2/20/22

Sun am

Guarding the Time

Ephesians 5:15-17

If you’re anything like me, there have been times that you get to the end of a busy day and think, “there is just not enough time in the day!”. Or perhaps you have experienced getting to the end of a rather lazy day (maybe the end of a netflix binge!) and wonder where the time went?

Each of these cases may be indicators that we did not use the time that we had wisely.

Ephesians 5:15-17

* Time: a *fixed* period; a *passing opportunity*. We only have so much of it.
  + Our lives are but a vapor
* Days are evil: this age; the potential for wickedness, worthlessness. **We were made for godliness and purpose in the time that we have.** **The enemy is active and would love to fill our brief and passing opportunity with *wickedness*…*or just worthlessness***.
  + \*Snagglewart story\*  *This is why we are told here to be alert to how we use our time*
* *Redeem the time: to buy up for oneself; to be intentional about how it is spent*
  + \*Illustration about money\* (Our time is like money. There’s only so much of it. And if we don’t intentionally plan where to invest it for the greatest return, it gets used unintentionally and foolishly…like grocery shopping when you’re hungry…and it is often wasted. Like a scam artist on the phone or via email that is trying to deceive you to get your money, the enemy is gunning for you to spend your time on all sorts of things)
    - Matt 25:14-30
    - 86400 seconds in a day. 1440 minutes in a day
  + What can worthlessness/wasted time look like?
    - Identify it. Laziness or busyness
      * A word about laziness. (*Selfishness. Excessive “Me time”*) ***Watch for those little “foxes” that spoil the vineyard***.
      * A word about busyness. (*A packed schedule. No time for rest, worship or service*) ***A busy schedule is not next to godliness. If we are constantly stressed about our schedule, there’s a pretty good chance that there’s something on it that is not God’s will***.
  + What ***is*** the best use of our time?
    - First, anything that helps us cultivate our relationship with the Lord (that will automatically help us properly prioritize our time); Second, helping others do the same (Love the Lord…and your neighbor); ***Everything else needs to be balanced well on that foundation***. (*Also, work, family and rest are listed as important for us in the scriptures*.)
  + What are the dangers of not being intentional with how we spend our time?
    - Temptation to wickedness is often on the heels of distraction/wasted time (Not being where we should be)
      * 2 Sam 11
      * Ex. mindless time scrolling/watching = mind numbing, discontentment, covetousness, etc.
    - Even if unintentional time doesn’t include wickedness or even lead to it, what often happens is that “Great” is sacrificed on the altar of “good”.
      * Doing “good” things (not evil in themselves), and neglecting “great” things
      * Ex. facebook; hunting, fishing, trapping, sports, clubs, workouts, car projects, books, etc.
        + “All things are lawful, but not all things are helpful” (1 Cor 10:23 – Paul speaking about food offered to idols. The principle is the same for the things we spend our time on)

*Then what does a godly schedule look like? A healthy balance between: Sleep, work, worship, Bible time, family time, rest/leisure, fellowship, service*

* Paul underscores this thought by saying, “don’t be foolish (without reason; reckless and inconsiderate habit of mind; an imprudent ordering of one’s life), but understand what the will of the Lord is.” (Seek His leading in all of our scheduling…”If the Lord wills…”)
* J. Oswald Sanders said, **“Each of us has the time to do the whole will of God for our lives.”**

Like your money, don’t wonder where your time went, determine where it goes.

Like your money, spend your time on the essentials.

(Duncan Brown’s “Screwtape Letter”)

My dear Snagglewart,

From what I have seen of your first report, you have fallen prey to a very common mistake made by novices in our field. You, dear Snagglewart, have started with your goals far too high! I see here that you aimed to make your patient hateful of his religion, and to drive him straight to debauchery. While these are admirable goals, and what you will ultimately aim for, your methods are, frankly, pathetic — they aim to do too much in too little time.

Remember: Rome didn’t fall in a day. You seem to think that giving him niggling feelings of doubt whenever he attends the Enemy’s home or egging him on to say yes to every dubious act is the best way to do this. How foolish! The proper route is not a direct attack, where he will be wary of affronts, but a more subtle sabotage in a place that he will not suspect. I shall give you two avenues of attack that I have found to be particularly useful against students at these wonderful pits of confusion and depravity: schedules and friends. Those, Snagglewart, can bring down almost any patient to the level we so desire, and are all the more effective at these schools they so “love.”

A schedule may seem like a small thing — and in many ways it is — but the important thing is to make it *seem*like the largest thing in the world to your patient. It doesn’t matter if your patient does in fact have a physical schedule; what is important is that he have a sense of urgency about him all the time. There is somewhere to be, something to do, and not enough time to do it! While you forge this sense of constant busyness, you must not jump the gun and attempt to remove his churchgoing habits immediately. This could backfire if attempted too early; instead, you must allow your patient to settle into a busy routine, until he feels more or less that this level of activity is normal, and that he has a grasp on it. It is then, when he has found his footing, that you must start the second part of this operation, by keeping constant vigil for a particularly chaotic time.

It is when a chaotic time falls upon him that you must convince him that he can drop something out of his schedule, preferably — but not necessarily — a visit to church. When the patient finally gives himself this time to breathe, after weeks of activity, he will realize just what a relief it is to shirk a duty. Now is a time of utmost importance; you must be there to tell him that this break is deserved, and furthermore that future breaks would be deserved as well.

If all goes well, you can even convince him that giving his word to do something is not as binding as he once believed it to be. “After all,” he’ll think, “why shouldn’t I allow myself time as I see fit?” — ignoring all the while his obligations to others and thinking only of his own tiredness.

In fact, he may come to resent those who rely on him, despite your patient being the one who offered his services in the first place. His time should begin to feel like a jealously-protected resource, so that he will always be on his guard against those whom he suspects of desiring it. If you can move correctly, soon he will go from having been overcommitted, overburdened, and exhausted all the time, to a creature of leisure and sloth, who regards it as a good thing that he spends hours on end twiddling his thumbs and doing little else. I hope you can see now, Snagglewart, that there is much more to this work than frontal assaults; after all, the Enemy has some measure of defense against these methods. It is best to attack from where we are unseen and unsuspected.

Your affectionate mentor,

Pusfly