

time

Leader's Guide

BIG IDEA

Time is a gift from God. But we abuse this gift by spending our time chasing our own pursuits rather than God Himself.

TIME POP QUIZ

SAY "To begin this study we are going to take a quick Time Pop Quiz. Let's reflect on these questions individually for one minute and then discuss them in a group."

START READING! YOU ARE WASTING TIME

READ THIS SECTION TOGETHER

What do you wish you had "more time" to do?

THE PROBLEM

LEADER READS THE SMALL SECTION UNDER "THE PROBLEM"

SAY "Now we are going to read a few passages of Scripture that talk about God's view of time. Can I have four volunteers with a bible each read one of these passages? We are going to read through these passages quickly to get a clearer idea of what the bible says about time and what the implications are for us."

READ Psalm 39:4-6

How is the passage urging you to think differently about time? We are not immortal like God. Our lives are like a "breath" or "vapor." We don't go on forever. It is futile to find security in temporary things like wealth and accomplishments.

What is the passage urging you to do? To ask God for help in realizing just how short our life is so that we would stop living like we have all the time in the world.

READ Ephesians 5:1-17

How is the passage urging you to think differently about time? The time or age we are living in is marked by evil and darkness, not peace and prosperity. We will not live unpunished forever. Because of our immorality, the wrath of God is coming soon.

What is the passage urging you to do? We are to walk in wisdom, grow in obedience, learn what is pleasing to the Lord, seek to understand his will, and make the most of every opportunity.

time leader's guide cont.

READ Galatians 6:7-9

How is the passage urging you to think differently about time? Whatever we “sow” with our time today we will “reap” tomorrow. If we use our time today to indulge in our flesh we will reap guilt and moral decay. If we use our time to do good for others we will reap eternal rewards.

What is the passage urging you to do? To stop being selfish, spending our time sowing to the flesh and instead be selfless, depending on the Holy Spirit for guidance and perseverance in doing good.

READ Colossians 4:2-6

How is the passage urging you to think differently about time? We are to make the most of every opportunity that God brings our way. Time is not just something that passes, but a stewardship that must be well thought out.

What is the passage urging you to do? Plan our schedules with intentionality and wisdom - especially thinking through how we can use our time to share the gospel and answer questions from others that are provoked by the unique way we live out our faith.

THE ROOT

READ THIS SECTION TOGETHER

In light of all these things, what keeps you busy and why? What do you spend most of your time doing? What does it reveal about what you want or love?

SOLUTION

READ THIS SECTION TOGETHER

What is your initial reaction to the Gospel message above? Potential follow-up questions:

- How does this section challenge you?
- How does this section encourage you?
- What lines or verses stood out to you from this section?

REDEEMING TIME

READ THIS SECTION TOGETHER

Which of these do you need to be empowered by the Holy Spirit to live out more fully? Potential follow-up question:
Which of these areas have you struggled with in the past?

SAY “Before we close in prayer, I want to show you the **three helpful exercises** in the appendix. The first is a Gospel Life Plan to help you with macro-level “big picture” planning. The second is Time-Management Matrix to help you with micro-level “day-to-day” planning. The last exercise is Time Wasters which will help you to make the most of your time everyday by eliminating common internal and external time wasters.”

GO THROUGH ONE OF THE EXERCISES TOGETHER OR ON YOUR OWN!

