



DYNAMIC

Steward

Exploring Partnership with God

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At each moment of your life there is something that you can do for God or your neighbor—Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 20

The gift of time

Today in history we have seven times more leisure than our ancestors. Despite the fact that since 1850 the work day has been shortened by one third, a recent poll states that 46 percent of Westerners feel they don't have enough free time. For modern man, time is a rare commodity. He has more time than ever before, yet the pace of life is moving faster and he is becoming more impatient. Breakthroughs in technology have given us jets, cell phones, computers and the internet. As a result we spend a fraction of the time we previously did for communication and travel, yet we find it unbearable when it takes 24 hours to receive an e-mail response! We live in a world with *zero* time delay. Not long ago we said, *Time is money*. Now we say, *Time is gold*. Why?

Numerous businesses catering to *speed* and *same day service* are making millions! World records in sporting events are set by thousandths of a second. Today, positive recognition is given to the hyperactive. Some people have capitalized on this with money-making schemes. An institute in New York offers a plan to *create more time and enjoy life*. In Berlin one school teaches people how to *live in slow motion*.

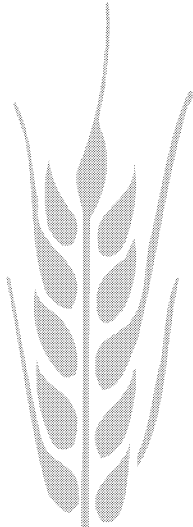
It has been a long time since God created each element of nature, looked at it carefully and waited until the next day to continue His work (*Gn 1; 2:1-3*). Have you ever wondered why God took seven days for His creation? It is a long time, if you consider that He just had to speak and it was done—in one single stroke man's environment would have been complete. God gave us the weekly cycle for our well being. The seven-day week was part of the creation process and was to remain eternal.

If we believe Adam and Eve were asked by their Creator to manage His property, we need to remember that one aspect of this property is *TIME*. How do we as the people of His promise use the little time that is left to us? We greet each other with *Maranatha*. Are we really longing for His return? Do we live joyfully in the time we have, waiting for a better life with Christ? With Jesus as our example, do we see how He modeled a devotional life for us to follow?

As Christ's disciples how should we use our time? Firstly, by serving our Lord and our neighbor (*Ac 1:8*). Next, we should use our time to glorify God: *For it is time to seek the Lord . . . (Ho 10:12)*. Lastly, we need God's guidance in our use of time. *Nothing is more precious than time, since it is the ransom for Eternity—Bourdaloue, On Wasting One's Time.*

Jean-Luc Lézeau, Associate Director, General Conference Stewardship Department

Application



Time management

Small group discussion

Begin group discussion by asking group members to write on a piece of paper, the time they spend each week: working, eating with the family, worshipping, resting, participating in church activities, enjoying leisure and praying. Then exchange comments on their findings.

Identify working habits by asking the following questions:*

	Never	Always			
1. Do you do what you like best first?	1	2	3	4	5
2. Do you begin one job and jump to another before coming back to the first one?	1	2	3	4	5
3. Do you procrastinate on what you have to do?	1	2	3	4	5
4. Do you have a lot of unexpected visits?	1	2	3	4	5
5. Do you spend much time on telephone calls?	1	2	3	4	5
6. Is your workplace tidy?	1	2	3	4	5
7. Do you have colleagues coming to you to relate their problems?	1	2	3	4	5

Always remember:

Parkinson's law:

The more time you take to do one task, the more time it will take to do it.

Carlson's laws:

Interrupted work will take more time than work finished in one stretch.

You should know your limits.

Persevere without being obstinate.

Ecclesiastes:

There is a time for all things.

There is a time for everything.

Conclusion

A good time manager knows himself, works within limits, evaluates the work he has to do, has a balanced self-image, knows the difference between the urgent and the important, and above all, doesn't forget God and his family in his day-to-day schedule.

