

TAKING CARE OF YOUR TIME

Take Care – Week 3

By Andy Manning

Introduction

The title of this sermon is “Taking Care of Your Time.” This is week 3 of our sermon series “Take Care.”

The big idea is that taking care of yourself is not sinful, or selfish, or unspiritual. It is a very spiritual, important thing to do, because if you don’t take care of yourself, then you can’t take care of others. If you don’t take care of your business, then you can’t take care of God’s business.

So we’re talking about how to take care of ourselves – your walk with God, your body, your time, your money, your emotions, and your marriage.

Today we’re going to talk about taking care of your time.

Ephesians 5:16 (EHV) “Make the most of your time....”

There are four reasons you must make the most of your time.

ONE: BECAUSE YOUR TIME IS LIMITED. You will not live on this earth forever. You only have 75 to 100 years, if you are lucky. If there is something you want to do, you better get started, because you don’t have forever.

TWO: BECAUSE YOUR TIME IS BRIEF. 75 to 100 years may sound like a lot, but it isn’t. As they say, time flies. And the older you get, the faster it flies. You better stop procrastinating, stop wasting time, and hurry up and start living, because your time on earth is very short.

THREE: BECAUSE YOU WILL BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE FOR YOUR TIME. God did not put you on this earth to do your will, or to fulfill your plans. He put you here

to serve Him (Ephesians 2:10). And He will hold you accountable for how well you used your time to accomplish the things He created you to do.

FOUR: BECAUSE IT IS THE BEST WAY TO LIVE. It is obvious that making the most of your time is a better way to live than wasting your time. You can accomplish so much more, and do so much more, and experience so much more, and enjoy so much more, if you focus on making the most of your time. **Alan Lakein** said, “Time equals life. Therefore, waste your time and waste your life, or master your time and master your life.”

But most people are not very good at time management.

William Penn said, “Time is what we want most, but what we use worst.”

So today we’re going to learn how to take care of our time from God’s word.

Ten Biblical Truths About Time

Today I want us to look at the story of two sisters, Mary and Martha. These two sisters, along with their brother Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead, lived in the city of Bethany, about two miles outside of Jerusalem. Eventually they became some of Jesus’ best friends. A short story from their life can teach us a whole lot about taking care of our time.

Luke 10:38-42 (CSB)¹

38 While they were traveling, he entered a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. 39 She had a sister named Mary, who also sat at the Lord’s feet and was listening to what he said. 40 But Martha was distracted by her many tasks, and she came up and asked, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to serve alone? So tell her to give me a hand.”

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are taken from the Christian Standard Bible, Copyright 2017, by Holman Bible Publishers.

41 The Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, 42 but one thing is necessary. Mary has made the right choice, and it will not be taken away from her.”

Let me point out ten Biblical truths about time.

ONE: WHEN I FEEL STRETCHED TOO THIN, IT IS OFTEN BECAUSE I AM DOING THE WRONG THINGS, OR BECAUSE I AM DOING THINGS WRONG.

Martha felt stretched too thin. She felt like she had too much to do. But that wasn't the problem. The problem was that she was doing the wrong things. It wasn't wrong to focus on her many household tasks. I'm sure she was serving all of their guests, and that is a good thing. But it was a good thing at a bad time. At the time, she should have been focusing on Jesus.

Our problem isn't that we don't have enough time. You have enough time to do everything God wants you to do. God promises to meet all of your needs, and that includes your time needs (Philippians 4:19). The problem is that we spend the time that God has given us on things that God doesn't want us to do; on things that God hasn't called us to.

When I first started working at FedEx I decided to play on the company softball team. And for the next eight weeks, I felt stretched too thin. Why? Not because I didn't have enough time, but because I was doing the wrong things. I had plenty of time for the things God wanted me to do. I didn't have time for softball.

We also feel stretched too thin when we do things wrong.

We try to do it all by ourselves instead of asking for help and delegating.

Or we do things very inefficiently. For example, it is important to keep your grass cut, but using a push-mower on a five-acre lot is not smart.

TWO: I CAN ACCOMPLISH MORE BY DOING LESS.

Who accomplished more in this story – Mary or Martha? You might think Martha, because she was doing many tasks. But the right answer is Mary, because she was doing the most important task – listening to Jesus. Even though Mary was doing less, she was accomplishing more.

Usually the way to accomplish more with your time is to do less. You must identify the essential tasks, and focus most of your time there, and then limit the time you spend on non-essential tasks.

In other words, time management is not about getting more done in less time. It is about doing the most important things, and doing less of the unimportant things. **Brian Tracy** said, “Effective people work on the vital few rather than the trivial many.”