PRAY

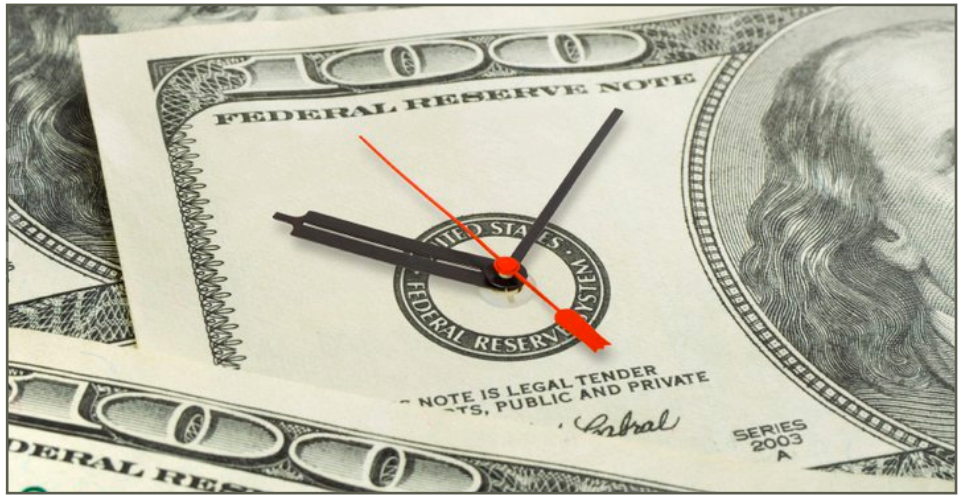
Time

Pop Quiz

- 1) The average college student spends more time in leisure and sports activities than in going to class and studying.
A. True
B. False
- 2) College students get an average of _____ of sleep each night.
A. 6.6 hours
B. 7.2 hours
C. 8.4 hours
- 3) College students spend an average of _____ grooming each day.
A. 23 minutes
B. 36 minutes
C. 48 minutes

ANSWERS:
1) True
2) C (8.4 hours)
3) C (48 minutes)

Quiz source: Bureau of Labor statistics
Note: Data includes individuals, ages 15 to 49, who were enrolled full time at a university or college.



START READING! YOU ARE WASTING TIME

You might be thinking: "Is this study going to be a waste of time?" You have a point. *Time is money*. But, if you think about it, we have less control over our time than our money, don't we? Time is a resource that we are forced to spend whether we want to or not. You are "spending time" right now. And once time is spent, you can't buy it back. It is irretrievable. The American poet Henry David Thoreau said that we can't "kill time without injuring eternity." That is why our culture is so fast-paced. Robert Banks says, "Whereas the English clock runs, the Spanish clock walks." Those outside our American culture can see that we have a problem with relaxing and slowing down. We are driven by a need to be productive and efficient.

In one sense, we are to be affirmed. Wasting time is a sin. God, who stands outside of time and who is sovereign over it, created us and put us in this place to accomplish the good works that he has prepared for us to do (Eph. 2:8-10). Our time is not our own. We were bought with a price and now belong to Him (1 Cor. 7:23).

Time is a gift given by God for us to steward. One day he will hold us accountable for how we spent our time. So it is right and good to be productive. But the problem is that many of us are busy-bodies who are busy doing things of little or no value. Pastor J. Hampton Keathley III said, "We are like the bus driver who told his passengers, 'I have some good news and then some bad news. The bad news is we took a wrong turn and we are on the wrong road. But don't worry, the good news is we are making great time.'"

Technology has made it possible for us to be more efficient with our time than ever before. But the truth is that we are either too busy to thank God or are ungrateful because we don't have enough of it. Just think about it. Everything you did today was only possible because God gave you time to do it. The only reason you or I think that we "don't have enough time" is because we are trying to do more than what God has asked of us.

King Solomon said that "there is a time for everything" and "a season for every activity under the heavens" which includes planting, building, weeping, laughing, mourning, dancing, embracing, speaking, and even silence (Ecc. 3).

Time is a gift. But the wise know that this gift will eventually run out (Ps. 90:12). Therefore, they prayerfully depend on God to make the best use of it.



What do you wish you had "more time" to do?

time is a gift

the problem



Time is a **gift** from God. But, we **abuse** this gift by spending our time chasing our own pursuits rather than God Himself.

Read

Psalm 39:4-6
Ephesians 5:1-17
Galatians 6:7-9
Colossians 4:2-6

Answer the questions below after reading each passage of Scripture...

How is the passage urging you to think differently about time?

What is the passage urging you to do?

THE ROOT ISSUE

We just learned that time doesn't last forever and that we should use it wisely, seek the Lord's will in how to spend it, use it to grow in holiness, and use it to share the gospel. In other words, we are to be good stewards of time. A steward is someone who manages the assets of someone else. For Christians, this means that we manage the time God gives us for his glory. Our time is no longer ours. We were bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:20). We exist to glorify him and enjoy him forever.

If that's the case, why are we such bad stewards of time? The main reason is simple: We have a *worship* problem. You might have thought this bible study was going to help you re-arrange your schedule to help you be more productive. But we want you to see that the underlying problem is not primarily about poor *management*, but poor *worship*. We always find time for what's important to us. Our schedule is filled with what we love.

Just in terms of allocation of time resources, religion is not very efficient. There's a lot more I could be doing on a Sunday morning.

