

## REDEEMING THE TIME

### “The Wise Use of Time”

#### Introduction

- How good is your sense of time? Exercise 1 & 2.

Exercise 1<sup>1</sup>:

You need a partner for this. Have them watch a clock and give you a go sign. Without looking at a watch or counting, signal when you think a minute has passed. How did you do?

“When a man sits with a pretty girl for an hour, it seems like a minute. But let him sit on a hot stove for a minute, and it’s longer than any hour. That’s relativity.” Albert Einstein.<sup>2</sup>

Exercise 2:

How accurately can you answer these questions:

- How much sleep do you average a night? A week?
- How many hours do you work per week?
- How much time do you spend in prayer a day? A week?
- How much time do you spend in the Word per day? Per week?
- How much time do you spend in fellowship with your spouse? (Daily, weekly)
- How much time do you spend in fellowship with your children? (Daily, weekly)
- How much time do you spend on entertainment weekly (i.e. TV, movie rentals, theater, fiction reading)?

How did you do? *We need to have an accurate perception of the passage of time and be able to account for how we spend it if we ever hope to steward our time well.*

- What is your psychology of time? Exercise 3.

Exercise 3<sup>3</sup>:

Write down some phrases that reflect how you relate to or deal with time. Some examples would be “I am learning to spend my time wisely,” or “I save time by making to-do lists,” or “I waste a lot of time after dinner.”

Now insert the word “life” where you have written “time.” Does this change your concept of or relationship to time?

Time management author Marshall Cook has these observations on time:

“We aren’t talking about some tangible commodity when we discuss the time of our lives. We no more ‘have’ time than we ‘have’ inches in height.

*We’re talking about our very lives.*<sup>4</sup>

...we never seem able to ‘find time’ for those important but not urgent activities...Stop looking. You’ll never *find* time. It isn’t lost. You’re living it.

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<sup>1</sup> Marshall J. Cook, *Time Management: Proven Techniques for Making the Most of Your Valuable Time*, Adams Media Corporation, Holbrook, Massachusetts, © 1998, Adams Media Corporation, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Stan Toler in *Stewardship of Time*, Beacon Hill Press, Kansas City, © 1998 Beacon Hill Press, p. 90.

<sup>3</sup> Cook, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, emphasis in original.

You have to consciously decide to live it in certain ways and not others. You have to *make* time by taking it away from one activity and giving it to another.”<sup>5</sup>

- We Need Wisdom to Redeem Time.

Col. 4:5 “Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.” KJV<sup>6</sup>

*Walking in wisdom is redeeming the time. If we lack wisdom, what are we to do?*

James 1:5

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

*Wisdom is the principle thing, for it adds to our life in more ways than one.*

Proverbs 3:13-18

13 Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.

14 For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.

15 She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.

16 Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour.

17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

18 She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her.

*Wisdom is a tree of life and adds length of days to our lives. It is the key to getting more time and more out of the time we have. What is the beginning of wisdom?*

Proverbs 9:10-12

10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

11 For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased.

12 If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself: but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.

*By the fear of the Lord shall our days be multiplied and our years increased. This is a tremendous promise of God to us. Wisdom from God will keep us from wasting time and cause us to use the time we have more fruitfully. The greatest key to time stewardship is the submission of our lives to God Almighty, the Master of Time.*

- Non-conformity and the children of the world.

Romans 12:2

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

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<sup>5</sup> Cook, p. 68, emphasis in original.

<sup>6</sup> All references are from the King James Version of the Bible unless otherwise noted.

