



Writing Life Faith



The Staff Handbook: Managing Time

"So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom." (Psalm 90:12)

Life at Camp, Part 7.

Quote of the Week

*"At the start of the summer, it seems like you have so much time.
Then, you blink, and the summer is half gone."*

I've been at camp for over a month now. It's funny, because in some ways, I have more energy and enthusiasm than when I started, but in other ways, I'm getting tired and run down. When we're exhausted, it's easy to return to the "default" state, where we revert to our phones, distractions, or bad attitudes.

I see this happening around me, and I feel the pull myself. My mind wants me to feel that my work isn't making a difference. The enemy wants me to judge others. To envy them. To compare myself to them. To grow angry and frustrated. To give up. To distract myself. The more I think about these things, the more they eat up time that I could be spending with the LORD.

This is a poor use of my time. Which is why, today, it's especially fitting that we talk about...

Managing Time

If you go back through the centuries, you'll see that time management has been around forever. Before we had phones and smartwatches, we had clocks. Before that, we had sundials and hourglasses. Humanity has generally wanted to stay on top of time. What does the Bible have to say about this?

Managing Time in the Bible.

"Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the LORD is." (Ephesians 5:15-17)

The Bible has lots to say about using our time wisely. Biblical characters didn't plan their days to the quarter-hour and schedule meetings on the hour, but they cared about time. I believe we could all take a lesson from Scripture by loosening our rigid schedules and making room for the LORD to speak to us.

When the Bible refers to managing time, it often looks at it from a big picture perspective. **God isn't as concerned with what we did at 4pm yesterday as He is with what we're doing in our current season.** God would much rather see you living for Him in this season (even though you made mistakes today) than living for Him at one point in your day (and neglecting Him for the rest). Ideally, we should do both. Day-to-day actions are important, but do they reflect the trajectory of our lives?

I'm a firm advocate of using our time effectively. I think we should wake up each day with a clear plan, but also knowing that God may well have something else on His mind for you today. We also ought to examine our lives to ensure we aren't getting lost in the menial work and missing what He wants in the big picture. Don't miss the majesty of the forest because you're obsessed with one tree.

Jesus' Example.

A quick glance at our Saviour's life reveals that He was a master time manager. *"Wait, but all He did was walk around from place to place; how is that productive?"*

I discussed this topic with a fellow Staff member last week, and here's what we realized. Sure, it *seems* like Jesus wasn't doing much of anything, but He was always going somewhere. Scripture does not say Jesus "was wandering aimlessly" or "Jesus was walking down a back road". No, Scripture always records Jesus' going somewhere or coming from somewhere. I had to verify this for myself, so I read the Gospel of Mark. Sure enough, Jesus is *a/ways* going somewhere, coming from somewhere, teaching, healing, or resting (don't neglect the last one). He had a deliberate plan.

That said, unlike most of us, He was willing to be interrupted. His plans weren't so important that everybody else was discarded. Many of Jesus' greatest moments happened when someone interjected. **Jesus set the perfect example of time management blended with spontaneity.**

I'm going to restate what I said before: *God is more concerned with what we're doing in this season of life than what we did at any fixed time today.* I'm not underplaying our daily actions. After all, it's the small choices that shape us. As John C. Maxwell said, "Life is a matter of choices, and every choice you make, makes you." The small things Jesus did were incredible, yet when you look at His life as a whole, that's where He stands out among all others.

The Bible is clear that we must use our time well, both now and in the future. To do this, we need to ask ourselves why we're doing what we're doing. If I'm investing my time in XYZ, what am I going to get out of it? Will this help me or hurt me?

Time Management at Camp.

"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under Heaven."
(Ecclesiastes 3:1)

Earlier this summer I shared a camp-inspired quote with the Staff, which goes something like, "Everyone has a plan until they go to camp." For all the work we do - and there's a lot of it - there are frequent times when we have no idea what to do. Sometimes we lack clear direction, unexpected situations arise, a new project is started, or things don't go according to schedule.

As we just learned from Jesus, we need to practice flexibility. **It's okay when things don't go according to plan.** We shouldn't let this mess up our week. Having issues with our water system and losing water for a day certainly leads to wasted time, but you can't call it an ineffective use of time. Things like that need to be addressed right away. Our other jobs will have to wait.

Life is likewise spontaneous. We make plans, something happens, plans change. This isn't a camp-unique scenario. Now it's tempting to jump a rung on the ladder and say, "Well, if nothing will go according to my plan, why plan at all?" That's not the point. We still need plans. Allow me to back this up with Scripture.

God's Will For Us.

James 4:13-15 says that our life is like the morning fog, here a little while, then gone. We're told that before we plan, we should consult the LORD. Jumping to Proverbs 19:21, it says, "Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails." This implies that yes, planning and time management are important, *yet we need to submit ourselves to God's control.*

We can manage and schedule our time all we want, assuming we are okay with pivoting when God plays the override card. Likewise, we can set up systems and brainstorm - we should - as long as we remember that God's plan will prevail, not my plan or your plan. Silly as it sounds, many of us have our trust placed in a plan rather than in God Himself. Choose the latter.

If this is the only thing you take away, I'll consider today's post successful. **The key to managing time is letting God manage what you do with your time.** God wants you to use your time wisely. He also wants you to come before Him, surrender your time, and say, "LORD, here I am. Use me today as you see fit."

Practical Application.

Turning over our schedules and to-do lists is challenging. It's no easier when I'm at camp. So, to end today's post, let's go through an implementation exercise.

1. Short-Term Examination.

How did you use your time today? Ask yourself whether you think you used your time well or poorly. Then ask God what He thinks of how you used your time. Where are you doing well, and where is there room to improve?

2. Long-Term Examination.

If today was great, that's amazing! If today sucked, remember that you can get up tomorrow and rebound. Now I want us to ask God about the season we're in. Ignore what happened today, or yesterday, or even earlier in the week. Based on your current time management, are you using your time for God's Kingdom, or for advancing your own interests? Is God calling you to shuffle your schedule or screen time to align with His vision for you?

3. Interim Examination.

Right now, are you willing to surrender your plans? God has convicted me on this point several times: *Am I trusting God or trusting my plan?* If it's God's will, we will accomplish our objectives either way. Are we okay with swallowing our pride and giving God the credit?

I'm only a short way into this journey of surrendering my plans and my time before God. I will say, it takes a ton of the stress off me. It's in God's hands, after all. For all our plans, it ultimately comes down to what He wants us to do. As James 4:14-15 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. What you ought to say is, 'If the LORD wants us to, we will live and do this or that.'"

