

D. Mike & Leann Collins - Time Managing Time Principles

“Teach us to number our days,
that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” Ps 90:12

“There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under the heavens...” Eccl 3:1

Two things to remember from these verses:

1. We only have so many days. We need to walk in wisdom—remembering that life is fleeting... and what we do with our time matters—even rest!
2. There are many things to do! We can't do them all at the same time... and we will need to choose the things that God is specifically calling us to do for the season of life we are in... and God might call others to do things he isn't calling us to... so no judgement! We are finite creatures and CANNOT do it all.

With that in mind we need to decide WHAT is important in life—even the mundane things are important—and WHEN we should do them...

Priorities:

1. God should be first in our lives no matter what season we are in. In Matthew 5:33 Jesus points out all the things that people need and worry about getting and then says, “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” We do need to do the mundane—go to school, earn a living, take care of children and family members. God KNOWS that these things are important, but he is saying to seek him and his agenda for our lives as a priority. He will help us with the rest if we just put him first.
 - A. We need time alone with him to renew our minds—to figure out what He wants us to be doing with our time. Romans 12:2 says, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” Time reading God's word and praying will be helpful with this.
 - B. We need time with His people. “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Hebrews 10:24-25
 - C. God wants us to be blessed by a Sabbath rest with Him and his people.
2. God wants us to work diligently at whatever we are doing vocationally and take enough time to do it well. Col. 3:23-24 tells us, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”
 - A. When we are young... “Do your planning and prepare your fields before building your house.” Prov. 24:27. Prayerfully consider what God wants you to do in life and plan for it. Will you raise a family? How will you support one? What things should you be doing now to prepare? We encouraged our sons to consider a career that would allow them to support a family alone if considering marriage and family. We encouraged our daughters to be educated and able to jump in to support a family should that need present itself as best for their family. The best time to prepare for the future is when you're young. The next best time is now!

- B. The rest of your life... working for your family is important... “Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” I Timothy 5:8. Taking care of our elderly relatives is included in this.
 - C. When you are old... There are still things you can do with your time to serve God and others. Retirement that is just “playing” all the time is not Biblical... Think about Jesus’ parable about the rich fool in Luke 12:16-21. (Text included at the end of my notes.). We need to keep on asking God what he wants us to do with our time (and resources—but that is covered later). Even if our health fails, we can use our time to pray for others and encourage whoever God brings into our path.
3. God wants you use your time to consider the needs of your spouse and nurture that relationship if you have a spouse. You and your spouse will do well to choose contentment with one another. “Godliness with contentment is great gain.” I Timothy 6:6... Your spouse is NOT the same as you, so play to their strengths and take the time to do the things that they don’t do well without feeling disgruntled. Song of Solomon 2:15 says, “Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards, our vineyards that are in bloom.” Take the time to invest in each other—even a 15 minute “date” to drink a cup of herbal tea together after the kids are in bed and reconnect with one another as often as you can. (Obviously, this takes both of you agreeing to prioritize each other. Ask God to show you what you should do and pray for your spouse. Sometimes that is all that you can do. But even that takes time.)
 4. God wants us to nurture and teach our children while they are growing up in our home. Taking care of our family (vocationally and all the cleaning, cooking, laundry and chores, too, for that matter) is a main reason WHY we work. Remembering this helps us consider the balance needed to keep our work in its proper place-- to provide—not as a statement about who and how valuable or important we are. I believe this is our NUMBER 1 ministry when our kids are still growing up. “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” Eph. 6:4
 5. Minister to others God brings across your path—in whatever way God is specifically calling you to minister. (Ask God about what he wants you to do!) James 4:17 says, “If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.”
 6. Run your time decisions over the grid of your core values. Here is what I mean. The core values for our home have always been and in this order are . . . 1. Love God with all your heart, all your life. 2. Obey Mama first time and fast. 3. Be a blessing to a lot of people. In practical terms this really means, put God first, do your duty to honor your family next and then you work at being a blessing to those outside your family. Here is the trap that you can get yourself into if you allow this pattern to work backwards. You can get so caught up in being a blessing to others at church and ministry that you forget to love God and honor your family covenants and commitments. Remember that the only two covenants I have ever made are with my Savior and with my wife. Don’t let blessing others come before your commitment to honor those two very important covenants. That is why you constantly need to run your time commitments over the grid of your core values to be sure, God is first with your time, your wife and family is second and others have their place as third. Not that they should be excluded or forgotten, just not first but keep them in their proper role of importance.
 7. We often hear the phrase, “Keep your kids so busy that they do not have time to get into trouble.” We have always rebuffed that wisdom. If your kids can only stay out of trouble by staying over busy, then you have a parenting problem and a time problem to address. Train up your kids to want to stay out of trouble and still have time to rest and have balance in all the activities that they do. Do the hard work of training them to have everything in rhythm and balance with self discipline and moral agency in play.
 8. Other stuff...