*It is the world system as it is manifested in the typical American lifestyle that is driving us over the edge. Busyness and speed swallow up our lives as we seek for quality time with our families while eating fast food or microwave meals after making it home through the rush hour! We are not to be conformed to this world. But unlike much of the church, the world has sought to figure out how to better manage their time.*

Luke 16:8-9

8 And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

9 And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

*In presenting this teaching, I will be drawing from some of the time management technology of the world. As Jesus said, the children of this world are in some things wiser than the children of light. So long as these principles and tools do no violence to Scripture and bring good fruit, they are useful. I offer you as an example another quote from Marshall Cook.*

“Time management isn’t just or even primarily about doing more things in the same amount of time or doing the same number of things in less time. Time management also involves choosing to do the *right* things.”<sup>7</sup>

*Indeed, stewarding time is all about doing the right things. We need to be aware of how we are currently spending our time, prioritize our time correctly, and implement cures for slothfulness and overload.*

## **I. How We Spend Our Time**

### **1. The Average American Life**

#### **A. The Time We Have.**

“The average person lives 74 years. That is approximately 888 months; 27,010 days; 648,240 hours; 38,894,400 minutes; 2,022,508,800 heartbeats.”<sup>8</sup>

#### **B. How We Spend It.**

The average life in the US is spent in the following ways:<sup>9</sup>

- 20 years sleeping
- 20 years working
- 6 years eating
- 7 years playing
- 5 years dressing
- 1 year on the telephone
- 2.5 years in bed
- 3 years waiting for someone
- 6 months tying shoes

<sup>7</sup> Cook, p. 36, emphasis in original.

<sup>8</sup> Toler, p. 19.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

In addition, we might spend:<sup>10</sup>

- 7 years in the bathroom
- 5 years waiting in line
- 3 years in meetings
- 2 years playing telephone tag
- 8 months opening junk mail
- 6 months sitting at red lights

*Do you know how your life is being spent? If not, you need to find out. Keep a log for a couple of weeks and find out where your time is really going. It will probably surprise you.*

### C. Work, Play, and Sleep.

*Though as Americans we work on average 2 months more than most Europeans<sup>11</sup>, the average work week (once time off is taken into account) is 36.5 hours<sup>12</sup>. It must be all the part-timers and those with four weeks of vacation that are making the rest of us ware ourselves out on overtime!*

*Our culture has even made play fretful. Commenting on what he calls “speed sickness,” Marshall Cook has this observation on our leisure time:*

“‘Leisure’ no longer rhymes with ‘pleasure’ as we race through life, checking the ‘fun’ items off the to-do list. Even our play has become purposeful (physical conditioning or enforced ‘relaxation’) and competitive (who plays golf without keeping score?). I even read recently about a birdwatching competition. Birdwatching? Competition?”<sup>13</sup>

*Our harried pace of life has also affected our sleep patterns. In the 1850’s, the average American got 9.5 hours of sleep a night. By 1950, we were down to 8 hours. Currently, the average sleep per night is 7<sup>14</sup>. Though the amount of sleep actually needed may vary with each person, we do need sleep. Adam slept while he was yet perfect. And the perfect man, the Lord Jesus Christ, was known to take naps! Sleeplessness is not a badge of spirituality!*

Ps 127:2

It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep.

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<sup>10</sup> Cook, p. 24.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11

<sup>12</sup> Richard A. Swenson, M. D., *The Overload Syndrome: Learning to Live Within Your Limits*, NavPress Publishing Group, Colorado Springs, Colorado, © 1998 by Richard Swenson, p. 172.

<sup>13</sup> Cook, p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> Swenson, p. 126

## 2. Method and Motive – then Activity

### A. Method

*More often than not, how we do things is more important than what we do. One man may be the president of a Fortune 500 company and the other a janitor. If the janitor works heartily as unto the Lord but the CEO works for himself – who gets eternal rewards?*

*Jesus focused much of His teaching on the how of life versus the what of life.<sup>15</sup>*

- The Parable of the Talents – “Faithful in little is faithful in much.” Matt 25:14-30. The Master focused on their faithfulness (method) not their activity (i.e. what they actually did to make more money).
- “Judge not lest ye be judged.” Matt. 7:1-2
- “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Matt 22:39

### B. Motive

*Jesus judges our motives. Motives speak to the “why” of the things we choose to do, be they good or bad. We can do the right things for the wrong reasons and receive no reward (Matt. 7:22-23)<sup>16</sup>.*

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

*In her talk entitled “The God of the Overloaded,” Shelley Hendry had this to say with regard to motivation and overload:*

“If we don’t relinquish our expectations to God and trust His sovereignty, we can get so bent out of shape in spiritual matters that we wind up doing the work of God in the spirit of the devil.”