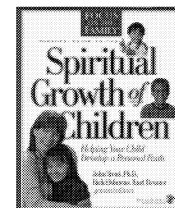
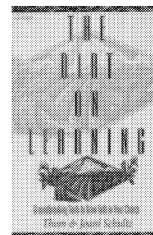
* And many more in *How to Manage Your Time*, John Adlair and Talbot Adair, 1987; *First Things First*, Stephen R. Covey, Simon and Shuster, 1994; *Manage Your Time*, Sally Garratt, Fontana/Collins, 1985; *How to Get Control of Your Time and Your Life*, Alan Lakein, New York, Signet, 1971.

*It is not in
doing things well
that we achieve
our goals but
in doing the things
that we have to do.
—Peter Drucker*

The Dirt on Learning

Why do some people seem to accept, retain, and apply God's word—while others seem virtually unmoved? Thom and Joani Schultz contend that the answers are found in the dirt, just as Jesus revealed in the Parable of the Sower. In *The Dirt on Learning* you'll unearth fresh discoveries that will revolutionize how you teach and lead children, youth, and adults. Pointers include ways to:

- help learners not just hear but truly understand
- unlock the secrets of the brain that lead to long-term memory
- nurture faith every day in learners' homes
- avoid thorny barriers to growth such as rewards, bribes, and unnecessary competition.



Parents' Guide to the Spiritual Growth of Children

This work has been created to help you take on the privilege of passing on your spiritual heritage to your children. Nearly 500 pages include everything you'll need to develop a highly customized plan targeting the unique mix of ages, personalities, and challenges found in your home. From a summary of various spiritual training methods, to age-specific content and tips for children ages birth to adolescence. The work *shouts* to eager but hesitant parents, *You can do it!*

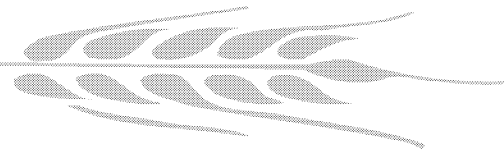
The Dirt on Learning

by Thom & Joani Schultz
Group Publishing
Loveland, Colorado, 1999
US\$ 17.99

Spiritual Growth of Children

by John Trent, Ph D, Rick Osborne, Kurt Bruner
Tyndale House Publishers
Wheaton, Illinois, 2000
US\$ 24.97

Reviewed by the staff of Dynamic Steward



Quotes on time . . .

Time is the coin of your life. It is the only coin you have, and only you can determine how it will be spent. Be careful lest you let other people spend it for you.—*Carl Sandburg*

Make each day useful and cheerful and prove that you know the worth of time by employing it well. Then youth will be happy, elders will be without regret and life will be a beautiful success.—*Louisa May Alcott*

Time is the one loan which even a grateful recipient cannot repay.—*Seneca*

A sense of the value of time...is an essential preliminary to efficient work; it is the only method of avoiding hurry.—*Arnold Bennett*

If you really know what things you want out of life, it's amazing how opportunities will come to enable you to carry them out.—*John M. Goddard*

Write it on your heart that every day is the best day in the year.—*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

We have to live but one day at a time, but we are living for eternity in that one day.—*Anonymous*

Time glides by with constant movement, not unlike a stream. For neither can a stream stay its course, nor can the fleeting hour.—*Ovid*

People count the faults of those who keep them waiting.—*French Proverb*

Make haste nor wait the coming hours; he who is unready today will be more so tomorrow.—*Ovid*

Your time, your talents, your possessions, and whatever you have must be poured on the earth like a loving flood for the salvation of those who are lost.—*Testimonies, v. 5, p.50*

Our time belongs to God. Every moment is His, and we are under the most solemn obligation to improve it to His glory. Of no talent that He has given will He require a more strict account than of our time.—*Ellen White*



The nature of time

Time flies! One person says. Another exclaims, *Where has this year gone?*

Time! We all have the same amount, and yet we each manage it differently. How we do so is a reflection of our relationship with God. Time is limited. It can neither shrink nor expand. And yet it is fluid. The tick of the clock does not change, but how we deal with time does. Some days we control our use of time, and other days we feel like time is controlling us.

Time is important in our spiritual life. The apostle John wrote of a time when *there should be time no longer* (*Rev 10:6*). Jesus declared that His time had come (*Mt 26:18; Mk 1:15*). Daniel speaks of a false power that would seek to *change time* (*Dn 7:25*). And on a couple of occasions, God actually changed time—when the sun stood still (*Js 10:12-14*) and when the shadow on the sun dial moved back ten degrees (*2 Kg 20:8-11*).

