

Time (Stewardship Part 1/3) - David Baumgartner

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Date: 24 April 2022

Preacher: David Baumgartner

[0:00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church, knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. For these next few weeks, we're going to be looking at a matter that affects virtually every facet of our lives.

And that facet is called stewardship. The Bible says a great deal about this topic of stewardship, yet it's often overlooked. The word stewardship comes from the word *oikonomia*, and it's the word from which we get the word dispensation.

It means the management of a household. And so the person responsible for managing a household is a steward, hence stewardship.

The key thing to realize is that this person acts as an administrator of the affairs of the possessions of someone else.

As Christians, you and I have been entrusted with a stewardship. In other words, we are responsible to manage God's affairs and possessions.

[1:11] Friends, this means something. This means that you and I, that the things that we call our own, they're not really ours. They're God's.

And we have no possessions. We don't even own ourselves. If you look on your handout there, if you look with me, what Paul says to this first letter to Corinth, he says, Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

For you have been bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body. I'll tell you what, I think many of us have a hard time grasping this concept.

I mean, for instance, consider the subject of tithing. If you ask somebody, would you define tithing for me? What is tithing? No doubt you would get a response that it's where you give 10% of your income and then the rest is ours.

That's not true. In fact, we are stewards of God's possessions. For the believer, there was a time when you and I were dead in our sins, but we have been bought with a price, we're told.

[2:31] And that's by what Jesus did on the cross. At the moment of faith, we passed from death into life, from darkness into light.

And we also went from an earthly citizenship into a heavenly citizenship. Therefore, since God owns each one of us, all that we have is his.

That's really very hard to imagine, friends, but it is true. And if that's so, we could ask this question. What is God looking for in each one of us?

Well, Paul adds, if you notice here in the same letter, 1 Corinthians chapter 4, he says, Let us regard, let a man regard us in this manner as servants of Christ, as stewards of the mysteries of God.

Just to stop right there. Friends, if someone asks you, what's a Christian? You say, well, it's someone who is a steward of God's mysteries. He goes on here. In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.

[3:42] Now, in the Bible, we see examples of stewards who were trustworthy, right? For instance, how about Joseph in Potiphar's kingdom? You know the story.

We also see examples of those who were not trustworthy. For example, Jesus' parable of the steward who squandered his master's possessions. In the parable of the talents in Matthew's gospel account, we actually see two things with that parable.

One, the amounts entrusted to each servant was different. But secondly, we see that their rewards were not based on how much they were given.

No, they were given on what they did with whatever they were given. In other words, what God is looking for is faithfulness.

We are stewards of all that God has. And what we have is not really ours. It is God's. If you have your Bibles, please turn with me to Ephesians chapter 5.

[4:47] We're going to begin in verse 15 here. And we're actually, beginning this Sunday, we're going to be looking at three messages on stewardship. And that's because this topic touches every area of our lives.

It involves our time. It involves our talents. And it also involves our treasures. So for the rest of this morning, I'd like to focus on just that first aspect, our time.

And this message, friends, it's for believers of Bethel Community Church. If you're a guest here, then I would say just sit back and enjoy the ride.

Because this is mostly for the believers here at Bethel Community Church. Please read with me chapter 5, beginning in verse 15 of Ephesians.

He says this, Therefore, be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.

[5:55] So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Heavenly Father, it is so good to be able to come here today to be refreshed by what your word tells us, Lord, and how we should live our lives upon this earth.

Lord, you tell us that you own us because Jesus Christ purchased us with his blood. And so, Lord, what pleases you? How should we spend our time?

I pray that through the ministry of your word that you would answer those questions for each one of us, Lord, because it is our desire to please you in all ways.

Thank you for this grace in Jesus' holy and precious name. Amen. There was a bitter old farmer, and he owned several acres of land.

And I'll tell you what, this guy hated everybody. And the biggest reason is because everybody wanted his land. So he decided that I'll fix them all.

[7:02] I will will my farm to the devil. So what happens? Well, the guy did just that. He called some lawyers and had his will drawn up, and he willed his farm to the devil.

So eventually the guy dies. And so the lawyers of the township, they're trying to figure out, how do you transfer all of these tangible assets to the devil?

Where is the devil? Who is he? Well, so they studied the matter, and everybody's wondering what they're going to come up with. And so they have this big meeting, and they said, here's how we have come up with the best way to carry out the wishes of the deceased.

We're going to do three things. First, you allow the farm to grow weeds. Secondly, you allow the soil of the farm to just erode.

And thirdly, you allow the house, the barn, and all the equipment that's there to just rot away. In summary, the best way to leave something to the devil is to do nothing.

[8:17] Do nothing. I think in many ways, doing nothing is something that our society has become very good at. Would you agree with that? You think about all the mindless activities that are out there.