### C. Activity

*Jesus does and will judge all of our activities performed in this life.*

2 Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

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<sup>15</sup> Dru Scott Decker, *Finding More Time in Your Life*, Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, Oregon, © 2001 by Dru Scott Decker, p. 115-116.

<sup>16</sup> Matt 7:22-23 “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

*But simple activity is not righteousness. It must be the right activity in the right heart (see Rev. 2:1-5).*

3. Redeeming the Value of Unavoidable Expenditures

A. Working

*2 Thes. 3:10 tells us that we need to work if we are going to eat. How are we to redeem for eternity a task that will eat up for most of us nearly a third of our entire life?*

Colossians 3:22-24

22 Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:

23 And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

*If we work heartily as unto the Lord, then we will receive eternal rewards for all those hours at work. Also, if we really work as unto the Lord we will be diligent and we will keep Him Lord, not the work.*

B. Sleeping

*If we are not abusing ourselves with lack of rest, sleep will eat up the other third of our lives. These hours need not be spent on simple bodily rest (beneficial as that may be). By understanding that our spirits don't sleep, we can turn sleep time into fruitful time.*

i. Night meditations

Psalms 1:1-3

1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD; **and in his law doth he meditate day and night.**

3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

Psalms 63:5-7

5 My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips:

6 When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches.

7 Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.

*Meditation on the Word engrafts it into our hearts. When we go to sleep, it is the thoughts of God that will bubble out of our souls.*

Psalms 16:7

I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons.

*He will instruct us in the night seasons. We are less resistant to many things while we sleep. If we have made our minds permeable to the Word of God by meditation while awake, it becomes easier for Him to speak to us while we sleep.*

Psalms 17:3

Thou has proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night; thou has tried me, and shalt find nothing; I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.

*We are also tested in the night hours. When we begin to gain the victory in our dream life, we can be sure that we are becoming victorious in our waking thought life.*

ii. Songs in the night

Psalms 42:8

Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.

*His song is with us in the night!*

iii. Dreams of the Lord

Numbers 12:6

And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.

Acts 2:17

And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

*The Holy Spirit will give us revelation dreams. This is something we should expect!*

C. Waiting

*In our lifetime, we might spend up to 5 years just waiting! That could be a four-year Bachelor degree! What are some things we can do with the waiting time?*

i. Traffic

*Commuting is a great time for listening to teaching tapes or CD's, playing praise music and worshipping the Lord or simply praying. Based on traffic patterns in our area, Lord knows we need to be praying if we are driving!*

*If you are riding and don't suffer from motion sickness, try reading a good book. The Ethiopian eunuch did and look what happened to him (Acts 8:28-39)!*

ii. Appointments

*If you have an appointment, make sure to take some reading material along with you. It is amazing the reading you can get caught up on waiting for the doctor.*

iii. Shopping lines

*Instead of growing impatient or cursing the cashier, look for opportunities to witness the Gospel. Those people in line aren't going anywhere any quicker than you are! Jesus witnessed to the Samaritan woman while His disciples bought groceries (John 4).*

## **II. The Need to Prioritize**

*It should come as no surprise that if we are going to steward time, we are going to have to determine what activities are important and which ones are nonessential. This is called prioritizing. And in all of our priorities, God takes first place.*

1. God Takes Priority

A. The 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment

Ex 20:3 "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

*All of the Ten Commandments are God honoring. But our duty to hold Him above all others is mentioned first.*

B. The First and Great Commandment

Matthew 22:37-38

37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

38 This is the first and great commandment.

*This means that in all we do, with all our being we are to love the Lord our God.*

C. Seek First the Kingdom of God

Matthew 6:31-34

31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

*How much of our life is spent just making sure we are fed and clothed? The average American spends 6 years eating and 6 months tying their shoes! We need to make sure that His kingdom and righteousness take first place in our lives.*

