

**MYTH #8: "I NEED TO GET MORE DONE IN LESS TIME."
PSALM 90:12**

Let's pretend! Your bank calls you to give you some very good news. An anonymous donor who loves you very much has decided to deposit 86,400 pennies into your checking account each morning for the rest of your life. You do the math. That's \$864 a day or \$6,000 a week or \$315,000 a year. You're excited! Your family is excited! Your pastor who has taught you to tithe is excited! The bank says there's just one catch. You must spend all the money you receive that very same day. All \$864 must be spent each day. No balance will be carried over to the next day. Each evening the bank will cancel out whatever amount you failed to use. Just think of it - \$315,000 available to you each year for the rest of your life but only if you spend each day's deposit - 86,400 pennies or \$864 - every day totally. Interesting proposition, yes?

Well, back to reality! Every morning Someone who loves you very much deposits into your life 86,400 seconds of time or 1440 minutes or 24 hours. There's just one catch. That Someone - namely, God - gives you this amount of time for you to use each and every day. You can't carry any of it over on credit to the next day. No, you're given a precisely determined amount of time. Life is like money. You can spend it - your life, your time - any way you want to, but you can spend it only once.

Today, I'm concluding a series of messages entitled "Death By Suburb." The whole point of it has simply been to explore the powerful effect of our culture upon every area of our lives. For most of us here today, American suburbia is the dominant culture we live in. Its values, attitudes, beliefs and behavior get transmitted to each of us in thousands of ways every day. We're being shaped and molded by it without our being consciously aware of it. The Bible assumes that fact when it warns us, "Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you." (Romans 12:2 MSG) You're called to become a student of God and His Word and begin to discern where you can celebrate your culture and where you must defy it, where you can blend into your culture and where you must stand out, where you can love and embrace your culture and where - because your ultimate allegiance is to Jesus - you must hate and oppose it.

The last suburban myth I want to challenge today says, "I need to get more done in less time." American suburban culture preaches that you are only accountable to yourself for the use of your minutes, days and years. It teaches that staying busy is the best use of time - cram as much activity into as few minutes as possible - so much so that most of just get used to living on the edge of exhaustion. God doesn't ask that of you. Your culture does. It encourages you

just to stay busy and not reflect on the long term value of all your activities. Just stay busy and it will all work out supposedly! But the busier your life is the more unreflective it becomes. Time. What does the Bible say about time? Let's consider a kind of survey on the subject of time by looking at ten biblical truths.

#1. TIME IS GOD'S GIFT AND WORTHY OF CAREFUL INVESTMENT.

My primary text today is Psalm 90:12, but let's read the whole psalm just now. Moses, the author of this psalm, celebrates the fact that God is eternal here. Then he points out the brevity of life and God's anger against all sin. He concludes by asking God to help him make the most of his life here on earth. But v. 12 is the one that stands out to me on this subject of time. "Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." (Psalm 90:12 NIV) A few thoughts.... One, if time is the context where you gain wisdom, then time is a gift of God. Time is something valuable and precious. It's a gift from God to be treasured. Two, time is worthy of careful investment because by it you receive wisdom. When you handle time well, you get wise. What's wisdom? From the Bible's perspective, it's knowing God personally through an increasingly loving, obedient relationship. Three, managing time doesn't come naturally to any of us. Moses says you must be taught how to number your days aright. You must learn how to do this. Four, if you learn how to relate to time wisely, it is clear from this psalm that it pleases God immensely.

#2. TIME IS LIFE.

The Bible says, "Act like people with good sense and not like fools. These are evil times, so make every minute count." (Ephesians 5:15-16 CEV) That's not a suburban call to stay busy; it's God's command to use time wisely. How you use time is important because time is intertwined with the stuff of your life: it makes up your life. How you spend time reflects who you are. Who you are is largely defined by what you do and when you do it. Your life is made up of time. Therefore, you ought to be careful how you use time – how you number your days – how you live. You can use time wisely or foolishly. You can make every minute count or fail to make the most of what time offers you. Every day God gives you opportunities to know Him better and grow into a deeper relationship with Him. He offers that to you within the context of time. The Bible says the evil stuff going on within time makes it all the more important for you to be intentional about making every minute count. Handling time wisely doesn't happen all by itself. The suburban culture we live in with all of its godless values and mindset wants to steal time away from you. By doing so, it steals life from you. So, be careful how you live. Make every minute count. Why? Because time is life.

#3. TIME IS SHORT AND PASSES QUICKLY.