How we use or manage our time is really a reflection of our values and priorities. In this manner, the way we deal with time is very similar to the way we deal with money. Each demonstrates what is important to us. This is one of the reasons God gave us the Sabbath and tithing—to serve as personal thermometers of spiritual growth. So let's look at ways in which we can bring God into our management of time.

The Lord of time

The first tip is to recognize that as Creator, God is Lord of time. He must be at the center of our thinking about time. As in every other area of life, our challenge is to learn to put God first. In other words, the way we manage time tells us what place God has in our hearts. This is one of the reasons He gave us the Sabbath—as a way to help us bring Him into this critical area of life. We worship Him on Sabbath as we recognize Him as Creator (*Ex 20:8-11*), Redeemer (*Dt 5:12-15*), and Sanctifier (*Ex 31:13*). Worshiping Him on the Sabbath reminds us each week that He is Lord, not only of the Sabbath, but of each and every day for the Christian.

Putting God first in time begins with the Sabbath. It continues by taking time with God each day. Regardless of our preferences, we can begin each day with God. However, one's focused devotional time may vary from person to person. Let me suggest that if you are a morning person, take time in the morning for your devotional experience. If you are a night person, you might prefer to have your most meaningful time with God in the evening. Either way, try giving Him a part of your most productive time. I find that my growth with God is directly proportionate to the quality of time I give Him for listening to Him and His Word.

Ten timely tips

A second tip in dealing with time is to have a clear sense of mission and to integrate that mission into our schedule. A God-given mission brings clarity and focus to our lives. Then we arrange our schedule around that mission. Otherwise, events will seize control of our time. We each have different gifts and functions. Yet ultimately, the mission of each and every Christian is to glorify God. *So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God* (*1 Cr 10:31*). Part of this mission is to help others know the God we know.

Balance is another tip that guides us in our use of time. A compulsive focus on one area of life will control our use of time. God wants us to live in a balanced way that helps us grow in our relationship with Him and those around us. Proper balance results from a growing integration of God's lordship in every area of life. Can we trust God to guide us in the daily details of life?

Personal growth and strategies

A personal growth plan is a fourth tip to help us in managing our time. God has created us with an almost limitless capacity to grow. If we spend just one hour a day growing in some way, we have over 300 hours a year for growth. The potential is enormous.

A fifth tip is to make a time log for one week about once a year. Record all activities on a 15 minute basis. Total the time you spend in differing categories for each day, and then for the week. Next analyze your use of time. Measure it against your priorities and values. Then determine any changes you want to make.

Tip number six is to have a strategy for using the small corners of time throughout the day. You can carry a book with you and take advantage of those extra two to five minutes to read a page or two. Or you can carry a notepad, index cards, or an electronic organizer and use those few minutes to make notes or develop a concept. You can also use fragments of time for special intercessory prayer. Work your way through the members of your family, your friends, or your prayer list, lifting each one to God in prayer.

The seventh tip is to plan your activities for each day. I find two effective ways of doing this planning. One is to do it the evening before, and the other is to do it first thing in the morning. Either way works well. Establishing goals to be accomplished during the day may be a helpful part of that planning.

Number eight is the tip to “chunk” your time. Organize your activities into time blocks of about 20–40 minutes. This organization can be based on groups of similar activities, or segments of activities that require a larger block of time.

Take a break

Taking a break every 25–40 minutes is the ninth tip. This can be a break from what you are doing, or a break created by changing activities. You can accomplish this with a physical or mental change of pace. Most people find this type of rhythm helps keep the mind focused and fresh. It also helps maintain a higher energy level and prevents boredom.

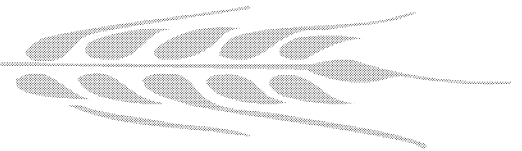
The tenth tip is to take God with you into every activity. Practice His presence by opening your mind to the reality that He is always with you (*Mt 28:20*). You can do this by consciously asking Him to go with you throughout the various activities of your day. Another helpful tool is to think about having Jesus visibly beside you in each activity. Imagine what it would be like if you could see Jesus walking or sitting beside you in every part of your day.