THREE: MY TIME PROBLEMS ARE MY OWN FAULT.

Martha assumed that her time problems were Mary’s fault. She did what many of us do. When we feel too busy, we blame it on other people. But Martha’s problem was not Mary; it was Martha. Martha was overly busy because of her own choices.

If you feel too busy, then it is nobody’s fault but your own.

We all have the same amount of time. Time is an equal opportunity employer.

We all make time for what’s important to us.

If you are overly busy, it is because you are doing too much, or you are being inefficient. It’s because you said yes when you should have said no. It’s because you wasted time that you should have invested. It’s because you are disorganized. It is because you procrastinated.

But don’t blame it on others.

Until you take responsibility for your time, you will never learn how to manage it. Because as long as you blame others for your time problems, you are giving them control over your time.

Blaming others for your time problems is like blaming the dentist for your cavities. The dentist didn't give you cavities; he just pointed them out.

Other people don't cause your time problems; they just help you see that you aren't managing your time well. You can either get mad at them, or you can change your behavior.

FOUR: BUSYNESS IS NOT EFFECTIVENESS.

Martha was very busy, but she was not effective.

Activity is not accomplishment. Just because you're moving fast doesn't mean that you are getting anywhere.

You can be very busy and still waste your life if you are busy with the wrong things.

Don't confuse business with significance. They aren't the same thing. You can busy yourself all week long watching TV and looking at Facebook, but you're not going to be very effective.

FIVE: THE ENEMY OF THE BEST IS THE GOOD.

Martha's problem was not that she was doing something sinful. She was doing a good thing. She was serving her guests. She was serving Jesus. That's a good thing. Martha's problem was that she was doing a good thing instead of the best thing.

The enemy of the best is the good. The devil doesn't have to worry about making you bad; he just has to make you busy. Because if you fill your life with good activities and tasks and neglect the best things then you will waste your life.

Fishing and hunting are not bad things, unless you do them instead of going to church.

Putting your kids in sports is not a bad thing, unless it interferes with church. Then it becomes a bad thing.

SIX: WHEN OTHERS DISAPPROVE OF MY TIME CHOICES, THAT DOES NOT MEAN THAT I AM IN THE WRONG.

Martha was critical of Mary's time choices. Does that mean that Mary was in the wrong? No.

Do not be discouraged when other people disapprove and criticize the way you spend your time. If you truly spend your time the way God wants you to, then you will likely annoy some people. Some people will feel offended. Some people will fuss at you. Some people will think you are foolish. That's okay. As long as you are managing your time the way God wants you to, nothing else matters.

Mary's wisdom was that she did not imitate others. She did not copy the way others spend their time. She didn't let the priorities and decisions of other people guide her time choices. Instead she was guided by what she thought was the most important thing to do with her time.

We must be very careful that we don't copy the way others manage their time, just to avoid criticism, or just because it's what everyone else is doing (Romans 12:2). We must seek God's guidance for every minute that we have, and then ignore what everyone else says and does.

SEVEN: IF I DO NOT MANAGE MY TIME, OTHERS WILL HAPPILY MANAGE IT FOR ME.

I want you to notice that Martha would have happily managed Mary's time, if she could have. She even asked God for permission to manage Mary's time.

There are plenty of people who would love to manage your time. They would love for you to do this for them, and do this with them. And if you don't manage your time by clarifying your priorities, and planning out your day ahead of time, and at times saying "No", then you are putting your time in someone else's hands.

EIGHT: TIME SPENT WITH GOD IS THE BEST USE OF TIME.

This is probably the big idea of this passage about Mary and Martha. Martha chose to do a good thing by serving others, but Mary chose to do the best thing by spending time with Jesus.

If you are too busy to spend quality time with Jesus, then you are too busy. If you are too busy for a daily quiet time, then you are too busy. If you are too busy to go to church on Sundays, then you are too busy.

Time spent with God is the best use of time. There is nothing you could possibly do that would be a better use of time than spending time with Jesus.

NINE: HOW I SPEND MY TIME IS A REFLECTION OF MY PRIORITIES.

There's no way around it. Martha spent her time doing all of her tasks because at that moment that was her priority. That's what was most important to her. Mary spent her time at the feet of Jesus because at that moment, that's what was most important to her.

The way you spend your time is a revealer. Time doesn't lie. You can say that God is your priority. You can say that your marriage is your priority. You can say that your children are your priority. You can say that your health is a priority. You can say that church is a priority. But what does your schedule actually reveal?

If many people were honest they would have to say their priorities are eating, sleeping, TV, internet, video games, and money (earning a paycheck).