In several places there in Psalm 90, Moses points to the brevity of life especially when you compare it to the eternity of God. He says it's like comparing the life

span of a blade of grass to your life span. There's just no comparison! He tells us that a thousand years of time is like one day to God. The Bible reminds us often of the shortness of life. It says, "How do you know what your life will be like tomorrow? Your life is like the morning fog—it's here a little while, then it's gone." (James 4:14 NLT) Not only is time short, but it passes quickly. We hear about saving time, buying time, making up time, but all of those are illusions. Time is always passing and it's passing quickly. Isn't it true that the older you get, the more quickly time seems to pass? It's kind of like being on the Niagara River heading for Niagara Falls – the closer you get to the end the faster it seems to come at you! Time is short and passes quickly.

#4. YOUR REMAINING TIME IS UNCERTAIN.

The Bible says, "Look here, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we are going to a certain town and will stay there a year. We will do business there and make a profit.' How do you know what your life will be like tomorrow? Your life is like the morning fog—it's here a little while, then it's gone. What you ought to say is, 'If the Lord wants us to, we will live and do this or that.' Otherwise you are boasting about your own plans, and all such boasting is evil." (James 4:13-17 NLT) No one here today has any idea how much longer you will live. This might very well be your last day. We get frequent reminders of the uncertainty of life. Just this week, there was a terrible commuter train accident in Washington, D.C. None of those nine people who died had any idea June 23, 2009 would be their last day. One young man on the train – sitting just a few feet from where the train car was smashed - said, "It was only a split second. No one had time to react." How should you live each day, then? Full of fear over what might happen? Of course not! Should you stop making plans for tomorrow or next year? On the contrary, because your remaining time is uncertain, you should plan it well all the more!

#5. TIME LOST CANNOT BE REGAINED.

You can lose money and even go bankrupt, but then regain your wealth. A person can lose an important relationship, but then regain love through a new relationship. But time is irretrievable. You can never repeat, relive or regain a single second. In our culture, we've gotten so used to seeing instant replays of football games that we forget there's really no such thing as a literal instant replay of time itself. What's the purpose of time from God's perspective? Certainly, it's to become more like the Lord Jesus Christ in your character. You can't do that on your own. You need the Holy Spirit living on the inside of you. You need the fellowship of the church and other followers of Jesus. On the other hand, God won't do it for you. You must pursue becoming godly within the context of time. You must expend some kind of personal spiritual effort today, tomorrow and the next day so that godliness will bloom in your life at some point.

If you misuse the time God offers to you, He never offers that time again. Jesus said, "We must quickly carry out the tasks assigned us by the one who sent us.

The night is coming, and then no one can work.” (John 9:4 NLT) In Jesus’ statement, night is the equivalent of death. When death comes, God doesn’t offer you an instant replay. So, how are you using your daylight hours, so to speak? What are you doing to become more like Jesus? What are you doing to know God’s Word better, to develop your prayer life, to serve the poor personally, to improve your ability to share your faith with a lost person? Let me add a word of encouragement. You can look back and feel deeply sorry about wasted years in your life. Don’t allow the devil to beat you up about that! Instead, confess your sin to God – the sin of wasting His gift of time -, ask His forgiveness and then do what the apostle Paul recommends from his own life experience. “...I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.” (Philippians 3:13-14 NLT) Anyone can start the Christian life. Fewer finish it and finish it well. Time lost cannot be regained.

#6. TIME MUST BE BUDGETED.

Time is kind of like money in that respect. You eventually come to the realization that you will never have enough money to do everything you want to do. You sit down, think through and set financial priorities. Because money is limited, you budget it. Because time is limited, the same principle applies. Just like with money, you have to discern between your needs and your wants when it comes to time. How you use or spend time must be prioritized. This is where American suburban culture fails miserably. The best it can offer is to encourage you to stay busy and get busier all the time so that you end up living life perpetually exhausted and with no opportunity to reflect on the value of all those activities.

A godly approach to time will demand that you discern the difference between what’s important and what’s urgent, what’s the best use of your time and what’s merely a good use of your time. The devil will use American suburban culture to get you to focus so much on what is urgent that you never get around to investing your time in what’s important. By the same token, he uses our culture to get you to do so many good things that you no longer have the time for the best things. For instance, how much time do you budget for God – to increase your personal experience of Him, to study His Word, to serve in His Name? How much time do you budget for your family? All of us are becoming increasingly aware of the exploding growth of these social networking Internet sites like Facebook, MySpace, Twitter as well as using cell phones for texting. I was fascinated to read last week, that there’s growing and ironical evidence that the more people use all this new stuff to communicate socially, the less time is given to developing relationships with those closest to them – namely, their families. One study revealed that the percentage of people who say they spend less time with family members because of the Internet nearly tripled from 11% in 2006 to 28% last year. “Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking.” You don’t have time for everything. It must be budgeted.

#7. USING TIME WISELY DEPENDS ON A WELL-DEFINED LIFE PURPOSE.

