

GOD AND MY TIME



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Michelangelo (1475-1564) is one of the greatest artists of all time. Two of his best works the Pieta and David, were sculpted before he turned thirty. Later in his thirties he painted the Sistine Chapel ceiling, consisting of 343 figures, all retelling the biblical story of God's Creation, Humanity's Fall and the prophecies concerning the coming of the Christ. It took four years to complete the work. One observer of the meticulous detail and art quipped, "No one will

Quote from John C. Maxwell, The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader: Becoming the Person Others Will Want to Follow, 16-18.

Following insights are my summary adaptations from resources: C.J. Mahaney "Biblical Productivity" accessed <http://www.sovereigngraceministries.org/Reference/Blog/cj-mahaney-biblical-productivity.pdf> and from Donald Whitney, Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life, pp.131-157.

ever see them", while Michelangelo's reply was, "God will." This is the perspective of using our time as a Christian. It is the realization that all of life flows from and for God.

Biblical Introduction

The Bible teaches that God is Creator, Lord and Eternal Judge. These concepts cannot be underestimated. They are repeated constantly throughout Scripture. And as such, there are expectations for the care of God's creation and we are stewards or managers.

Here is just a small selection of Scriptures that capture this idea:

Genesis 2:15 *"The LORD God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it..."*

Time to Treasure

At the end of each day we are reminded that we are not in control. Even more, our identity is not defined by what or how much we accomplished in our schedules; but is rooted in the accomplishments and grace of Jesus.

C.J. Mahaney says, "No matter how much planning, scheduling, and discipline is present in my life, I will never completely redeem the time. I am a finite creature, limited in what I can accomplish, and further limited by my sin. So it should surprise nobody that I leave to-dos undone each and every day. My joy is not derived from the flawless execution of my goals. My joy each day is derived from the person and work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Only God gets his to-do list done each day. I need the cross of Christ each day."

Matthew 6:25-34 (v.34) "Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

Matthew 11:28-30 "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

John 17:4, 19:30 "I [Jesus] glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do... It is finished."

Proverbs 16:3 “Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established.”

Proverbs 20:18 “Plans are established by counsel; by wise guidance wage war.”

Proverbs 21:5 “The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty.”

Human Interruption vs. Divine Intervention

It is impossible to plan every detail or anticipate every circumstance in each day or week. Not only does this reveal our limitation but it also reminds us of God’s sovereignty to bring about His plans and purposes in our lives. This calls for evaluation and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit.

- Does it fit my role? (do, delegate or decline)
- Does it fit my goals and schedule?

Time Keeps Ticking

The clock is the great leveler of all. Time is one of the only resources that cannot be regained. Scripture reminds us of the shortness of life and how that requires us to prepare and live for eternity.

Ephesians 5:15-16 “Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.” (kairos: opportune moments)

John 4:34; 9:4-5 “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work;... We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

Other Scriptures: Psalm 90; Proverbs 27:1; Hebrews 4:12-14, 9:27-28, James 4:14; 1 John 2:17

Psalm 24:1 “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it; the world and its inhabitants belong to the Lord.”

Matthew 25:14-30 “For it is just like a man going on a journey. He called his own slaves and turned over his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents; to another, two; and to another, one—to each according to his own ability. Then he went on a journey. Immediately the man who had received five talents went, put them to work, and earned five more. In the same way the man with two earned two more. But the man who had received one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground, and hid his master’s money. After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. The man who had received five talents approached, presented five more talents, and said, ‘Master, you gave me five talents. Look, I’ve earned five more talents.’ ‘His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave! You were faithful over a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Share your master’s joy!’ ‘Then the man with two talents also approached. He said, ‘Master, you gave me two talents. Look, I’ve earned two more talents.’ ‘His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave! You were faithful over a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Share your master’s joy!’ ‘Then the man who had received one talent also approached and said, ‘Master, I know you. You’re a difficult man, reaping where you haven’t sown and gathering where you haven’t scattered seed. So I was afraid and went off and hid your talent in the ground. Look, you have what is yours.’ ‘But his master replied to him, ‘You evil, lazy slave! If you knew that I reap where I haven’t sown and gather where I haven’t scattered, then you should have deposited my money with the bankers. And when I returned I would have received my money back with interest. ‘So take the talent from him and give it to the one who has 10 talents. For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have more than enough. But from the one who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. And throw this good-for-nothing slave into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

Application: Using Time For God's Glory

Every breath is a gift of God and the time on earth for each person is designated differently by God, yet each day contains the same number of hours for each person (**Psalm 90**). As stewards of the time God gives each person we must be faithful to use it wisely. A recent search on Amazon.com showed over 20,000 resources to assist with "time management". The pulse of society is to be productive with their time. Even more, Scripture gives several reasons why and ways how our time is to be used.

Everyone & Everything

A first principle is to realize and remember that every person with every thing they do is worship! To be clear, there is not a distinction between sacred and secular forms of work. Everyone is called by God to serve Him with all they have. So, the time you have is appointed for God's purposes in your life and roles.

- Do I make excuses or consider my time and work as insignificant in the eyes of God?
- Is busyness or procrastination getting in the way of honoring God with my time? Realize procrastination is a form of laziness because it is neglecting priorities.

Colossians 3:17 "And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

Know Your Role

As C.J. Mahaney says, "Defining our roles helps to ensure that we are doing stuff that matters each day, knowing we have in some small way advanced the gospel and served others."

- What roles do I have currently? Where has God placed me? Make list of all roles. (serve in the now not the eventually)

Know Your Goal

Work and use of time is not an end in itself. To do so is to work without direction, purpose or planning. After defining your role, the goals help achieve success and define faithfulness in that role.

- Based on your roles, what vertical (toward God) does God command and you desire?
- Based on your roles, what horizontal (toward others) does God command and you desire?
- S.M.A.R.T. goal setting:
 - Specific: What is the purpose or objective?
 - Measurable: How will you know if progress is being made?
 - Attainable: What are potential obstacles to overcome?
 - Relevant: Why does this matter? What impact will it have?
 - Timed: When do you expect to reach this goal?

Keep Your Schedule

Once roles and goals are defined then blocking out time for specific tasks based on priority and time can be planned. Planning is the important component to the implementation and effectiveness of your roles and goals. Time management experts say that 1 minute of planning = 10 extra minutes in your day not being wasted. Abraham Lincoln once said, "If I had 60 minutes to cut down a tree, I would spend 40 minutes sharpening the ax and 20 minutes cutting it down." Some other benefits to planning are: less stress, enjoying relaxed time, awaking to purpose, greater ability to make decisions in the 'tyranny of the urgent' and have flexibility in schedule.

You have a choice with your schedule if you're not accomplishing all you desire. 1) Work harder (more effort). 2) Work longer (more hours). 3) Work Smarter (involve more planning and people). Ultimately, any plan must be combined with prayer and wise counsel for godly effectiveness.