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Is MY Christianity a Waste of Time?

Psalms 90:12: (NASB) *So teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom.*



Did you ever notice that there never seems to be enough time? For some reason or other, we are always rushing around to do the things we need to do and we seem to scarcely be able to even take a breath in between this and that. Our lives are often harried, and as a result we tend to feel unfulfilled and empty at the end of a day. So, how are we spending our time? What are we doing - or not doing - with that precious commodity of time to either fulfill or fritter away our lives? As Christians, are there different and specific guidelines for spending and investing our time than for others? Are there ways to simply and efficiently reorder and reclaim our time? Where do we start? What do we do?

What are the important things for the Christian? Bible study, prayer, meditation, fellowship and service. How do we not lose focus on the most important things and how do we fit them into our busy lives? Christianity "done right" is a full-time job.

Time Management Tool #1: Our use of our time directly dictates our quality of life.

Understanding and absorbing the simple truth sets us up for paying attention to where our time goes. Most of us, even though we are "busy," waste more time than we care to admit.

Time is bigger than we, as imperfect humans, can even imagine: Psalms 90:1-12: All ages past to all eternity moving forward, God was, is and shall be. He is the same in character and power throughout and the same God in the Old and New Testaments. ³*You turn man back into dust and say, Return, O children of men. This is another reference to Adam and the result of his sin (From dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return.)* This Psalm gives us the sober sense that God is BIG! Our lives are very short when compared to the incomprehensible longevity of God. ⁴*For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it passes by, or as a watch in the night. Remember that God said Adam would die in the day he sinned? But Adam lived 930 years according to Genesis 5:5. This and other Scriptures liken a day with God to a thousand years. So, in God's perspective, Adam died "in a day."* This gives us a *long view of time* outside of our present reality. What does God do now with those thousands of years since man sinned? ⁵*You have swept them away like a flood, they fall asleep; in the morning they are like grass which sprouts anew. ⁶In the morning it flourishes and sprouts anew; toward evening it fades and withers away. (Time passes on.) ⁷For we have been consumed by Your anger and by Your wrath we have been dismayed. ⁸You have placed our iniquities before You, Our secret sins in the light of Your presence. ⁹For all our days have declined in Your fury; We have finished our years like a sigh. (People say all the time, "Is this all there is?" This can cause a feeling of despair.) Sin has taken its toll on the human creation. We now have VERY limited time. What should we be focusing on - what is worth our time? ¹⁰As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, or if due to strength, eighty years, yet their pride is but labor and sorrow; for soon it is gone and we fly away. (Our time is very short.) ¹¹Who understands the power of Your anger and Your fury, according to the fear that is due You? (There is urgency to make our lives of great value.) ¹²So teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom.*

Number our days - take notice of them, count them. In the eyes of God, if we *number our days* and focus on them clearly, He is glorified when we have a measure of wisdom.

Time Management Tool #2: Valuing and using our precious time is wisdom from the inside out

If you use your time without valuing it, it withers away. We need to use our very short lives to give God great glory and honor. We need several things to help us make the best investment of our time...

Vision: The all-encompassing picture that captures the imagination

VISION is about the struggle surrounding what you decide to invest your time focusing on versus the default behavior of spending your time only seeing what the world sets before you. The distractions of life can take you off course. Rick and Jonathan had a vision to work together to serve the Lord, and He gave them the opportunity to witness on the radio and now podcast.

Proverbs 29:18: (KJV) *Where there is no vision, the people perish:*



Our vision of a visionary: Hebrews 12:1-3

The path to the Thrilling Mountaintop passes directly through the Tedious Valley of experience.

Time Management Tool #3: Continually looking for what we have chosen to focus on will narrow our focus and therefore lessen distraction.

If we are not investing our time properly, our Christianity is just a waste. It will be an external label that does not have any transformative affect. Make the vision of your Christianity viable every day! Our vision is the big, panoramic picture of our passion and purpose. Someone once said, "The devil is in the details." If our vision is like the compass that gets us focused in the right direction, then our priorities are what help us determine which roads to take to get us to our "true north."

Priorities: The necessary ordering of the details of our life

Establishing PRIORITIES is a function of mindful behavior. To be mindful is to be thoughtful, clearly aware and positioned to powerfully act on that awareness.

God IS mindful: Psalms 8:4: For God to be *mindful* of man means that He loves us and plans for us. Psalms 115:12: God's mindfulness is proven in His plan! We need to make a plan and be purposeful in our lives.