Time is precious. That which is wasted can never be regained. We can only move forward, but we can do so intentionally. We can ask God to help us take control of our time by surrendering each moment to Him and by asking Him to transform all we do through His presence. Thus time becomes a lifestyle of worship as we offer ourselves completely to God (*Ro 12:1-2*).

Benjamin C Maxson, Director, General Conference Stewardship Department

*Make use of time,
let not advantage slip;
Beauty within itself
should not be wasted:
Fair flowers that are not
gather'd in their prime,
Rot and consume
themselves in little time.*

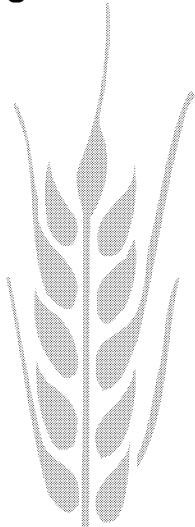
—Shakespeare



Stewardship Window more from the director's desk . . .

With this issue of *Dynamic Steward* we bid farewell to Fylvia Fowler Kline, our editor and Assistant Director of the General Conference Stewardship Department. During the last four years, Fylvia has made great contributions to the Seventh-day Adventist stewardship world. She has visited several divisions, has managed the production of materials, and has served as editor of the new stewardship resource journal, *Dynamic Steward*. It is with regret that we say goodbye to Fylvia. Her friendship and talents will be greatly missed. Fylvia's husband, Roy, has accepted a call to be hospital administrator of the Adventist hospital near Kathmandu, Nepal. Their family begins the adventure of mission life in one of the most fascinating areas of the world. Yet we are not totally saying goodbye. Thanks to the blessing of electronic media, Fylvia will continue to work with us on a contract basis in developing special materials and resources. So we wish Fylvia and her family God's richest blessings in this new adventure.

At the same time, we extend a special welcome to Claire Eva, our new Assistant Director and *Dynamic Steward* editor, who joined us the first of January. Claire brings a rich background to this position. Her roots are in Ohio. She majored in education in college, with minors in English and religion. She then pursued a Masters degree in human development with emphasis in counseling. Claire has had the valuable experience of serving as a pastor's wife alongside her husband Will, now editor of *Ministry Magazine*. Their ministry has led through many experiences which strengthen Claire's contribution to the Stewardship Department. She has taught school and has significant experience in writing and editing. She has also presented seminars on family finance and pastoral home life. We are already enjoying Claire's presence and contribution to the department. Please pray for her as she grows into her responsibilities and helps us to continue growing in our service for God and the world church.



Introduction

From his deserted island, John was given a God-inspired view of the future. And from this revelation he described end-time *saints* as *those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus (Rv 14:12 NKJV)*. These are comforting words to me. I see myself as faithful to Jesus and a commandment keeper. I guess that makes me a saint. But, you say, *Read the first part of the text again.*

Here is the patience — the pa-t-i-e-n-c-e — of the saints. Patience! You mean saints are patient? My *sainthood* is shattered! *I'm no saint!* Take this week for instance! My meager patience collapsed in six days. First, we moved and I had to set up for camp meeting. Next our son relocated to a distant 800 miles away. Then I was summoned to jury duty for three months. I can't endure! I want it all fixed — Now!

Patience?! Remember when we didn't demand fast food? Remember when families actually sat down to a meal together and conversed?

In the June 26, 2000 issue of *Newsweek*, George F. Will provides an insightful history of fast food. The history begins in 1762 with the fourth Earl of Sandwich. He spent long hours at a gambling table and solved his hunger problem by *eating meats placed between slices of bread*. In 1908 Henry Ford *produced the first Model T and Americans started motoring, looking for what eventually became America's great contribution to world cuisine: 'fast food.'*

And now, says Will, *The drive-through line has become the new frontier in the quest to go where none has gone before. The great goal of human striving, akin to past attempts to fly through the sound barrier and run a four-minute mile, is to get to 90—that is to an average of 90 seconds from the moment a driver places an order at the menu board of a fast food restaurant to the moment the food is handed out*

I'm no saint

of the takeout window. This all sounds like my morning's rushed bite of the Bread of Life. It's interesting that I even want to become a saint on fast spiritual food! Jesus promises us an experience of grace growth as we feast daily, not fast, upon His Word.

