

## ***Take the Time Now***

To all of my beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

The clock is ticking. None of us are getting any younger. And we have no guarantees as to how long we will be alive on this earth. Most, if not all, of us have experienced the passing away of loved ones. They have shown us just how short life can be.

God exhorts us to be wise in the use of our time.

*Therefore, watch carefully how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise,*  
Ephesians 5:15

‘watch carefully’ in this verse is a translation from the Greek word *akribos*. It means to be diligent and take great care. That is, to use strategy and planning. This word is also used in Matthew 2:8 where Herod asked the magi (wise men) to search ‘diligently’ for the child.

*making the best use of the time because the days are evil.*  
Ephesians 5:16

‘making the best use of’ is a translation from the Greek word *exagorazo*. It means to rescue from loss. Once time is gone, it can never be recovered. Squandering our time on menial tasks that have little significance in the grand scheme of things is not a wise thing to do. We should make each moment count.

The commentary from <https://RevisedEnglishVersion.com> for this verse expands on the meaning of *exagorazo* by saying, “to make wise and sacred use of every opportunity for doing good.”

*Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of your opportunities.*  
Colossians 4:5

‘making the most’ in this verse is again a translation from *exagorazo*. Notice the addition of ‘outsiders’ in this verse. God is exhorting us to make

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the most from our time by focusing on ministering to the needs of outsiders. When we see that someone has a need and we have the resources to help them, we should not allow that opportunity to get away.

Here are seven keys that will help you utilize your time so you will receive the maximum benefit:

### **Passion**

What you choose to put your time into should be something that you love. Otherwise you will be more likely to quit or give up. When you are pursuing your spiritual goals, there will always be setbacks. It is the intense excitement you have to see the end result that will keep you going.

When I was in high school, I was a distance runner on our track team. One time after a race a teammate asked me, “I saw that you were smiling when you came around the last turn of your race. How could you smile when you were running so hard? Your body must have been hurting at that time.”

I answered, “My attention was not on my body. At that moment I was thinking about the outcome. I saw myself crossing the finish line and winning the race. That’s why I smiled.”

Passion will continue to drive you to success when everything else tells you to quit.

### **Discipline**

As Ephesians 5:15 pointed out, accomplishing something great requires discipline in managing your time. It requires making wise decisions. We need to learn when to say ‘yes’ and when to say ‘no.’ We can’t be everywhere. We can’t do everything. To succeed, we have to make deliberate decisions to spend our time on those things that truly matter the most.

Most things in life that are important require lots of time and sacrifice. Someone who wants to win a gold medal in the Olympics doesn’t just show

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up the day of the competition. There are years of planning and dedicated workouts required. My youngest daughter is on the high school Cross-Country team right now. She recently ran a time of 19:57 in a 5K race. The road that was paved for this success began four months ago when she began training 5 to 6 days every week. You can't expect to succeed at something unless you dedicate the necessary time towards it.

### **Talent**

Not everyone can be a great Cross-Country runner. Some of our potential ability is passed on to us genetically, from our family tree. The legendary Kipchoge Keino, who won gold medals in the Olympic games in 1968 and 1972 as a runner is an example. Kip's dad was a long-distance runner. And several of Kips sons were successful runners for universities in the USA. Don't get me wrong, hard work is also necessary for success. But the hard work really pays off if you have the genetic makeover to go with it.

What are your talents and abilities? What are you naturally good at doing that other people struggle with? Use the discipline that I described above to focus on the inherently gifted abilities that you have been blessed with.

### **Patience**

The true meaning of patience is not to sit and wait for something to happen. It is an active verb and it means to continue to take positive action towards our goal even when success is not immediately obvious.

We live in a world where we expect quick gratification. We go to a fast food restaurant so we can immediately eat delicious food. But how healthy is that food for you? Preparing a nice, healthy meal takes time. But the benefits to your body make it worth it.

Likewise, if we really want to do something special with our lives, to really have an impact, then we need to push through the difficult times with the view that our desired outcome will eventually come if we continue to act with patience.

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Are we going to live our lives day to day for quick gratification things? Or do we have a vision for what we want to accomplish that will have a long-lasting impact on the lives of others?

### **Forgiveness**

We can't change the past. We can't control the future. The only action we can take is in the present.

In Philippians 3:13 we are advised to let go of those things that are behind and to reach forward to the things that are before. When someone has wronged us, we are tempted to turn our focus on them. What we need to realize is that it is God who has promised us success. Our success is not contingent upon how other people treat us.

Forgiveness is a huge key in letting the past stay in the past so we can move forward in the present. And sometimes the one we need to forgive is ourselves. Whether it is someone else or something we did, the correct approach is to let it go, through forgiveness, and move on.

### **Service to Others**

In deciding what it is you are going to do with your time, I would like to encourage you to emphasize goals that involve serving and helping others.

Recently I received an email from a 'get rich scheme' business saying that Christians many times make the mistake of allowing their passion to help people to get in the way of having a successful business. The email tried to encourage me to focus on what will make me money rather than what people truly need. It made me sick to my stomach.

You and I may not ever become billionaires. But I believe true wealth comes from meeting the needs of people. And that God has eternal riches in store for you and I if we will choose to dedicate ourselves to serving others as guided by our Lord Jesus Christ. And, by the way, money cannot buy happiness. But helping people in need can and will bring great joy and happiness into your life.

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### **Seek Direction from God**

In Ephesians 2:10 we are told that we are God's handiwork and that he has already prepared for us to do good works. I cannot tell you exactly what you should be doing with your life. Neither can the pastor of your church. But our Lord Jesus Christ can.

In James 1:5 it says that if we lack wisdom, ask God and he will give it to you. As you seek God and our Lord Jesus Christ with an open heart, you will be guided towards the best way for you to spend your time.

Spend some quiet time alone with God in prayer. Assess the things going on in your life right now and think about how you can better utilize your time to achieve goals of a much higher purpose. Then take it a step further by coming up with a plan for action.

Deliberately set aside the time you need in order to achieve your goal. Be patient and forgiving. And eventually, you will experience success.

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