For us to be mindful (the obvious opposite of mindless) means a deliberate investment of time and effort into identifying what requires our mindfulness and why: 2 Peter 3:1-7: We have to be mindful because we will be tested. If we are not ready, we will stumble and fall when tested and our Christianity will fall apart. We must have a captivating vision and then be mindful to understand what is most important and why. We may not get priorities right the first time, but as long as our vision is strong and scriptural, we can reset. Start over. Try again. Do not give up.

Time Management Tool #4: Mindfully setting priorities based on vision is the very foundation of life

The appearance of effortless service comes ONLY as a result of practice, pain and perseverance, all of which must result from the right focus and activity!

This is important to remember when we look at others who seem to "have it all together," as if everything comes naturally to them. When we have truly established our PRIORITIES based on the big picture of the VISION, there will naturally develop a deep sense of URGENCY, for nothing will be more important than following through on that which has proven to be most important.

Urgency: The application of focused energy for a very specific purpose

Urgency is in contrast to panic or rushing through something. Being urgent is not necessarily fast; it is doing something deliberately, with focus and mindfully with the clear-cut objective of what has to happen.

When you "value" something, you set it apart from other things. Value our moments because they can be a part of making our Christian life exciting, inspirational, full of growth, and an example to others.

Urgently strain forward towards that which is most valuable: Philippians 3:12-16: Even the Apostle Paul - with all his focus, energy and discipline - had to intentionally *press on*. He ran forward to make continual progress towards his goal. He did not assume that just because he was the Apostle Paul with a special calling that the prize was automatically his.

Here we can see the VISION and PRIORITIES in place and the deep URGENCY to fulfill them. Without URGENCY, VISION and PRIORITIES are merely theoretical - kind of like New Year's resolutions. Too often we get stuck in the "idea" of Christianity rather than the life of a Christian. If we want that Christian life to not be a waste of time, we need to grab hold of what it means to live the life of a true Christian - the urgent investment of your time.

The Old Testament frequently uses the words *slothful* and *sluggard* to contrast idleness with urgency. These words are defined as "indolent" which means an "inclination to laziness."



Proverbs 6:6-11: Examples of what *not* to do should be received as loud and obnoxious alarms to vacate the premises! Do not live the life of a sluggard!

URGENCY does not produce perfection of action, but it does produce action and this action represents a necessary investment of time, even if it is lacking.

Success in sacrifice is most often born out of failure. To fail with great intention, over and over again is to live in the hand of God's mercy - and that is success!

Proverbs 24:16: One important thing to remember is you only fall and rise when you are moving!

Time Management Tool #5: To be urgent and yet imperfect in action is to press our priorities to the forefront. This step redefines our time for our time is now in the service of our life's vision.

VISION, PRIORITIES and URGENCY are the necessary elements we must have in place to wisely invest our time. As Christians, we do not want to be wasting our time. Next we will review the “how to” practical part of the equation needed to support what must be in place in our hearts and minds to truly invest our time into our Christianity.

Inspiration: That which feeds and lifts the heart so that it may overcome

Inspiration changes your physiology, lifts you to a bigger level and helps you take important steps. **Inspiration works best when we have someone whose struggle can be observed:** **2 Corinthians 12:7-10:** Paul needed the trial to keep his focus pure, because he was given something spectacular! He was given specific revelations and we are in awe of the grace of God through him. The inspiration comes from the Apostle Paul going before God to ask to remove the weakness (we believe this was poor eyesight) and he is told *my grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness*. Our inspiration comes from seeing how the grace of God becomes powerful. His trials INSPIRED him to a closer walk in Jesus' footsteps. STEP UP, STEP OUT and BE BRAVE with your Christianity!

Jesus inspires us to see through our trials to grasp victory: **Ephesians 5:1-2**

Inspiration is not necessarily delivered in exhilaration and victory. On the contrary, it is often found in those lonely and desperate times of struggle doubt and fear and it quietly carries you through your present tempest to where you can again find secure footing.

Time Management Tool #6: Inspiration liberally applied to our urgent investment of time provides the positive desire to fully engage in that investment.

INSPIRATION is emotional and needs to be directed. It provides us with the desire to rekindle our VISION, reset our PRIORITIES and restart our URGENCY. But INSPIRATION alone cannot keep us there.

For inspiration to play its part in our use of time, it must be accompanied by its lesser known and certainly less attractive younger brother, PERSPIRATION!