## 2. The Power of a Purpose Driven Life

*Knowing God's purpose for our lives saves us from the distraction of unnecessary decisions and activities. He has a plan for our lives. We need to find out what it is and follow it.*

### A. A Foreordained Ministry

Ephesians 2:10

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Ephesians 1:11

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

*We are foreordained and predestined for a purpose. God does have a plan.*

Jer 29:11

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. NIV

Romans 8:28

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

*We are called according to a purpose. Do you know your purpose? If not, spend some time with Father. He'll tell you what your job is.*

### B. The Power of Principled Decisions

Jeremiah 35:5-10

5 And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites pots full of wine, and cups, and I said unto them, Drink ye wine.

6 But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever:

7 Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers.

8 Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters;

9 Nor to build houses for us to dwell in: neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed:

10 But we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us.

*Because of their forefather's decision and their adherence to it, there were many options in life that the Rechabites didn't have to worry about. Their course was set on principle. When Jeremiah asked them to drink wine in the Temple, they weren't distressed with decisions about probable protocol. They had already decided that they didn't drink.*

C. Jesus Driven by Commitment, not Culture

i. Feast of Tabernacles

John 7:1-8, 14

1 After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him.

2 Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand.

3 His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest.

4 For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world.

5 For neither did his brethren believe in him.

6 Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is always ready.

7 The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.

8 Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come.

14 Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught.

*Even though culture and family insisted, Jesus opted to follow His Father's prophetic timing than get pressured into acting when people thought he should. (Yes, that He showed Himself on the fourth day of the feast was tremendously prophetic and symbolic.)*

ii. Death of Lazarus

John 11:5-6

5 Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.

6 When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.

*Jesus is the healer and Lazarus is His friend. Yet when He hears that Lazarus is sick, He stays put for two more days.*

John 11:7-15

7 Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judaea again.

8 His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?

9 Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.

10 But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.

- 11 These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.  
 12 Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well.  
 13 Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep.  
 14 Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.  
 15 And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him.

*He actually waited for Lazarus to die so that He could give evidence that He is the resurrection and the life! It is about Him, not us.*

iii. Mission tempered by mercy

Matthew 15:22-28

- 22 And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.  
 23 But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.  
 24 But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.  
 25 Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.  
 26 But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.  
 27 And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.  
 28 Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

*Even though He had a clearly defined mission, He didn't allow it to interfere with the greater principle of mercy.*

### **III. Dealing with Sloth and Overload**

1. Slothfulness

A. Definition

Proverbs 18:9

He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster.

*In Hebrew, slothfulness means to be slack or let loose, like when one slackens the reins. This tells us the character connection between slothfulness and immorality. A slothful person lacks discipline in their inner life.*

B. The Field of the Slothful – Prov. 24:30-32

Proverbs 24:30-32

30 I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding;

31 And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down.

32 Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction.

i. Grown over with thorns

*These are worries and the deceitfulness of riches – Matt. 13:22.*

ii. Covered with nettles

*This tells us that the slothful becomes the companion of fools and evil men – Job 30:7-8; Luke 6:44-45.*

iii. Walls broken down

*This tells us that the slothful has no self-control – Prov. 25:28.*

Proverbs 25:28

He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.

### C. We Have more Time than We Think

*Americans have had a steady increase in leisure time for the past fifty years. The question is: how are we using it? American men spend 39% of their leisure time watching television and women on average 37% of their spare time on the boob tube.<sup>17</sup>*

*Shopping winds up absorbing a lot of our time as well. Americans spend three to four times as many hours shopping as do Western Europeans. As of 1998, the United States had 16 square feet of shopping center for every man, woman, and child in the country<sup>18</sup> (but only 2 square feet of parking – just kidding!). Note that this is shopping time, not buying time.*

*Buying has its own problems. There seems to be a one-to-one relationship between the possession of things and the consumption of time. Everything we own requires a commitment of our work time to pay for it and our leisure time to use and care for it.<sup>19</sup> How is this related to slothfulness if buying things makes us work harder? Often we buy the things we cannot afford on credit. Instead of working diligently and saving faithfully for it, we buy it on impulse and tell ourselves that we will pay it later. Credit is more often than not an impatient and lazy man's purchase.*

Ephesians 5:18

And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

*The NIV translates excess as “dissipation.” The Greek word is asotia, which literally means “unsavedness.” In other words, the things that waste us away actually move us in the opposite direction of our salvation!*

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<sup>17</sup> Cook, p. 12.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>19</sup> Swenson, p. 164.

