

Tools for Wise Leadership

A programme of TWR-Africa, produced by TWR-Zimbabwe, presented by Rev Dr Roy Musasiwa

Series 13: Leadership Stewardship

Talk 10: Stewardship of using Time

Welcome to the programme Tools for Wise Leadership.

We are focusing on the issue of stewardship in Christian leaders. We defined stewardship as management of someone else's affairs or property. In previous programmes we emphasized that the main purpose of a steward is to add value to what has been entrusted to him or her. We then applied this and other principles to the stewardship of our bodies, our minds, physical resources and the talents or special abilities God has given to us. One of the things we stressed is that what we do not use we lose.

Today we are focussing on the stewardship of time, which is another intangible asset that we either use or lose. Let us consider Paul's words in Ephesians 5:15-17 where he says:

“Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.”

If we lose time there is no way of recovering it. A wise man once said there are 3 things in life that never come back when gone:

1. Time
2. Words and
3. Opportunity

Of these three, time and opportunity go hand in hand. To make a good use of time is to take hold of fleeting opportunities. The opportunities that are here today will be gone tomorrow. That is why Paul says that we must walk in wisdom, aligning our lives with God's will for our lives. As children of light we must make the most of the day instead of drifting through life.

But let us go deeper now and explore what it means to make the most of every opportunity. This does not mean that we must lead incredibly busy lives devoid of any rest. It means getting our priorities right. Being busy has in fact become something of a modern day cult. I call it the cult of busyness. When we talk of a cult we are saying that it is possible to worship busyness, just like it is easy to worship riches instead of worshipping God. One meditation I read is the voice of a person who was madly rushing from one activity to another. In one point of the poem the man says:

I raced to the bus stop, but there was no bus in sight and I had no time to wait. I walked to the office, moving like the wind. I collapsed at my desk and threw myself into my work, but there wasn't time to finish any job properly. I leapt from one thing to another, completing none of them. After work I couldn't waste time queuing for the bus, so I grabbed a passing taxi, blowing my budget for the week.

His life was one of being continually and utterly exhausted and always feeling that there just weren't enough hours in the day.

In Luke 10 we have the story of Mary and Martha. While Mary sat at the Lord's feet listening to him, Martha was caught up in the cult of busyness as she tried to play perfect hostess. She was not doing what she was doing with joy. Nor was she doing it out of a sense of call to love. No, she was driven by a self-imposed tyranny of expectation that her hosting had to be perfect. She had an image to protect. In the end Mary complained that Martha was not up and about helping her cope with all

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the work. "Lord", she said, "don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" What was Jesus' response? "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Now we tend to be like Martha who was always worried and upset about many things instead of being like Mary who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what the Lord was saying. Martha was an activist. Mary was a reflector, and Jesus said Mary had found what was better, which would not be taken from her.

Being busy like Martha isn't necessarily being effective in the use of time. I like the concept on time usage that is presented by Steven Covey in his book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. He makes a quadrant with four divisions. Horizontally the quadrants are labelled as IMPORTANT and NOT IMPORTANT. Vertically the labels are either URGENT or NOT URGENT. What this means is that quadrant A consists of activities that are IMPORTANT and URGENT. Can you think of how many things you do that are both important and urgent? You rush an injured child to hospital, you stay up most of the night to finish an assignment that is due tomorrow, you tow your broken car to the garage and you put out a fire that has broken out in the house. These are just a few of the activities we do under quadrant A - things which are both urgent and important.

Quadrant B consists of all the activities you may do which are NOT IMPORTANT but URGENT. That is what kept Martha busy. Because Jesus had arrived it was urgent for her to spring into action with all the catering that had to be done before the visitor departed. Many calls, sms messages, WhatsApp messages and other social media communications that we do are of the same kind. They demand urgent attention, but they are not all important. If you ignore them, nobody will die and you may find yourself rescuing a huge volume of time for more important tasks.

Then quadrant C consists of things that are IMPORTANT but NOT URGENT. Spending time with significant people falls in this category. Prayer time, exercise, rest and recreation are other activities that go into this quadrant. All these things are often postponed in favour of urgent things. Unfortunately this is where so many leaders fail. By ignoring things that are important in favour of the urgent we find so many things suffering. Relationships suffer, our spiritual wellbeing suffers and even our health suffers.

The last quadrant, D, consists of things that are NOT IMPORTANT and NOT URGENT. This is the worst area of time expenditure. Activities in this quadrant include gossiping, social media like Facebook and some TV programmes.

It would be a useful exercise to take just a week strictly recording where your time is distributed in these quadrants. You may be amazed at how much your time is being eaten up by lower priorities of things that are not important, even though some of them may be urgent. For most of us in Christian leadership, we get caught up in the cult of busyness. What we so often do not realize is that when we neglect things in quadrant C that are IMPORTANT but NOT URGENT, we help to pile up activities in quadrant A that are both important and urgent. Neglecting to develop a relationship with your child (quadrant C) may in future help him become a criminal who demands a lot of your time visiting jails and courts (quadrant A).

This is an important concept that deserves more exploration. We shall return to it in the next programme when we conclude our discussion of the stewardship of time. For today let me end by reminding you of what Paul said. "Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but

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understand what the Lord's will is.” May the Lord guide you in the wise use of time. Until we meet in the next programme practice these tools of wise leadership.

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