

Stewardship of time
Psalm 39:4-13; Acts 2:38-47

Equipment: paper – numbers 1-5 on one side. Three questions on the other (outline)

A minister was known for preaching very long sermons. One week, he noticed a man get up and leave during the middle of his sermon. The man returned just before the conclusion of the service. Afterwards the minister asked the man where he had gone.

"I went to get a haircut," he said.

The minister asked, "Why didn't you do that before the service?"

The man replied: "I didn't need one then."

As I begin *this 20 minute sermon*, I can look up and see a clock! How many clocks do you have in your house? An alarm clock next to the bed, a clock in the lounge room, one on the VCR, one on the microwave, a watch on your wrist, a clock in your car, on your mobile phone, on your computer. We are constantly reminded that time is ticking away.

We can often feel that we waste a lot of time, can't we?

In an average lifetime did you know we spend about six months sitting at stoplights, about eight months opening junk mail, and about 5 years *waiting in line*?

God says that we can live a life where we don't waste a single minute of our time. Today as we talk about our stewardship of time, we're talking about how we use every moment of time in the life that God has given us.

A steward is simply defined as

PPT - "a person who manages the property or affairs for another entity."

In **Genesis 1** God makes us stewards over his creation. But it's very clear in the beginning that

PPT –

Nothing *belongs* to us. Psalm 24:1:

"*The earth is the Lord's and everything in it*" and God can ask for it all back at any time, including our own lives. God has created everything. So it all belongs to him. We are stewards of his creation. Managers of his property.

I want to ask three questions about our stewardship. This week, we'll apply them to our *time*. Next week we'll apply them to our *money* and other possessions. Here are the three questions – these questions are on your outline:

PPT -

- 1. HOW MUCH DO I HAVE?**
- 2. HOW SHOULD I SPEND IT?**
- 3. HOW MUCH SHOULD I GIVE?**

So let's start with time. And let's begin with a short exercise:

Question One:

PPT - **1. HOW MUCH TIME DO I HAVE?**

III – Write down a wish list of 5 things that you haven't done, but would like to take the time to do. Just take a minute to quickly write down 5 things. Travel, skydiving, learn to cook...

PPT - **Psalm 144:4** says – "*4 Man is like a breath; his days are like a fleeting shadow.*"

No-body knows how much time they have. It's as simple as that. You do not know when God will ask for your life back. He's given it to you as a steward, but it *belongs* to him. How many of those things on your list will be accomplished? You don't know. It's nice to have a "wish list", but you do not know how long God has given you. So that makes the next question a pretty important one.

Question Two:

PPT - 2. HOW SHOULD I SPEND MY TIME?

PPT... Colossians 3:17 – “*17 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.*”

In other words, **Live every moment for God.**

We're not working to build a kingdom here on earth. Whether we're doing the laundry or mowing the lawn; teaching or doing housework or playing music, or nursing – it's not the **job** that gives us satisfaction or joy, it's not the pay we receive, it's not the hours we work or the fringe benefits – it's our boss that makes it worthwhile – we do everything in the name of Jesus. Every minute we work, whatever job we're doing, we're doing it for Him, as stewards of His creation.

Listen to **Ecclesiastes 2:24** – “*24 A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, 25 for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment?*”

The writer of Ecclesiastes is saying you **cannot find** true enjoyment without God! Without God, we cannot live for the purpose he created us for. When we make decisions, are we making them with God?

- What career will I choose?
- What ministries will I be involved in this year?
- Where will we live? And how big a mortgage will we take out?
- How will I spend my retirement?

These are decisions that have a great impact on how we use our time. And if we make those decisions without God, we will not be satisfied. God wants us to be satisfied! God wants us to be content and fulfilled in our lives. The way to be content and make good decisions about our time is to focus on our future.

Listen to **Psalm 39: 6-7**: “*6 Man is a mere phantom as he goes to and fro: He bustles about, but only in vain; he heaps up wealth, not knowing who will get it. 7 "But now, Lord, what do I look for? My hope is in you.*”

When we put our hope in a job, or in a career, or in a lifestyle, we will find it impossible to be satisfied. If we look at our future as a big pile of money or a big family, or a big career, our future will be hopeless. But when our hope is in God, and the future we have with him, even the most mundane life or the most difficult job is exciting. Because we know God has a plan for us that is much better than any plans we have for ourselves! Wherever God has placed you in the world, you can be confident that he has placed you there for a purpose.

Finally, the big question. Question three

3. HOW MUCH TIME SHOULD I GIVE?

Well obviously, **all** of our time is God's. But he's also given us so many ways to **spend** that time – and they're not all work – friends, family, children; there's food, walking, music, rest, sleep, holidays. There's a time to enjoy each of these parts of God's creation in our lives.

But we are also made in God's image. And as people made in his image, we are first and foremost to be enjoying our relationship with Him.

PPT - 1 Peter 2:9 reminds us of this – “*9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*”

We live to declare God's praises. We live to express our relationship with him that has been made possible through Jesus' death on the cross. Jesus' death and resurrection brought us into an eternal relationship with God that starts NOW! Our relationship with God doesn't start in heaven. It starts NOW!

III – When I do the grocery shopping, I usually indulge in a few treats. Like Tim Tams. And sometimes I start eating them on the way home! And why not? They're mine! I want to enjoy them straight away!

We can enjoy our relationship with God right now! And we can do that together! Acts 2:44 gives us a great picture of the life of the early church –

PPT - *"44All the believers were together and had everything in common."*

People enjoying their relationship together under Christ. There is nothing on earth that is better than what we have when we meet together. Right here at church. Or the women together at convention this weekend. The HADCEA breakfast on Saturday morning. There is nothing better than being together with God and his people. There is no better way to spend your time.

PPT – tomato seed, fruit, plant.

III – Think of our Christian growth like a tomato seed. You see tomatoes in the shops. You see them in your fridge. You see them on dinner plates. You see them in soup. You see them in sauce. Tomatoes are everywhere. But you don't pick up your tomato *seed* and put it in the fridge. You don't put your tomato *seed* on the dinner plate! You don't put a *seed* in a sauce bottle! You stick it in the ground. That's the first place it goes. Because that's where it grows. Then it's able to go out into the world and be a productive little fruit!

Church is not only where we enjoy our relationships in Christ together. It's also where we grow as Christians, so we can go out and make an impact in the world.

We do not know how much time we have left on this earth. Have a look at that list of 5 things again that you made earlier. You don't know how many of those things you will ever get to do. Are there some more important things you could put on that list? Where does your church family fit into that list? Where do **God's** plans for your life fit in to that list? (Why not take a moment to change your list now if you want.)

You can't change how much time you have. God has given you your life, and he can take it back any time he chooses. The past is gone. The future isn't here yet. So what is God telling you is important NOW? If you only had the time to do one important thing, what would it be? Let me encourage you to be a good steward of God's time, and simply do what God is telling you to do.

PRAY – that we won't waste time, but simply DO God's will in our lives, beginning now.