1 Peter 4:3-5

3 For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries:

4 Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot [asotia], speaking evil of you:

5 Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.

## 2. Are You Overloaded?

### A. You Know You Are Overloaded When...<sup>20</sup>

- You wonder if brewing is really a necessary step for the consumption of coffee.
- You can achieve a runner's high by sitting up.
- You believe that if you think hard enough, you can fly.
- Antacid tablets become your sole source of nutrition.
- You begin to talk to yourself, then disagree about the subject, get into a nasty row about it, lose, and refuse to speak to yourself for the rest of the night.
- You find no humor in WASTING YOUR TIME reading silly "you know you're [overloaded when]" lists.

### B. The Symptoms of Overload and Burnout

*Following are some symptoms of what Marshall Cook calls speed sickness<sup>21</sup>:*

- nervousness
- depression
- fatigue
- appetite swings
- compulsive behavior (repetitive actions that are difficult or even impossible to stop)
- unwillingness or even inability to stop working
- inability to relax even when you do stop working

*Our pace of life can not only make us sick, it can kill us. Rushing through life suppresses the immune system, hampering the manufacture of white blood cells. This, in turn, makes us vulnerable to a variety of ills<sup>22</sup>.*

### C. Are You Burdened and Heavy Laden?

*Stories of stress are legion. Busyness is a badge of honor in our society. We have taken the adage "idle hands are the devil's workshop" far too seriously! Time management trainer Dru Scott Decker comments:*

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<sup>20</sup> Cook, p. 183

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, p. 5

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, p. 6

“Busyness becomes the standard people use to measure their worth as human beings. They believe it’s the only way to justify their existence.”<sup>23</sup>

*She goes on to say:*

“Personal worth does not depend upon what you do. You have value as a human being regardless of your activities. The prestige or economic value of your work has no bearing on your worth or your right to human dignity.”<sup>24</sup>

*I believe that the performance value trap is the biggest busyness trap many of us fall into. We commit to things because of the positive affirmation we receive for doing them. And women are even more at risk for this than are men in our culture.*

*As a culture, we do not esteem the work of the stay-at-home mom nearly enough. When these precious women take on a task outside of the home, be it work or a church function, they see accomplishment and get praise. This in turn encourages them to take on more tasks because they receive more positive feedback from them than they do for their labors of love at home. This cycle feeds itself to the point where the majority of church work is done on the slave labor of women, who begin to bemoan the lack of involvement in church work by men!*

*Husbands can do much to short circuit this terrible cycle. First, we should be very intentional in showing our appreciation for our wives in both words and actions (this would include pitching in with the house work and child rearing). Secondly, we should assume our responsibilities within the church instead of relying on the women to do the lion’s share of the work.*

*All that being said, the major hedge we can raise against the performance trap is to have a correct value of ourselves. How are we supposed to arrive at a correct value of ourselves? By using God’s standards.*

Gen 9:6

Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.

*First, we need to recognize that every man, woman, and child has value because they are made in the image of God. This is the reason the Lord gives for carrying out capital punishment. Man has more value than things or animals because he has been stamped with God’s image.*

1 Cor 6:20

For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

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<sup>23</sup> Decker, p. 73

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*

*Our value is further enhanced by having accepted the payment of our purchase. In the Father's eyes, we are worth the price He paid for us – the life of His only begotten Son. Next time you are attacked by satan with regard to your worth, point him to the blood Jesus poured out for you in love!*