The television programs with the situational comedies. The lots of things. Doing nothing is actually very easy.

All you have to do is nothing. Yeah, how about this? You delay. You procrastinate. You waste time. You do nothing. I have this article that I brought. It's on this question here of the ten biggest time wasters in our culture here.

I kind of like this article because it had lots of things. It says here, here's how you waste time. You don't prepare a to-do list. Yeah, that's kind of a good thing.

[9:20] I know I make little lists to myself and then I lose those lists. How about this one? Not paying attention. That applies to this morning especially. No, they're talking about here on just the merits of focusing

on the tasks that you're doing.

How about this one? Third, this is how you avoid wasting your time. Not learning from your mistakes. And that's because when you don't learn, you repeat your mistakes.

And it reduces your confidence and increases your stress. Here's another waste of time. Constantly checking your social media.

Yeah, I agree with that. Here's a fifth one. Gossiping. Gossiping. Gossiping is a time waster because of the negative impact it has on everybody.

Here's another one. Watching TV. Let me get a little specific here because I know we like a good movie and so on. TV, he says, used to be a popular source of information and entertainment.

[10:25] But now it's becoming... The idiot box. The idiot box, yeah. Now it's becoming more and more a waste of time because of all the reality shows and all the things that they've got listed here.

I agree with a lot of that. How about this one? Daydreaming. Daydreaming. Daydreaming is a waste of time because you're thinking about the future and, you know, it very seldom works out.

He says you should work on your dreams more than thinking about them. Here's the eighth one.

Oversleeping. Anybody guilty of that? Yeah. That affects your whole day as far as all your routines go.

Ninth, overeating. Unheating. That can lead to a healthy body and that makes a person lazy and lethargic. And then the tenth one is unhealthy habits.

You know, you can think about all the habits that some people have. Smoking, drinking. I'm sure I have habits that are not good for me. So there's perhaps a few bits of meat there and you can spit out the rest of the bones.

[11:32] I'll tell you what. Just in thinking about this very topic, I think the very fact is, is that we have so much time on our hands, don't we? Would you agree with that?

You consider all the previous generations where they didn't have the technology that we have. And yet we have more and more time for what?

To waste our time. The apostle Paul tells us, though, about another level. There's something spiritual here. He says in verse 15, Be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise.

In other words, you and I are to make the most of our time. Now that word walking there, that's referring, that's a metaphor referring to how you and I live our lives.

How do we conduct our lives before others and before the Lord? And so I'd like to begin here with some basic biblical truths about time. And, you know, this is not in that article.

[12:40] No, this is from the word of God. The first thing is this. Our time is owned by God. I know you're not going to be surprised by that.

The psalmist says in Psalm 31, My times are in thy hand. Deliver me from the hand of mine enemies and from those who persecute me.

My time is in your hands. That's no surprise. But not only that, did you know that the Bible teaches that you and I have an established path upon which we walk?

It's a path individually made, carved out, if you will, for each one of us. Look with me what Psalm says in 139. Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance.

And in thy book were written all the days that were, what? Ordained for me. When as yet there was not one of them.

[13:40] Isn't that an amazing thing to teach? That there is a path carved out, ordained for each one of us. The writer of Hebrews in chapter 12 says this.

Therefore, since we have such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every encumbrance and the sin that so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance.

Get this. The race that is set before us. That's some very interesting things to learn about our time, that it's owned by God.

The second thing that we see in Scripture is that life is brief. It's short. It's limited. James in chapter 4 says this.

Yet do you not know what your life will be like tomorrow? You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. I know that for most of you, that's no surprise there either to learn that.

[14:43] How many people do you know that have never finished something that they've begun? Consider all the unfinished symphonies out there, unfinished paintings out there.

There are some projects perhaps that some of you have begun and you've never finished. There are dreams that never become a reality. hopes, maybe ministries that you wanted to get started and they've never got off the ground.

And that's because life is short. Our time is limited. But here's the third thing. You and I can be foolish with our time.

I'll tell you what. The world thinks that they're wise with time. But I don't think they are. They're foolish. It's the complete reverse. But they are not wise in a biblical sense.

In his book by C.S. Lewis called *The Screwtape Letters*, C.S. Lewis describes this meeting between Satan and all his demons, his henchmen.

[15:51] And in this meeting, Satan is inviting all these ideas on how do you neutralize these believers, these Christians? What do you say to them? So one of the demons stands up and he says, I know, let's tell them there's no heaven.

And so Satan says, oh, that's not going to work. Heaven is written about in the Bible. Another one stands up and says, well, let's tell those Christians there's no hell.