The key to effective time management is to make sure that your schedule actually reflects what want your priorities to be.

TEN: I CANNOT DO EVERYTHING.

Mary could not sit at the feet of Jesus and serve everyone at the same time. Neither could Martha. They had to make a choice.

You cannot do everything. You do not have enough time. Time management is all about choices. Your time choices matter, because when you choose to do one thing, you are choosing to do that instead of something else. When you choose to watch TV, you are choosing to do that instead of something else. When you choose to play video games, you are choosing to do that instead of something else. When you choose to work late, you are choosing to do that instead of something else. You cannot do everything.

When you choose to do something with your time, make sure there is not something more important that you should be doing instead.

It's been said that the key to time management is this question: "What's the best way to spend my time right now?"

Just because something is fun doesn't mean it is the best way to spend your time. Just because something is not sinful doesn't mean it is the best use of your time. Just because something is a good use of your time doesn't mean it is the best use of your time.

Every hour of the day you should be asking, "What is the best use of my time right now?"

Six Tips for Better Time Management

With that being said, now let's get practical and look at what we need to do to take care of our time.

ONE: GIVE YOUR TIME TO GOD.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 “19 Don’t you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought at a price. So glorify God with your body.”

The Bible says that you belong to God. Because He created you. Because He redeemed you with the blood of Jesus. And if you belong to God, then that means your time belongs to God.

The question is Have you consciously given your time to God? Have you purposefully committed your time to God?

Proverbs 16:3 “Commit your activities to the Lord, and your plans will succeed.”

You cannot succeed in life until you commit your time to God.

What does that mean?

One: Put God first in your time. Don’t do other things when you should be spending time with God.

Two: Let God dictate your time priorities. Let God decide what is most important in your life; the things that you should be giving the most time to. Don’t decide what is most important; ask God what is most important.

Three: Don’t spend your time on sin. It may be hard to figure out what God wants you to do with your time, but it is easy to figure what God doesn’t want you to do with your time.

TWO: TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR TIME.

Galatians 6:5 (ERV) “You must each accept the responsibilities that are yours.”

The worst thing you can do is to do like Martha and blame your time problems on others.

To get control of your time, you must take responsibility for it.

That means that you need to accept that you are where you are in life right now because of your own choices. You are as close to God as you have chosen to be. You are as physically fit as you have chosen to be. Your marriage is as strong as you have chosen it to be. You are as successful at work as you have chosen to be. You are busy as you have chosen to be. Your schedule is the way it is because you have arranged it that way.

Rick Warren said, “To make the most of your time, you must assume responsibility for your time. That’s the first step. This means you stop complaining about how much you’ve got to get done and how much you’re not getting done and how much you’re overworked and over-stressed, and you just start making some smart choices. Stop complaining, and start choosing. Your choices control your calendar a lot more than your circumstances do. You may not like what you’re doing, but you’re choosing to be busy. You can’t change your circumstances until you start changing your choices.”

There are three types of people in the world: accusers, excusers, and choosers.²

Accusers blame everyone else for their time problems. They blame other people of asking them to do too much; and for not helping enough.

Excusers don’t blame others. They just make excuses for their poor use of time. They are busier than everyone else. They have more responsibilities than everyone else. They don’t have enough help. Their life is harder than everyone else’s. Everyone depends on them. If they stopped doing a few things the world would end. You are not going to succeed by being an accuser or an excuser.

Instead, you need to be a chooser. You need to realize that that you are where you are because of your own choices. Once you realize that, then you will have the power to choose to change.

² I got this idea from an article written by Rick Warren.

THREE: SET YOUR PRIORITIES.

Author **Stephen Covey** wrote, “The essence of the best thinking in the area of time management (practice planning) can be captured in a single phrase: Organize and execute around priorities.”

Biblical time management is not about getting more done. It is about getting the right things done. So the foundation for time management is clarifying the right things; the most important things.

The Bible teaches the importance of getting your priorities straight. **Matthew 6:33** “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you.”

What is a priority? The dictionary gives two definitions: 1) Being earlier or more important, precedence in rank or order, the right to be first; 2) something that is more important than other items or considerations.³ Your priorities are the things that are most important to you. The things that you value the most. The things that you want to make sure you get done.

What are your priorities?

Every Christian should have the same primary priorities: Savior; Spouse; Seed; Self; Service.

1) Savior: Your relationship with God. **Proverbs 3:6 (TLB)** “In everything you do, put God first, and he will direct you and crown your efforts with success.”

2) Spouse: Your relationship with your spouse (if you are married). **John Capozzi** said, “The executive who works from 7 am to 7 pm every day will be both very successful and fondly remembered by his wife’s next husband.”