*With regard to our busyness and burnout, there are some questions we have to ask of ourselves and some solutions we need to implement.*

i. Harassed and helpless

*Do you feel harassed and helpless? Why? What type of people did Jesus say were harassed and helpless?*

Matt 9:36 NIV

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

*Sheep without a shepherd are harassed and helpless! So if we are feeling this way, what is the next natural question? Where is the Shepherd? Well, He hasn't gone anywhere. So the question should be: why have we as sheep gone astray?*

John 10:1-4

- 1 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.
- 2 But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.
- 3 To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.
- 4 And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

*If we are faint hearted and feel cast down, we have to ask ourselves what robbers we have let get into the sheepfold of our lives. Jesus says that His sheep hear His voice. We need to not only hear, but listen and obey.*

ii. Finding rest

Matthew 11:28-30

- 28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
- 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.
- 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

*We need to go to Jesus and find rest in Him. If we are obedient to His voice, He will not let us get overloaded because everything we do will be what He asks and for everything He asks us to do He will grant the grace to accomplish it.*

iii. Walking in grace

Romans 12:6-11

- 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;
- 7 Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;
- 8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.
- 9 Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.
- 10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;
- 11 Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

*Little else in life is as frustrating as walking outside of the grace that is given us. Each of us is given a measure of grace by God to accomplish the tasks He has set before us. A simple life example would be that women are given grace by God to bear children. A man trying to give birth would be very frustrated! What are you graced in? Mercy? Giving? Teaching? Exhorting? Whatever it is, be about it. Walking in the grace God has given you gives wings to life.*

Gal 2:20-21

- 20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.
- 21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

*We need to live by faith and do those things which Christ calls us to do to not frustrate the grace of God in our lives. Follow your calling and make full proof of your ministry.*

### 3. Controlling Our Commitments

#### A. The Problem of Fatigue

*“Fatigue makes cowards of us all,” Vince Lombardi said<sup>25</sup>. Boy, does it ever! We need to count the cost of our commitments with the fatigue factor in mind. It is thought that drowsy drives may kill as many people as drunken drivers<sup>26</sup>. As a serious commuter who has had his share of close calls, I consider that to be a very sobering fact. How are we to get a handle on our fatigue problem? Let’s start by looking at some common culprits that are causing us to be worn out<sup>27</sup>.*

#### i. Fatigue from sleep deprivation

<sup>25</sup> Swenson, p. 123.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Swenson, p. 126-127. Dr. Swenson specifies sleep deprivation, deconditioning, and stress as major fatigue factors.

*We've already stated above that sleeplessness is not a badge of spirituality. We are responsible for stewarding our bodies. Thus, we are responsible to make sure we get proper amounts of rest. And sleeping faster isn't the answer!*

*Having consistent wake times and go-to-bed times would do it for most of us. It's a simple matter of discipline. If you are having trouble getting to bed or going to sleep, try some of the following:*

- Avoid caffeine and sugar before bed time.
- Turn off the television!
- Read the Bible and pray before retiring for sleep.
- Pray in the Spirit.
- Make an appointment with your bed – and keep it!

*For additional rest and recuperation, try taking a weekly Sabbath and a couple of naps during the week.*

ii. Fatigue from deconditioning

*Modern technology has given us more time and less physical expenditure. Unless your daily work demands continual physical exertion, you are probably out of shape. This means that we have to “work out,” which many do. It may seem contradictory that working our bodies harder will lessen our fatigue factor, but it will. Nothing tires you out like sitting around for weeks on end!*

iii. Fatigue from stress

*We are designed to handle stress. As a matter of fact, our psyche without stress begins to behave like our bodies without exercise. But just like we can only lift so much weight, we can only handle so much stress. We need to take inventory and be aware of the stressors in our lives and adjust accordingly.*

*If we are in a very stressful season of life, we may want to compensate by increasing our nutrients (in food and/or vitamins) and our sleep. We will want to avoid taking more on as well. And finally, we need to shift our stress load to Him.*

1 Peter 5:6-7

6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

Phil 4:6-7

6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

B. The Power of Saying “No!”

*Most of our over commitment problems could be solved if we just learned how to say “No.” To get there, we need to understand our responsibility with regard to commitments and why it is that we may be saying “yes” too often.*

i. Yeas and nays

James 5:12

But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.