And Satan says, no, Jesus spoke more about hell than he did about heaven. Finally, a third demon stands up and he says, let's tell them there's no hurry.

And Satan, he gets really excited about that. And he says, great job. That's the strategy that we'll use. There is no hurry. I remember talking to a guy.

I was getting ready to share the gospel with him. And he could sense that. And he says, oh, here you go again. He says, I don't have time for any of that stuff.

[16:55] He didn't use the word stuff. He used another word that began with S. I heard it this very, this morning from a brother here. He was wanting to share the gospel.

And the guy said, I have no time. I'll tell you what, buddy. You need to take the time. Because in here, in God's holy word, we find out what life is really about.

Take the time to do it. And yet, you hear people say, I'll do things my way. And their choice is tragic. Just consider with me, when Noah preached the word of God to all those around him, what happened?

It says in Genesis chapter 6 that God closed the door. The opportunity was lost. How about those five virgins who were not prepared when the wedding groom came?

It says the door was closed. And what happened? It was terrible. Their choice was tragic. Notice that Paul says here in his letter to the Ephesians in verse 16.

[18:09] He says the days are evil. What does he mean by that? In Galatians chapter 1, he's talking about how Jesus came to deliver us from, he says, this present evil age.

So in Paul's mind, we were already living in an evil age. You consider Paul was in jail when he wrote this letter to the Ephesians. And when it was written, believers couldn't take anything for granted.

Roman persecution was on the rise. And believers were in danger at every level, every day and night. And so here he says, and it says if the days are evil in Paul's day, how much more are we living in an evil age today?

It's quite a thought. I'll tell you what, things are not getting better. I think the advance of sin, the advance of human rebellion in this present decade even, has just been amazing to me.

We don't know what's going to happen tomorrow. But we don't know what the next, the evil day that will be brought. But we can be assured, friends, our time is in God's hands, even though our time is short.

[19:34] But also we can be foolish with the time that he's given us. So with all of that, how can we better use our time? And I'm just going to have, just identify three things here.

The first one is this. Be careful how we live. Look with me here. He says in verse 15, Be careful how you walk. Not as unwise men, but as wise.

If you have a King James Bible, you might see that word circumspectly. That means that you're looking around when you walk. You're walking with precision, as if you're walking in a minefield. Well, that's a very defensive strategy, and I think it's pretty good. Because if you and I actually saw all of the mines that were out there in this life, I believe that you and I would be very careful how we walked.

Making sure every step we took was the correct one. And it's because of this. Oftentimes we allow distractions to get us off track, don't we?

[20:44] Yeah, the cares of this world, worries. I believe that there's an active agenda out there to get us to worry about everything.

I don't know if you agree with that or not, but I do. In verse 27 of Matthew chapter 6, he says, By which of you being anxious can add a single cubit to your lifespan?

Yeah, worry. So those are some things. Be careful how we walk. Secondly, establish godly priorities. Notice here how Paul connects walking carefully with being wise.

He says in verse 17, Therefore, be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise. And verse 17, So that don't be foolish. Understand what the will of the Lord is.

I believe what this means, friends, is that we're to have a biblical perspective on things. Yeah, there's a lot of good tips out there on how we can waste our time and how we can approve ourselves, but we need a biblical perspective on things.

[21:57] We are to walk in wisdom. God's wisdom. We're to walk as wise people, taking the narrow path that the Lord has outlined for each one of us.

If you want to define godly wisdom here, it's living by divine life principles. And where do we find those? God's word. Paul also said in Romans chapter 12, he said, Do not be conformed to this world.

But he says, Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. That you may prove what is the will of God. That which is good and acceptable and perfect.

What a great verse that is. That's how our mind is transformed. That's how we know what God's will is. By having our minds transformed. Bringing our values and our priorities in line with what God's values and priorities are.

Seeing everything. Seeing others. Seeing the world through God's eyes. What a great goal that would be. Toward the end of his life, Moses prayed this.

[23:12] And it's in Psalm 90. Teach us to number our days that we may present to thee a heart of wisdom. What a great desire that is.

Well, so how does God reveal his desires and plans to us? Three ways. And I already mentioned one. Through his word. Also through his spirit. As we interact with God who indwells with us. Also through our circumstances. That's how we can know the will of God. Let me get to this last one here because this is the biggest one. To redeem the time that we're given.

If you look with me again. Verse 16. Making the most of your time because the days are evil. That word time there is not the same word from which we would measure days like on a clock or a calendar.

It's a different word and it's talking about eras or epochs of time or opportunities. That's really what he's talking about. We must watch for opportunities that are out there.

[24:19] Opportunities that we can make the most of. Moments, if you will, that can be grasped for something good. For something concerning God.