Please, Lord, give me patience

Paul tells us that patience is a fruit of the Spirit (*Ga 5:22,23*). Christians energized by the Spirit are patient people. John affirms they are in fact, *saints*. Patient saints are saints because God's Spirit is in them! They become patient by seeking God's will and *waiting on the Lord*.

Joseph became a saint as he prayed and patiently waited. He waited through chains and dungeons. He waited for God to bring to fruition his boyhood dreams. Moses became a saint as he tolerantly learned lessons God had for him. He endured while shepherding stubborn beasts and, even more challenging, a stiff-necked people. He waited on the Lord to lead Israel into the land of promise.

Jesus revealed his sainthood as he waited *for his time to come*. He held back when he might have used his Godly power during his forty-day test in the wilderness. He was restrained in the Garden as he waited, praying for the will of his Father. He was patient as he uttered the words, *'It is finished.'* He is patient still. As for me? *Clearly, I am not.*

Receiving God's grace

As patient saints receive God's grace, this grace provides favor, salvation and our acceptance of His perfect timing. *As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. For he says, 'In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.' I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation (2 Cr 6:1,2).*

For Paul, life was far more intolerable than mine will ever be. *As servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in sleepless nights and hunger; in patience and kindness, through glory and dishonor, and yet we live on; having nothing, and yet possessing everything (2 Cr 6:4-10).*

What happened to the impatient Saul to transform him into a patient Paul? In God's timing, Saul met Jesus on the Damascus road and, as divinity flashed into the darkness of his humanity, Paul accepted his Father's assurance: *I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people (2 Cr 6:16).* God living in Paul's heart matured him on the journey to patient sainthood.

Scripture Reading

2 Corinthians 6:1-10

Suggested Hymn

Make Me a Captive, Lord
(Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal #568)

Paul's relationship with God grew as he found assurance as a son of God! We may experience the same growth. What joy to be called the sons and daughters of God (2 Cr 6:18)! He says, *I am with you; that is all you need. My power shows up best in weak people (2 Cr 12:9 NB)*. In His time, God grows His children into patient saints! Wait for Him and give your Father your willing permission to pour His favor upon you. Let our prayer be: *Please God, I need your grace, your patience! I patiently wait for your power which can change my life!*

A great fall

Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall.

Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.

All the King's horses and all the King's men,

Couldn't put Humpty together again.

But soon the King heard of Humpty's fate and was deeply disturbed. So, setting aside his royal finery, disguised as a common peasant, the King slipped unnoticed through the majestic palace gates and into the rough-and-tumble street life of his kingdom. He meandered through the back streets and alleys in search of Humpty. After several days and nights, the persistent monarch found him. Humpty's shattered body was scattered over a ten-foot circle amidst the broken glass and flattened beer cans of a back alley. Though weak from his searching, the King was overjoyed at the sight of Humpty. He ran to his side and cried, 'Humpty! It is I—your king! I have powers greater than those of my horses and men who failed to put you together again. Be at peace. I am here to help!'

'Leave me alone,' Humpty retorted, 'I've gotten used to this new way of life. I kind of like it now.'

'But'—was all the King could get out before Humpty continued. 'I tell you, I'm fine. I like it here...'

The King tried again. 'I assure you, my kingdom has much more to offer than this back alley—there are green mountains, rolling surfs, exciting cities.' But Humpty would hear none of it. And the saddened King returned to the palace.

A week later one of Humpty's eyes rolled skyward only to see the concerned face of the King standing over his fractured pieces. 'I've come to help,' firmly stated the King.

'Look, leave me alone, will you?' said Humpty. Reluctantly the King turned once again and walked through the streets of his kingdom, back to the palace. It was over a year before the King ventured to return to Humpty's side. But, sure enough, one bright morning one of Humpty's ears perked up at the sure, steady strides of the King. This time he was ready. Humpty's eyes turned toward the tall figure just as his mouth managed the words, 'My King!'