*When we say yes, we need to mean yes. And when we say no, we need to mean no. This means that we need to remain true to the commitments we make with our mouth. To guard our lives, we need to guard our tongue. Why do we get over committed? Because there are so many things that are good to do, so many things that we are asked to do, and so many things that we want to do. Often, it is saying yes to the things we are asked to do that crowds out the things we want to do and the good things we should do.*

ii. Wrong reasons for saying “Yes!”<sup>28</sup>

- 1) *Looking for love in all the right causes.* This is saying yes because we earn the gratitude and approval of our peers when we shoulder their loads. Our approval quota should come from God.
- 2) *The guilt syndrome.* This is when we say yes because saying no would make us feel guilty (even if saying yes puts us over the limit!). We need to understand that we all have limitations. Staying within them is no reason to feel guilty.
- 3) *The myth of indispensability.* “Rather than kindness, your effort may in part be motivated by arrogance. Perhaps you don’t let others do the job because, deep down, you don’t believe anyone else can do it as well as you can.” If we can’t learn to delegate, we need to learn to pass up on further responsibilities.
- 4) *The fear of expendability.* If I don’t do it, will they find out that they can really get along without me? This is the sister to #3 above.

iii. How to say “No!”

*You can say no to the project without saying no to the person. You do this by affirming the individual without agreeing to the time investment<sup>29</sup>. It is actually more loving to say no and mean it than to say yes and regret it. We are encouraged to “speak the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15). We can say no and not be rude. We can say no and not be wrong.<sup>30</sup>*

*Following are some simple keys to saying “No”:<sup>31</sup>*

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<sup>28</sup> Cook, p. 88. He calls them the not-so-nice reasons for being so nice.

<sup>29</sup> Decker, p. 233.

<sup>30</sup> Decker, p. 211-220 has many more helpful hints on how to learn to say “No!”

<sup>31</sup> Cook, p. 95

- 1) *Beware of the automatic “yes.”* Think before you speak and don’t answer right away if you don’t know the correct answer.
- 2) *Buy time.* It is perfectly acceptable to ask for time to think about it. “Can I get back to you tomorrow on that?”
- 3) *If the answer is “No” say “No.”* Say it gracefully, but say it.
- 4) *You don’t have to give a reason.* Oftentimes, in justifying our no’s we simply expose many of the wrong reasons why we say yes. Prudence often calls for us to keep our mouths shut.

### C. The Pleasure of Closure

*A sense of accomplishment can be restful and invigorating all at the same time. Conversely, unfinished business, all those things that we have not completed, pulls at us subconsciously all day long and can leave us drained.*

#### i. The drain of unfinished business

Matthew 18:34

And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

*Unforgiveness is the most damaging open item we can have in life. Certainly, checking off twelve items on our to-do list may make us feel good. But getting a clear conscience will actually make us better, not just feel that way.*

#### ii. Walking in the completed work of Christ

Colossians 2:10-15

10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

*So long as we draw breath, there will always be some loose threads in our lives. Whenever we begin to get the “I can never complete one thing” blues, we need to remember that we are complete in Him. We need to walk in His accomplished work.*

#### iii. Finish well

2 Timothy 4:7-8

7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

*It has been said often by many: this race is a marathon not a sprint. If we are to finish well, we will have to be good stewards of our time. If we waste it or spend it faster than we should, we may not have enough energy to get across the finish line.*

### **Conclusion**

*Since we all shall give an account for the things we have done in this body (2 Cor. 5:10), we need to seek the Lord for wisdom and not lean to our own understanding (Prov. 3:5-6) for the heart is deceitful above all things (Jer. 17:9). We need to submit ourselves to the Master of Time and allow Him to judge all the thoughts and intents of our hearts (Heb. 4:12) that in the end of all our activity we may hear the words we all long to hear, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant...enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." (Matt. 25:21)*