



Discussion Guide

SPENDING TIME WISELY "Run Straight to the Goal" Part 2

Jeff Wall

Live life, then, with a due sense of responsibility, not as men who do not know the meaning and purpose of life but as those who do. Make the best use of your time, despite all the difficulties of these days. Ephesians 5:15–16 (PH)

God tells us that managing our time is a mark of wisdom. He wants us to know that **time management is life management**: “Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful” (1 Corinthians 4:2 NIV). Ecclesiastes tells us **our problem isn’t time, it’s our choices**: “There is a right time and a right way to do everything, but we know so little” (Ecclesiastes 8:6 GN). And in the book of Psalms we discover that **time management can be learned**: “Teach us to number our days and recognize how few they are; help us to spend them as we should” (Psalm 90:12 LB). In this D Group, we’ll examine a few starter strategies for effectively managing the time God has given us, based on Ephesians 5:15–16.

Open your group with a prayer. Remember that Jesus has promised that the Holy Spirit will teach us and ‘lead us into all truth’. You have Him with you right now this is even better than having Pastor Floyd in your D Group; although that would be awesome too!

THIS IS ONLY A GUIDE. PICK AND CHOOSE YOUR POINTS.

STEPS FOR MANAGING MY TIME

1. ANALYZE MY LIFESTYLE.

God gives us specific advice regarding how we live. Discuss the warning in Ephesians 5:15.

- The Amplified Version tells us to “look carefully” at how we live. What keeps us from doing this? [Note: God has told us to examine our lives, and that makes it a command.]
- Why do you think our lifestyle decisions matter, if, after all, it’s just a choice?

Discipleship—Wise students of Christ study their lives in light of God’s Word. This week you may choose to, set aside the first few moments, or last to 1) keep a time record. Journal or look at how much time you are spending on various tasks. Where are you under- or over-estimating time spent? If you are like my bride Sherri it may be in the amount of time it takes to drive to your next appointment. Find out where your time is really going; 2) Sit down and look this record. Be honest with yourself. Ask: Is this what I want to do? Is God pleased with how I am spending my time? Ask your group or spiritual partner to hold you accountable in this area.

2. PRIORITIZE WHAT’S IMPORTANT.

How does Ephesians 5:17 contrast foolishness with understanding (what’s important with what is not)?

- How does this apply to our use of time?
- What can each one of us do to more firmly grasp God’s will for the day to day?
- Why do we often feel stressed by time pressure? Who are we trying to please?
- At the end of the day or week, to whom are we accountable for what we accomplish?

Fellowship – It’s easy to get caught up in the demands of our lives, but God longs for us to put him first and one of his purposes for us is that we connect regularly with other believers. What choice could you make this week to invest some time in fellowship? Write down what God reveals to you and determine to make that appointment. Remember that “prior” does not mean priority (just because it is in your schedule now doesn’t mean it should stay). If a task on your list is not critical, maybe it can be bumped for that fellowship opportunity.

3. ECONOMIZE MY ENERGY.

Discuss the advice offered in 1 Corinthians 10:23.

- How can we learn to focus our activity choices on what is constructive or beneficial, as opposed to what is largely a waste of time? Is it ever OK to engage in activities that do not seem to be especially purposeful? Explain.
- What can help us determine if an activity that may not be harmful is also not necessary?

How did Isaiah feel about his own use of time, according to Isaiah 49:4?

- Share a few tips you can each do to increase or preserve your energy for what matters most.

Worship – Romans 12:11 tells us to “*Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord*” (NIV). How can we make sure we have plenty of energy for daily time with God? One suggestion is that every time you add something to your schedule, you take something else off. Another is to avoid late night TV. Sherri and I have no cable T.V. at home and were reminded recently what a huge temptation it is to waste time in the evening watching stuff that could be used to torture almost anything with a brain larger than a walnut.

Discuss a few other ideas for eliminating and reducing time wasters. Commit to becoming aware of activities you can do without in order to spend more time with God and the people you are here to love.

4. UTILIZE THE PRESENT.

From Ephesians 5:16, why should we care about using our time wisely?

- What do you think Paul means when he says “these are evil days”? Is this true today?

Read Ecclesiastes 11:4. What happens when we decide to wait for the perfect time?

- What reasons (or excuses) do we come up with for not doing things we know we ought to do—or even goals we dream of achieving?
- Share a brief story or two of an opportunity missed by waiting or a goal achieved by recognizing the right moment.

Ministry and Mission—There’s an old saying that goes, “There’s no time like the present.” Too many of us waste time regretting the past or presuming upon the future. Where does God want to use you right now to bless the lives of those around you—to show your gifts in service and to go tell others? If you are currently engaged in ministry, thank God for this opportunity and ask the group to pray with you for you to expand your influence. **Ask God to reveal where he would like you to share his joy with someone who does not yet know him and plan to move in that direction. There are a lot of folks in Fairbanks He wants to invite to the party!**

Take a moment to review any assignments/challenges made during the personal application and commitment section of your previous meeting. Seeing God at work in the lives of those who commit to him is essential for growth.

PERSONAL APPLICATION AND COMMITMENT:

God tells us that life is a trust and a test. He is watching how you use the time he has given you. Only God knows how much time each of us has. What matters is that our choices are in line with His plan.

“This is the hour to receive God’s favor; today is the day to be saved!” 2 Corinthians 6:2b (TEV)