- Bill Gates

This quote from Bill Gates illustrates the trap many of us fall into. We think that spending time with God, engaging in spiritual community, or practicing spiritual disciplines are *obstacles* that get in the way of what we *really* love. Our schedules prove this! We say, "I don't have enough time. I wish there were more hours in a day." The reality is you don't need more hours in a day. God didn't make a mistake. He has given you all the time you need to accomplish his purposes for your life. If you are too busy, it means you are either trying to do more than what he has asked of you or you are enslaved to one of the following needs:

Approval and appreciation. "I can't say no to anyone who asks me to do something because I don't want to let them down" or "I need to keep checking FB to see how many likes or comments I got."

Emotional and physical comfort. "I have to study or work non-stop so that I can find comfort in or have a peace of mind that I'll get what I want in the future."

Security and control. "I can't delegate anything because I can always do it better" or "I get angry when my schedule is interrupted last minute because it interferes with my goals."

Influence and Power. "I have to fill my schedule in order to get more knowledge, money, friends, or prestige on campus."

In addition to filling our time with work and activities that bring about some coveted feeling or accomplishment, the bible also addresses the busy-body syndrome (1 Tim. 5). Busy-bodies are lazy people who stay busy doing meaningless things out of boredom. These activities include daydreaming, fantasizing, gossiping, texting, playing video games, reading tweets or blogs, and Facebook messaging and wall browsing. Author Trisha Wilkerson says, "The busy-body is more concerned with the actions, thoughts, and juicy tidbits about others. The sin of a busy-body is often when desires are disappointed and we either demand or settle for the pleasure of knowing others' business. Instead of being connected relationally to God and people, we slip into false intimacy and gather knowledge that doesn't grow us, but instead wastes time... [These things] take up mind and heart space that should be occupied by prayer and purpose."

In light of all these things, what keeps you busy and why? What do you spend most of your time doing? What does it reveal about what you want or love?

solutio

The Gospel confronts our complaint that we have no time. Jesus was the busiest person ever to live and never complained despite the fact he only had three years of ministry here on earth. Even though Jesus had more to do than you and I will ever have, he still got away to spend time with his Father (Mark 1:35). He had many voices around him telling him what to do yet he didn't give in, but rather sought to re-arrange his schedule to fulfill his primary calling. When Simon came and said, "Everyone is looking for you" Jesus replied, "Let us go elsewhere, into the surrounding villages, so that I can preach there too. For that is what I came out here to do" (Mark 1:36-38). Jesus actually turned down hundreds of good opportunities to serve and heal people. Why? Because if he would have given in to every good thing that came his way, he wouldn't have made it to the cross. Jesus perfectly managed his time to fulfill his primary calling while abiding deeply in his Father.

Looking at the life of Jesus is convicting isn't it? It's frightening to think that we will stand before God someday and give an account of how we stewarded the time he gave us. On judgement day, even the busiest philanthropists won't stand a chance: "On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me...'" (Matt. 7:22-23). You telling people "I'm busy" may get you an applause at work or with your friends. But in the end, God will ask you like the religious people above, "Why were you busy?" The religious leaders were busy doing good things to make a name for themselves, not God. They loved themselves and that love drove their schedules. Time management wasn't the primary problem for them and it isn't the problem for us. We need to repent and turn from self-worship so that we can worship God with our time.

However, repentance does not look like you leaving this study wanting to try harder to fit God into your schedule. It means grieving over the time you've wasted daydreaming and chasing your own desires and goals, accepting God's gracious forgiveness through Christ for spending it in a selfish way, and asking the Holy Spirit to guide you moment-by-moment as you plan your schedule and rely on his power to change.

Jesus spent his time on earth pursuing the cross to die for the way we spend our time. Right now, Jesus is spending his time in heaven preparing a place for you and me (John 14:3) so that we can spend an infinite amount of time enjoying him forever. Until then, Jesus says to the busy and burdened, "Come to me... and I will give you rest... Take my yoke upon you... and you will find rest for your souls" (Matt. 11:28-29). Here's the big idea: Get busy resting in Jesus!