- A. We need to take care of our bodies, so they work for us well. We need to maintain our “stuff” -- homes, cars, yards, etc..., so that things can keep doing what we need them to do. It’s OK to want to keep things nicely. God does that too! But keep it in balance.
- B. Hobbies or creative pursuits can be part of who we are as image-bearers of God. There are things that God made you to excel at, or pursuits that are restful. Remember there are seasons in life. If your time is limited in your current season, can you make those pursuits do double duty with some of our more eternal priorities? (Examples could be pursuing relationships while doing these things, or making this pursuit your vocation if you are really gifted at it and God opens that door.) Or is God calling you to set those pursuits aside for a season?
- C. Say “No” to the “One offs” and “Yes” to the “Multi Box.” People may want to ask for your time to do coffee or talk and it just involves you and them for an amount of time. I, Mike here, tend to say “No” to that unless there is a pressing need. Instead, when someone wants my time and attention, I combine it with existing ministry time slots. For example, if a guy wants to talk or spend time with me, I invite them to The Brotherhood Men’s Group on Saturday mornings at 7:30am. If they are serious about getting up and coming, then I know it’s worth my time and theirs. We then meet at a time I am already gathering with fifteen to twenty other men. That is my time to build relationships, mentor leaders, develop Bible lessons, make new friends and deepen existing ones. When one activity like Saturday mornings can do so much all at the same time, it is a win for me because instead of being a “One off” event that completes one goal, it is a “Multi Check Box” event that completes seven to eight goals all at the same time. Try to make as much of your time commitments a “Multi Check Box” event as possible. If the event checks off fewer and fewer goals at the same time, then look to stop it or replace it with something that allows you to work “Smarter” not “Harder” for the time invested.
- D. The key for all of these things is asking God how he wants you to spend your time. Prov. 3:5-6 “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.”

Some practical ideas to work our priorities out:

1. You really cannot do everything... and neither can your kids. Say “No” to the good things in order to be able to say “Yes and Amen” to the best things. Pray and ask God what those things are for your family. God really does direct people differently according to their gifting and circumstances. Put the “big rocks” in first! Plan for your priorities.
2. Use the concept of “Don’t harvest to the edges of your field” when it comes to your time. Understand the concept of scheduling some “white space” on your calendar so that you have time for the “widow, orphan, foreigner” that God brings across your path. Lev. 23:22 “When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and for the foreigner residing among you. I am the LORD your God.” (Learned this from Gordon MacDonald’s “Ordering your Private World” and also the study of the psych students who were tested with a time-sensitive errand across campus with people in need planted along their route—compassion when in a hurry... was rare!)
3. Consider how to make activities accomplish more than one priority. When God told his people to be sure to teach their children about him, he suggested that it happen while they are “doing life” together! “Teach (God’s commands) to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up.” Deut. 11:19. With our high school aged kids, I, Mike here, scheduled a fifteen minute coffee date with each of them every week. Yes, it took planning, but boy, did it pay big dividends. Every one of our kids got special time with dad and it just

seemed to give them time to air their concerns, thoughts or questions. As Meri told me, "It just let me know the Big Dog loved me." Also, dads, try as much as possible to be the ones to take them to and from school and to their events. Time in the car is special time, make it count. Ask them what they have been thinking or feeling and then let them talk. Let the pregnant pause draw them out. It might amaze you what will come from such simple questions.

4. You do need a Sabbath Rest. Ask God what that should look like for you and your family. We are still figuring that out, and I think it looks a bit different in the different seasons of our life.

Leann's time management worksheets. Mike's time management methods. Examples that work for different personality types! The point of these tools is to use them to accomplish what you say your priorities are— including time to rest and relate.

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

Luke 12:16-21

¹⁶ And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. ¹⁷ He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'

¹⁸ "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. ¹⁹ And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'"

²⁰ "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'

²¹ "This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God."