³ This definition comes from Ken Blanchard’s book, *The On-Time, On-Target Manager*.

3) Seed: Your relationship with your kids (if you have kids; or your parents, if you are a kid). **Charles Colson** said, “As I think back on my own life, my biggest regret is not spending more time with my kids. Making family your top priority means standing against a culture where materialism and workaholism are rampant. It means realizing that you may not advance as fast in your career as some of your colleagues – at least for a few years. It means being willing to accept a lower stand of living... knowing you’re doing the right thing for your children, giving them the emotional security they’ll draw on for the rest of their lives.”

4) Self: Your relationship with your self (self-care). You are no good to anyone if you are no good. You cannot strengthen others if you have no strength. You cannot encourage others if you are depressed. You can’t take care of others if you don’t take care of yourself. Self-care is not selfish, it is responsible. Brushing your teeth is not selfish. If you don’t brush your teeth, they will rot. I’m sure your spouse would tell you, “If brushing your teeth is selfish, then please, be selfish.”

5) Service: The work that God has given you, and the ministry that God has called you to. **Colossians 3:23 (ERV)** “In all the work you are given, do the best you can. Work as though you are working for the Lord, not an earthly master.” If you are a kid than your job right now is school.

After these five priorities you may have others. Your friends. Your hobbies. Your bucket list. Sports. Financial goals. Vacation goals. Etc. But it is essential for effective time management that you understand your priorities in the right order: Savior, Spouse, Seed, Self, Service, then everything else.

Why is it important to set your priorities? By setting your priorities, you are making sure that you take time for the things that matter most. Because if you don’t take time for the things that matter, then the things of matter will be taken from you – you won’t be able to enjoy and experience their full value.

Stephen Covey talks about the clock and compass in his book *First Things First*. The clock represents what we do with our time and how we manage our time. The compass represents our priorities, our values, our principles, our mission from God. The goal of time management is to make sure that our clock is

following our compass. To make sure that our schedule is a reflection of our priorities and values. And the first step is to set and clarify your priorities in life.

FOUR: SCHEDULE YOUR PRIORITIES.

The worst thing that can happen is that you end up spending all of your time on less important things and so neglect your priorities. That's called a wasted life.

The solution is to schedule your priorities. You must figure what you want to accomplish with each priority, and then put it on your schedule. And then you schedule everything else around your priorities.

Effective time management requires careful planning. **Proverbs 21:5 (NLT)** "Good planning and hard work lead to prosperity, but hasty shortcuts lead to poverty."

You've probably heard the old saying, "If you fail to plan, you plan to fail."

Stephen Covey said, "Make time for planning; wars are won in the general's tent."

Bill Hybels said, "Your calendar is more than merely an organizer for what needs to get done; it's the primary tool for helping you become who you want to become."

Here is what Bill Hybels is saying. Don't just use your calendar to help you stay organized, and to help you get more done in less time. Use your calendar to help you become the person God wants you to be. Decide what you want to accomplish, and then decide when you are going to work on it, and put it on your calendar.

Let me give you some examples. Start with your primary priorities. Your first priority is the Savior, your relationship with God. How do you cultivate a healthy relationship with God? You need to make Sunday worship a priority, so put that on your calendar. You need to have a daily quiet time, so pencil it in. Home Group – pencil it in. Read Christian literature – put it on the calendar when you

are going to read – the days of the week, and the times. Do that with all your priorities.

There are a couple of questions that can help you with scheduling.

One: What do I need to do on a regular basis to keep first things first – to prioritize Savior, Spouse, Seed, Self, and Service? Write those things down, and then schedule them.

Two: What do I need to do on a regular basis to grow in my priorities? Write those things down, and then schedule them.

FIVE: SIMPLIFY YOUR LIFE TO MAKE ROOM FOR YOUR PRIORITIES.

As we learned from the story of Martha, if you don't have enough time for what's important, then you are doing the wrong things, or you are doing things wrong.

Remember that you can't do everything. You have to make choices. Anytime you choose to do one thing, you are choosing to that instead of something else. You have to make sure that you are choosing the right thing.

The problem with many Christians is not lack of commitment, but overcommitment. They have too many irons in the fire. They are juggling too many balls.

To become more effective with your time, you will regularly need to simplify your life. To prune your schedule.

Your schedule is like a flower bed. Weeds will always try to grow up and overtake the flowers. You have to regularly pull the weeds of overcommitment.