For something concerning his glory. I think the fact is, friends, every day there are opportunities for us to do good. To do wholesome things.

For an example, Paul writes to the Galatians, chapter 6. So then, while we have an opportunity, let us do good to all men and especially to those who are the household of faith.

Doing good to people. Grabbing those opportunities as they come up. Here's another one. It may be not in the doing, but rather what we don't do.

What am I talking about? I'm talking about opportunities to shun evil. You know, think about that. Maybe it's the end of the day. And instead of thinking about all the things that you didn't do, maybe you could say this.

[25:27] The best thing I did today was that I resisted evil. Yeah, and that's because you participated actively in God's transformation process

for you.

That's nothing to be shirked, nothing to be avoided, to shun evil. Here's the key, friends. God, if God has saved you and I, and if we're still here, then he must have a reason for keeping us around. Paul would write to Titus and let our people learn to engage in what? Good deeds to meet the pressing needs that they may not be unfruitful.

And then, of course, later in this letter of Ephesians, for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

All this fits together about how we're to spend our time here on earth. Here's another way. Consider the ministry of prayer.

[26:37] I'll tell you, that's the hardest thing to do, and yet, that's where the real work happens. You may have heard people say, I don't pray because I think it's just a waste of time.

No, friends. You're becoming before the mighty throne of God. As James says in chapter 5, the effect of prayer of a righteous man, it can accomplish much.

Here's a fourth way to spend our time. Bible study. In 1 Peter, it says, like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to your salvation.

If you have tasted the kindness of the Lord. He's talking here about the sanctification process of being saved. We are saved, we are being saved, and we will be saved.

So what a great truth that is. And finally, number five, get involved with one or more ministries that are going on. ways to serve the Lord.

[27:48] You may think about maybe the camp ministries that are coming up. You may think of joining a ministry team. Get involved because time is short and we have, and we need to use our time wisely.

Paul says in his second letter to the Corinthians, for if readiness is there, in other words, being ready, it's acceptable according to that. In other words, what a person has, not according to what he has not.

You may think of yourself as not having anything. I'll tell you what, friends, God is looking for readiness. He's looking for those who have first, let their first be a willing heart.

That's what he says. In the process, you'll discover a lot about yourself as you serve. Maybe one day you'll be speaking in front of a bunch of people. Maybe a bunch of little kids at a camp.

Maybe you have other abilities. Maybe you'll discover some of your spiritual gifts. That's how most people discover their spiritual gifts, by trying things. And the next thing you notice, people are coming to you and they're saying, you know, I've noticed that you have a particular gift in such and such.

[29:06] I see it in you. Well, if you've never, if you never started it, you'd never, people would not know that and you would not know that. Besides our salvation, I think time is one of the most precious gifts that God gives us.

It's a lot more important than money. You can always make more money, but if you have, but we only have a finite amount of time allotted to us.

And when we waste our time, we're essentially wasting our life. And none of us really knows how much time we have left. Maybe you've heard this cliché before, but I think it's true that when someone's on their deathbed, you'll never hear anyone say, I wish I would have spent more time watching reality TV shows.

No. We're to take advantage of every opportunity. Look with me with this last verse in Romans 13. He says, Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep.

For now salvation is near to us when we believe. The night is almost gone and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

[30:29] What a great thing to tell a group of people. What a great way to live your lives. To wake up from our slumber and to put on God's armor.

Because when you put on God's armor, it means that you're ready. You're ready for action. If I could have the musicians come up. Here's another thought.

Suppose there was a new bank that opened in your neighborhood. And they send you a letter and it says that we've opened an account for you and every day we're depositing \$86,400 into your account.

Every day. There's only one catch. You have to spend it all every day. If you don't, you're going to lose it. What would you do?

I think a lot of us would go out and buy a bunch of stuff. We'd fill our garages. We would buy storage, more storage facilities. Here's the kicker, friends.

[31:38] Every day God gives us 86,400 seconds to live. And if we use them wisely, we will be rewarded for that.

And we'll be rewarded in this life and as well as the next one. Jesus purchased our lives when he took our place on that cross. And that included our time.

You know, he didn't have to do that. But out of grace, he did that. He lived the sinless life that we didn't. And he died the death that you and I should have died.

He died in our place so that by faith we may receive all the blessings that he has in store for us in this life as well as the next.

And it's our privilege to seek him out as to how we must use the time that he's given us for his glory.

Next week, Teddy's going to be talking to us to help us consider not only time but also our talents.

[32:42] So we're off to a good start here. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we are so grateful that you've given us time that we may get to know you more, that we may study your word and pray, but mostly, Lord, that we would get to just walk in your ways and to find out how we can use our time for your glory.

Lord, help us to use and employ these things in our lives. Thank you in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Thank you.