



Using My Time to Steward My Calling

A Time to Reflect

Why Am I Here?

Our lives are set in hours, days, and years. We watch time quickly go by and hope we will have more to accommodate our future plans. Time is the framework in which we carry out our callings in life. How we spend our time can be physically, emotionally, and spiritual enriching...or draining – it can help you reach your goals, burden you because of your goals, or distract you from your goals.

- *Describe what you see as your goal in life.*
- *What gets in the way of achieving it?*

Life can be confusing, conflicted, and unfulfilling when disconnected from its purpose. It is important to take a step back and ask the questions: Why are we here? Why do we breathe? What are we to do with our time?

- *What would you answer? Does it match up with your goals?*

A Time to Review

Life's Purpose

It is in Christ that we discover who we are and for what we are living. Our identities are all wrapped up into the dynamic designs God has for our lives and his overall purpose as he works things out to accomplish his gracious will. This is part of what we pray for in the Lord's Prayer when we say "Your will be done..."

John 17:1,4 *¹After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you . . . ⁴I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.*

1 Corinthians 10:31 *So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*

- Explain what these passages have to say about your underlying purpose and life priority.

God doesn't leave life a mystery to those who are his children. It is seen in his hidden hand in history and his promises fulfilled. Yet the glory of God shines most clearly to us in his grace as shown by his plan of salvation. It is what even amazes the saints and angels in heaven.

Revelation 5:6-13 *⁶Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders . . . ⁹And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll (the insight to the future) and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. ¹⁰You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth." ¹¹Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. ¹²In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" ¹³Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power for ever and ever."*

- Imagine you were in the heavenly realms with this melodic crowd. Discuss why they are giving such glory to Jesus, the Lamb.
- Explain why Jesus is worthy of special glory in your life today.

The song that thrills heaven should become the song that thrills earth. What is it God wants? What brings him glory in our lives? How can we live a complete and satisfying life? Here is an important place to start:

Mark 12:29-31 *²⁹"The most important commandment," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' ³¹The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."*

- Paraphrase what Jesus is saying that is central to our calling and that matches his purposes for us.

How can we love a God we can't see and people who don't love us? All this is only possible if it is driven by Christ's love for us. He didn't treat us as our sins deserve. He opted for restoring a relationship with us rather than claiming his rights or receiving from people the glory he deserved

during his days on this earth. Unless we are filled with God's love to us in Christ, we won't be able to show him proper love or have the power to love others as he has loved us. He draws us fully to him so we can find joy in our purpose and eventually share in the glory.

"God doesn't want just the first part . . . he wants all of our day . . . all of our relationships . . . all of our time to carry out his will, our calling. Jesus is not merely to be first, but the center of this all. Everything in our lives moves around our relationship with him—friends, family, work, activities . . . thoughts." John Jeske

When we obey God, who defines love for us, it liberates us as redeemed sinners to boldly move into each new day with the confidence that God will carry out the hidden purposes of his grace through us.

A Time to Repent

Our lack of joy in life often comes when we are blind to our calling (our place and purpose in God's creation at this moment) or fail to appreciate its valuable effect on others. Living in a culture where life revolves around "me" makes it hard for us to view things beyond now, beyond what I want, beyond what everyone else is doing—diminishing our capacity to grasp how we fit into a higher purpose. At times we become so obsessed with our plans, our perspectives, and our priorities that they become far more important than God's. Look what Paul urges:

Ephesians 5:1-3,15-17 *¹Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children ²and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. ³But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people . . . ¹⁵Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. ¹⁷Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.*

- What makes these days "evil" or reveals that people don't understand what the Lord's will is?
- Discuss ways you may be prone to waste your time and pass up opportunities to "be imitators of God living a life of love, just as Christ loved us."
- Spend time in quiet prayer right now. Evaluate how you have fallen short. Imagine the opportunities that were missed to give him glory and reflect his love. In view of Christ's mercy confess any self-centered time agendas or careless adopting of the culture around us.

Life isn't about me. It doesn't revolve around me. It is about Christ's love for me that becomes the energy for my life for him. In a tempting culture I need to be careful how I live. It becomes my calling to make the most of every opportunity to love God and the people he places in my life. Thank God he has forgiven us through Jesus and empowers us to seize the opportunities to glorify him in our actions toward others.

A Time to Renew

Time for Your Calling

Ephesians 4:1 ¹ . . . *I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received . . .*

Our calling is intertwined with being stewards of the relationships God has delegated to us. Theologians have labeled this "calling" a "vocation." Luther often interchangeably used the terms: station in life (*Stande*) or calling (*Beruf*) or office (*Amt*). A vocation, therefore, is the station in which I am right now where I obey and serve God, and where "the common order of Christian love," love of neighbor, is above all. These are my stewardship assignments in God's creation to reflect my love for him. It is part of my calling to forsake old, sinful ways and boldly seize the opportunities to give him glory and reveal his love through my relationship.

One priority tool God entrusts to us to develop those relationships is his gift of time. During the lessons of this series you will be working on reordering your time to better focus on making every effort to honor your calling in view of your relationship with God, family, the body of Christ, and neighbors.

Everyone seems to have a different personal or cultural approach to time. Some people are very efficient with the use of their time, but if that efficiency is spent on things of little lasting consequence, all efficiency counts for nothing (like a football player expertly taking the ball to the wrong goal). Laziness and inattention to time is like the one who buried his talent in the ground instead of investing it (Matthew 25:14-30). Our lives are often referred to as a race God has designed for us to run. Paul urges us to train our bodies and get in top condition so we don't run aimlessly, but purposefully, toward the goal.

Remember the movie *Groundhog Day* when Bill Murray as Phil Connors had to live the same day over and over again?

- *If you could start all over again where would you reset the clock of your life? What would you do differently?*

You can't go back and change the past, but with an eye to the future you need to live in the moment. You have the tool of time *now*. You have 1,440 minutes every day to help you live out your calling as a child of God lavished with Christ's love.

A Time to Recommit

Philippians 3:13-14 ¹³Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Christ's love and our calling draw us to use our time for purposes that are more extraordinary than what is offered by the world. Let's get serious about who we are and recommit our time to wisely nurture the relationships he has entrusted to us.

- Spend some time looking at your calendar (see Love Takes Time booklet, p.14). What jumps out at you? What does it reveal about your priorities in life? What things seem to grab at you as top priority?
- Sketch out what you would like to see as your ideal day/week (see booklet p. 14-15).
- Choose who you will ask to hold you accountable as you go through the process of reordering your time and refocusing your life.

Prayer