So the first thing you need to do is to look at your schedule and ask, “Are the activities that fill my day aligned with my stated goals and priorities? Are they fostering the process, or are they hindering it?”⁴

Earlier I mentioned that I played softball for FedEx. After evaluating my goals and priorities, I realized that I didn’t have room for that. So I finished up that season, that was in 2012, and I have never played again.

That’s what we have to do. Pull the weeds. **Howard Hendricks** said, “The secret of concentration is elimination.”

The second thing you need to do to simplify your life is to learn to say “No.”

Many Christians are overcommitted because they are too nice; they are so afraid of hurting someone’s feelings that they can’t say “No.” But it’s not rude to say “No.” It is godly. When you don’t say “No,” you are allowing other people to control your time rather than allowing God to be in charge of your time.

Richard Swenson said, “Learn to say no. Saying No is not just a good idea – it has not become a mathematical necessity. If there are fifteen good things to do today and you can do only ten of them, you will need to say No five times.”

Saying “No” is Biblical.

Nehemiah had to say no. While he was busy leading the Jews to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem, a group of men wanted to have a meeting with him. But he concluded that that meeting was not a good use of his time. **Nehemiah 6:3-4** “3 So I sent messengers to them, saying, ‘I am doing important work and cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?’ 4 Four times they sent me the same proposal, and I gave them the same reply.”

⁴ These questions come from the book *Simple Life*, by Thom Rainer.

Jesus had to say “No.” After doing some ministry in the city of Capernaum the people wanted him to stay there and start a church and live there and keep doing ministry there. **Mark 1:36-38**

36 Simon and his companions searched for him, 37 and when they found him they said, “Everyone is looking for you.”

38 And he said to them, “Let’s go on to the neighboring villages so that I may preach there too. This is why I have come.”

But notice why Jesus was able to say “No.” It is because He knew His priorities. He was able to say “No” because He had a bigger “Yes” that He was already committed to. You must clarify your Biblical, God-given priorities if want to have the backbone to say “No.”

Another reason Jesus was able to say “No” was that He lived for an audience of One. He lived only to please the Father. He wasn’t concerned with the opinion of man. He didn’t fear criticism. He didn’t fear disappointing people. His one goal was to please the Father.

The apostle Paul had to say “No.” **Acts 18:20** “When they asked him to stay for a longer time, he declined.” Paul had been ministering in the city of Corinth for some time, and now it was time to move on. He was not called to be the pastor of a church. He was called to travel around planting new churches. And so when the Corinthians asked him to stay longer, he declined.

Rick Warren added, “News flash! You don’t have to accept every invitation, take on every project, or volunteer for every activity that comes your way. Two of the greatest life skills you can learn are the art of delegation and the ability to say no.... The number 1 biggest time saving word is No!” **Jim Rohn** has figured out an effective method for saying “No.” Just say, “I don’t think so, but if that changes I’ll call you.” If you are being wise with your time, then you should be saying “No” a lot more than “Yes.”

SIX: REMEMBER THAT LIFE IS SHORT.

Psalm 90:12 (ERV) “Teach us how short our lives are so that we can become wise.”

To make the most of your time, it is important to always keep in mind that life is short. You don't have time to waste. You don't have time for the unimportant. You don't have time for sin. You don't have time to procrastinate. You don't have to delay.

I like how **Andy Stanley** put it. “Remembering our time is limited provides us with wisdom to know how to spend our limited time.”

Life is short. Time is very limited. Get busy living. Hurry up and do the things that God wants you to do. Hurry up and become the person God wants you to be. Hurry up and disciple your kids. Hurry up and repent of your sins. Hurry up and stop that bad habit. Hurry up and start that ministry. Hurry up and lose the weight. Hurry up and change your diet. Hurry and live.

A couple of years ago I ran across the tragic story of Katie Evans. Katie had four little boys, and she had just given birth to premature twin girls. On Friday, October 6, 2017, on the way home from visiting the twins at the hospital, she was hit and killed by a drunk driver. The driver who hit her crossed the median and crashed into her car just a mile from her home. She leaves behind her husband, and her children Spencer (12), Travis (11), Nathaniel (9), Gideon (2), and her premie twin girls Hanna and Sarah (not even 8 weeks old).

The story of Katie Evans is a reminder that life is short. And tomorrow is not guaranteed. This may be your last day. This may be your last week, or your last month, or your last year. Make the most of your time for the glory of God. **Bruce Lee** said, “If you love life, don't waste time, for time is what life is made up of.”

What's the most important thing you can do with your time? Make sure that you are ready to meet your Maker. Make sure that you are saved. Make sure that you have a right relationship with God, so that if Jesus comes back today, or if you die tomorrow, you will be ready to go to heaven.