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Spend Your Time Wisely

How to coax a much higher yield from your most precious commodity

- Stephen Flurry
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Each day, you start with a full bank account—an account *filled with time*. And each day, you spend all 24 hours of it. One of the smartest investments you can make is to stop and take stock: You're paying out a lot of hours. What are you gaining in exchange?

Paul understood the value of time—and how to spend it. In Romans 13, he admonishes us to awake out of sleep—because *we know the time!* (verse 11). As urgently as he lived his life, Paul's words are even more poignant today, when time is so short before the return of Jesus Christ! The key to redeeming our time for something of real value is to *live as Christ lived* in these urgent days (verses 12-14).

Yet there is a reason why that simple principle is so hard to live by. Satan is doing all he can to tempt you to nickel-and-dime your life away—or worse. He knows that you cannot serve both God and mammon (Matthew 6:24), and that a friend of the world cannot be a friend of God (James 4:4). So he wants to make you spend your time on anything but God.

So how should we spend our precious time? On the one thing that lasts: God's character!

Matthew 6:33 says, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." To spend your time wisely, God must come first in your life! You must give God your very *best* time! *Then He will be involved in how the rest of your time is spent.*

To keep this law, you must organize your time investment strategy around God. Every day, carefully budget how much of your valuable time you spend on various activities. An hour is a precious thing. Don't fritter it away!

In a 1999 study, a group of participants was asked to complete just 20 minutes of exercise at any time within the following week. Only 29 percent of the people took the time to do so. A second group was told how exercise reduces the risk of heart disease. In that group, 39 percent found the time to exercise. A third group was asked to exercise on a specific day, at a specific time and at a specific location. In that group, *91 percent* completed the assignment (Tony Schwartz, *The Way We're Working Isn't Working*).

"By defining precisely when we're going to undertake a behavior, we reduce the amount of energy we have to expend to get it done," Schwartz wrote. "Often, when we make a commitment to a new behavior such as exercising, we fail to recognize that unless we set aside a specific time to do it, it's unlikely we will. In part, that's because there is another behavior we're more accustomed to doing, out of habit, or because there is something easier and more pleasurable we could do. Each time we have to think about whether or not to do an activity—in the face of other temptations and potential distractions—we deplete our limited reservoir of will and discipline. If you have to consciously think for very long about doing something, it's unlikely you'll end up doing it for very long. ...

"The more challenging the ritual—physically, mentally or emotionally—the greater the need to be precise in implementing it."

This same principle holds true for our *spiritual* rituals. The more challenging it is to carve out time for our daily spiritual needs, the more *precise* we must be in locking it into our schedules.

The Apostle Paul charged us to use this life to “present [our] bodies a living sacrifice” unto God (Romans 12:1). In the Old Testament, there were no living sacrifices. They were all dead. To be a *living* sacrifice, we must first put to death the lusts of the flesh and, by sacrificing the self, keep them dead (Romans 6). Secondly, we must lay down our lives—our energy, our effort, our *time*—to support God’s purpose.

Just like us, Jesus had only 24 hours to work with every day. It was His practice to rise up a “great while before day” to allow plenty of time for His prayer (Mark 1:35). He studied God’s Word; He trained His disciples; He fulfilled God’s will. He spent all His time doing those things that pleased the Father.

Now God says to us, *You follow those steps—you organize your life the way Jesus Christ did* (1 Peter 2:21). *And if you overcome like He did, you will rule with Him on His throne* (Revelation 2:26).

When Christ returns to restore His government on Earth, He will need qualified leaders to assist Him in ruling the nations (see Daniel 7:27 and Luke 19:12-19). How we use—or *misuse*—our time will determine how God can use us in His Kingdom (Luke 16:10-11).

Christ is about to return. God is about to give human beings power and authority and eternity—*an unlimited amount of time*. That is a yield that is well worth learning to discipline ourselves and budget our time around Him today!