use of time. He never gives us two moments at the same time. He never gives us a second moment without taking away the first. And he never grants us that second moment without holding the third one in his hand, leaving us completely uncertain as to whether we will have it.**