Jesus is our best example of this truth. His three years of active ministry were very busy, full years. You never get the sense, however, that Jesus was rushed or had to play catch up. Somehow Jesus got done everything He needed to do without a Blackberry to keep it all organized. He made time for prayer, meditation and pouring His life into those twelve disciples. Jesus understood His mission in life. For example, there's the story of Jesus' last trip to Jerusalem in Luke 18. As he approaches the city of Jericho, He stops and heals a blind man much to the annoyance of everyone traveling with Him because they all want to get to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover on time. Then Jesus has this encounter with Zaccheus, a much despised tax collector. Jesus takes additional time to have dinner with him at his home. There is much irritation over this further delay as well as Jesus' insistence on hanging around with this evil man. But, Jesus saw it all from the viewpoint of his life's mission: "The Son of Man came to look for and to save people who are lost." (Luke 19:10 CEV) Jesus' purpose in life wasn't getting to Jerusalem on time. It was saving lost people. By the same token, because Jesus knew the purpose of His life, He understood that His life had limits. He didn't try to meet everybody, heal everyone or pour Himself into every possible person. He used the time God gave Him to accomplish His unique life mission and purpose. God gives you the same ability.

#8. USING TIME WISELY RESULTS IN FREEDOM.

By this time, you might be thinking that to number your days or to make every minute count sounds like a very restrictive, imprisoning sort of experience. It's actually just the opposite. Using your time wisely involves building fences around your time space and protecting it from all the "time thieves" that are out there. That's true! But make that area big enough to move around in and enjoy! Making every minute count is not a call to pack up your life with endless activities, but instead to develop balance so that there's time for leisure, for rest, for recreation and refreshment, too. God calls you to freedom in every area of your life including how you use time.

#9. YOU ARE ACCOUNTABLE TO GOD FOR YOUR TIME.

American suburban culture won't tell you that. God's Word does. It says, "And so, each of us must give an account to God for what we do." (Romans 14:12 CEV) Now, the Bible teaches that eternal life with God in heaven is a gift. It also says that every follower of Jesus will give an account of his or her life to God so that appropriate eternal rewards can be given and received. If time is life and life is time, then you will answer to God ultimately for your use of time. Your eternal rewards in heaven – or lack of them – will be directly related to your earthly use of time. You are accountable to God, not yourself.

#10. USING TIME WISELY PREPARES YOU FOR ETERNITY.

You can and must prepare for eternity within the context of time. The Bible says, “We die only once, and then we are judged.” (Hebrews 9:7 CEV) It also says, “... Indeed, the ‘right time’ is now. Today is the day of salvation.” (2 Corinthians 6:2 NLT) Eternal life is offered to you within the context of time and you must take and receive it in that same context – in time, or in your life span. Have you ever received eternal life? That’s what this life is for! And, my friend, when you can face the mighty fact of death secure in the knowledge of God’s love for you, then – and only then – are you ready to handle life! Now, if you have received eternal life; in other words, you’re a follower of Jesus today, a Christian, then you need to learn how to live each day with eternity in view. The Bible says that God “...has planted eternity in the human heart...” (Ecclesiastes 3:11 NLT) Isn’t that a great concept? He hasn’t planted eternity in animals, plants or other living things – just in the hearts of human beings. Since you’ve been given this curiosity about the future and what happens after death, all the more reason to pursue right here and now the God who put that curiosity there in the first place. The clearer vision you have of eternity, the more it will shape your use of time. Your life and your use of time prepare you for eternity.

One day an expert on time management was speaking to a group of business students. He pulled out a wide-mouth glass jar and set it on a table in front of him. He then took about a dozen fist sized rocks and carefully placed them into the jar one at a time. When the jar was filled to the top with these rocks, he asked, “Is the jar full?” Just about everyone said, “Yes.” He said, “Oh, really?” He reached under the table and pulled out a bucket of gravel. He dumped the gravel in and shook the jar causing the pieces of gravel to work themselves down into the spaces between the big rocks. “Is the jar full?” he asked. Now the class was on to him! “No!” someone shouted. “Good,” said the time management expert. He reached under the table again and brought out a bucket of sand. He was able to get most of it in there because it fit into the spaces between the rocks and the gravel. “Is the jar full?” “No!” the whole class shouted. “Good,” he said. Finally, he grabbed a pitcher of water and poured it in until the jar was filled to the brim. “What’s the point I’m trying to make?” he asked the class. One student raised his hand and said, “No matter how full your schedule is, if you try really hard you can always fit some more things into it.” “No,” the speaker said, “that’s not the point at all. The truth is this: if you don’t put the big rocks in first, you’ll never get them in at all.”

American suburban culture promotes a lot of myths about time. One of them is: “I need to get more done in less time.” No, you need to use your time on what matters. And there is no bigger rock than your relationship to the living God – the One who has set eternity in your heart. If you don’t put Him into the jar of your life – so to speak – first and foremost, you’ll never get Him in there at all. You’ll do well when you make sure God and the things of God occupy the most space – the most time - in your life.