What is your initial reaction to the Gospel message above?

redeeming time:

You can't **redeem** a busy culture without being redeemed yourself. So the first step is to trust in Jesus, who lived a perfect life and died to make you righteous before God (2 Cor. 5:21). Those who are made righteous by God are sealed with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13), who empowers you with the motivation and ability to redeem time in the following ways:

rest with God

We think our time is well spent only if we *accomplish* something. Once, when Martha hosted Jesus at her house, she got irate at her sister Mary for lazily sitting at Jesus' feet. Jesus looked at her said, "*Martha, Martha... you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed - or indeed only one.*" (Lk. 10:41-42). Sitting at the feet of Jesus will *accomplish* more for you than anything else in life. That is why the fourth commandment says we should take one full day of rest per week (Exodus 20:8). In a society that values working 24/7, we can live counter-culturally by taking time off to reflect, pray, and play.

know your calling

You don't need more time. You need to use the time you do have to fulfill God's plans for you. Ask yourself these two questions: 1) *Who am I?* 2) *Why am I here?* Knowing that you're a Christian means that you are a disciple (who spends time learning how to follow Jesus), a family member (who spends time knowing/ serving the Father and others), and a missionary (who is sent to make disciples). Keeping your identity and life calling in mind will help you to decide what you should and shouldn't be doing. Author Dr. Kenneth Boa says, "*With a well developed sense of purpose, shaped by God's Word, all our activities and decisions are brought into alignment with God's purposes so that we can achieve maximum effectiveness with the time and resources God has given us.*"

embrace every season

There is a time or season for everything (Ecc. 3:1-8). Instead of always thinking about what's next or trying to get out of a trial, ask God to help you embrace what he has for your right now in order for you to become more like Jesus (Jam. 1:2-4).

recreate your schedule

Use the time management tools in the appendix to recreate your schedule in light of everything we talked about.

Which of these do you need to be empowered by the Holy Spirit to live out more fully?

Appendix 1 MACRO-LEVEL PLANNING

Gospel Life Plan BY SCOTT THOMAS



THE GOSPEL LIFE PLAN is a macro-level tool designed by Scott Thomas. The diagram and headings are taken from the Gospel Life Plan tool as explained in the book *Gospel Coach*. The questions were adapted from the material in the book.

Appendix 2 MICRO-LEVEL PLANNING

Time Management Matrix

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	What are the important and urgent things that need to be done right away?	What are important but not urgent things that need to be done, but not right away?
NOT IMPORTANT	What are the urgent , but not important things in my life (<i>things that are wasting my time because I or someone else thinks they are important</i>)?	What are the not important and not urgent things in my life that are wasting my time and energy?

Stephen Covey, author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* and *First Things First*, popularized the concept of a TIME MANAGEMENT MATRIX.

Appendix 3 TIME WASTERS BY SCOTT THOMAS

Seven External Time Wasters

1. **Personal interruptions.** Block out long periods of time on the most important things in your life and allow for no interruptions.
2. **Phone calls and text messages.** Learn to set a callback time for phone messages. Do not immediately view every incoming text message.
3. **E-mail barrages.** Schedule two to three times a day to check and respond to e-mails - and then stick to your rule. Ongoing e-mail work distracts you and keeps you from being productive.
4. **Message alerts and phone ringers.** When you work on important projects turn off your phone ringer and message alerts.
5. **Short attention spans.** Learn to focus. Use instrumental music or white noise to help you quiet your mind while working. Use headphones to block out noise. Sit in areas where you won't be easily distracted.
6. **Social media.** Learn to be proactive in your social media engagement rather than reacting to every comment made on your social media account. Use it as a tool and not as an open door for interruptions.
7. **Your daily energy cycles.** Be aware of when you have the most/least amount of energy. Put the most important tasks in your best block of time. Put the least important tasks (email, FB, etc.) in the other blocks.

Six Internal Time Wasters

1. **Lack of delegation.** Which activities could be done by someone else just as well, if not better?
2. **The “tyranny of the urgent.”** We are impatient. We think everything needs to be done right now. Good leadership involves learning how to filter e-mails, interruptions, demands, and fun opportunities.
3. **Procrastination.** Unpleasant tasks will often be avoided deliberately. Procrastinators usually are prone to interruptions and actually invite them.
4. **Perfectionism.** We often spend too much time on projects that result in wasted time, neglecting to spend time on more critical areas.
5. **Lack of planning.** Good leaders must plan ahead. [Scott Thomas] suggests the following blocks of time to plan ahead: Daily (30 min); Weekly (1 hr); Monthly (1/2 day); Quarterly (1 day); Yearly (2-3 days)
6. **Lack of a gospel life plan.** This may be the greatest time waster of all, but it is also the easiest to miss. No clear calling, no goals, and no specific steps to accomplish your goals will result in a bad stewardship of time. See *Gospel Life Plan in Appendix 1*.