Perspiration: The result of the continuous exertion that stems from being fully engaged

1 Peter 5:6-9: So, there is *rest* in the Spirit, yet we are in a “fight mode” which leads to sweat. Any time we are instructed to do anything with firmness, the effort implied is great and requires significant time and attention. It is this type of effort that brings us to perspire!

Why would I have to sweat if I am a Christian and “saved”? Am I not okay? Acknowledging Jesus as our Savior is only a starting point. Do we think, “God loves me, Jesus loves me, they will take care of me. Ahhhhhh...relax.” But that is only the beginning! The hard work comes in fighting off the adversary, denying ourselves, taking up our cross and following Jesus. If we do not invest our time into the hard work of Christianity, we will not receive the blessing of mature Christianity. No one ever ends the race where they start. We need to get to the finish line.

Why should we be willing to sweat? Because replacing that which is old with newness of life is hard: **Philippians 3:7-11:** Paul saw the conforming of his past and recognized it was the wrong path. He would now be conformed to Jesus. We should be in love with the life of a Christian and eternal life, but that means sacrifice and perspiration along the way. Nothing replaces hard work and hard work takes time. We hear the adage “work smarter not harder,”



and this is true, yet for the true Christian we are to work smarter through the Spirit of God, and therefore we are able to work harder and more productively at those things of greatest importance. **Combating the commonplace seductions of life is time and sweat well invested:** Philippians 3:13-14:

The more fully engaged we are in the work the more we find that the greatest effort is often not the work itself, rather it is the effort to position and condition ourselves for that work...

Time Management Tool #7: Focused hard work on what is important is the best remedy for the seductive slot machines of life

With the PERSPIRATION of complete engagement in place, there remains but one thing to give us a complete picture of redeeming our time. It is a simple thing, yet often overlooked when we set our minds to a service...stay tuned! The world captivates us! Does the motivation of Christ have enough power to release us from the world? Satan will find many ways to distract and tempt us. Technology has made the seductive process of stealing away our attention, and therefore our time, easy, enjoyable and addictive. Unless we are prepared, we do not stand a chance.

Consistency: The continual long term application of all those things necessary towards faithfulness

How do we check ourselves to be sure we are consistently following the right path, the right thoughts, the right attitudes, the right actions and the right use of our time?

Philippians 4:4-8: (NASB) ⁴Rejoice in the Lord **always**; again, I will say, rejoice! Rejoicing is the first CONSISTENCY exercise introduced here. Rejoicing is built upon INSPIRATION. Rejoice regardless of the situation. Rejoicing is a heart communion with Christ that shows appreciation for our blessings. ⁵Let your gentle spirit be known **to all men**. The Lord is near. The next CONSISTENCY exercise is our Christlike character. Our character reflects our PRIORITIES. Whoever is around you should feel the spirit of Christ in you. ⁶Be anxious for nothing, **but in everything** by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. This CONSISTENCY exercise is the development of an URGENT prayer life - prayer for **all** things - both in good times and bad times. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses **all** comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. This CONSISTENCY exercise develops our VISION through which we are always protected. ⁸Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. This CONSISTENCY exercise is all about PERSPIRATION and the effort it takes to stay above the fray and on target.

Consistency in an effort is the least glamorous of all its elements. There is no excitement of an idea, no newness of a project, no giddy anticipation of a beginning. Consistency shines in the quiet times of monotony, in the bruised moments of failure and in the darkness, when the unknown and unsung perseverance of will beckons us to get up one more time and press on by the grace of God.

How do we remain consistent when it seems like there is so much work involved? Exodus 20:8-10: The Sabbath was created so Israel could stop and rest. Israel had a **built-in rest to their Law, and we Christians can LIVE that built-in rest:** Hebrews 4:9-11: We have been given the rest of Jesus Christ in our lives. This should be with us all the time. Hebrews 4:15-16: One of the reasons we have such deep confidence in Jesus is because of his consistency. He never wavered in his human experiences. He understands the human frame.

Time Management Tool #8: Consistency is the momentum that can carry us through the harsh or seductive parts of our lives so we can truly invest our time and attention to the glory of God.

Do not let your Christianity be a waste. There is so much value to it. We need VISION, PRIORITIES, URGENCY, INSPIRATION, PERSPIRATION and CONSISTENCY in our daily lives. This makes our Christianity the most valuable part of every day. What we do with our time creates our destiny. Use your time to serve God!

***So, Is MY Christianity a waste of time?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!***