Immediately the King fell to his knees on the glass-covered pavement. His strong, knowing hands gently began to piece Humpty's fragments together. After his work was completed, the King rose to full height, pulling up the figure of a strong young man. The two walked hand in hand throughout the kingdom... This went on forever. And to the depth, breadth, and height of their friendship there was no end.

Once while walking together down the sidewalk in one of the King's cities, Humpty overheard a remark that made his heart leap with the joy of his new life and the bitter memory of the back alley. Someone said, 'Say, who are those two men?' Another replied, 'Why, the one on the left is old Humpty Dumpty. I don't know the one on the right—but they sure look like brothers!'

The Father patiently waits for our decision. Receiving his gift of grace depends upon our consent. No, I'm no saint. But—hallelujah—because of my Father's patience, and by His, grace I am granted sainthood! The *patience of the saints* is not based on patient-performance. Oh, no! Patience is God-given to *non-saints*, transforming them into saints!

God will put us together again! *Now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation. Here is the patience of the saints.* Vic Pentz, *Stories for the Heart*, compiled by Alice Gray, Multnomah Publishers, 1996.

*There is a time for everything,
and a season for
every activity under heaven:
a time to be born and
a time to die,
a time to plant and
a time to uproot,
a time to kill and
a time to heal,
a time to tear down and
a time to build,
a time to weep and
a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and
a time to dance,
a time to scatter stones and
a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and
a time to refrain,
a time to search and
a time to give up,
a time to keep and
a time to throw away,
a time to tear and
a time to mend,
a time to be silent and
a time to speak,
a time to love and
a time to hate,
a time for war and
a time for peace.*

—Ecclesiastes 3:1-8



Introduction

A man went to see his doctor to get results from his medical tests. The doctor said, *I have some bad news and some good news. Which do you want to hear first? I'd like to hear the good news first*, the patient replied.

The good news, exclaimed the physician, *is that you have only twenty-four hours to live*. The man was flabbergasted. *Only 24 hours! I can't possibly get all of my affairs in order in 24 hours! I can't believe this. WHAT COULD BE WORSE?* He asked, *What is the bad news?* The doctor embarrassingly responded, *The bad news is I was supposed to tell you yesterday, but I forgot*.

We all feel like we are running out of time, and are continually trying to figure out how we can get more. Unfortunately, time is a fixed commodity. Everyone has the same amount—60 seconds in a minute, 60 minutes in an hour, and 24 hours in a day. The difference is in the way we use time. Time is the passing of life, and it passes at a consistent rate for everyone.

Be industrious

(Read Pr 6:6-11). There are other robbers that can creep in and pilfer one's life. These robbers I refer to as *time bandits*. A time bandit is any controllable activity that hinders our efforts to accomplish a task. Notice I said *controllable*. There are some uncontrollable events, but much of what we think to be uncontrollable is really just poor time management habits. What are some *time bandits* in life?

Poor planning or scheduling. Emphasis on day-to-day activities almost always upstages planning. And putting out today's fires takes priority over planning for the future. Ironically, fire fighting interferes with fire prevention. This often leads to crisis management—the tyranny of the urgent. The urgent is not always most important. The tyranny of the urgent lies in the distortion of priorities, adorning minor projects with major status. Often we become a slave to the tyranny of the urgent, and yet others seem to thrive on it. Some receive gratification in overcoming crises, so people create a crisis by procrastinating, allowing or possibly even *planning* a crisis.

The phone. The need to control phone time by screening calls is essential. The telephone can be an effective tool for time management, or can steal away valuable time.

Junk mail. Stephanie Winston, author of *Getting Organized* recommends applying the TRAF system. *T*: Trash it, *R*: Refer it, *A*: Act on it, *F*: File it.

Overcommitment. Supermom, chauffeur, coach, tutor, maid, Sabbath school teacher, and church slave have forgotten the first word they and their children ever learned to say—NO!

Interruptions/Drop ins. I read a book this week that suggests you should leave your coat hanging by the door so if someone drops by your home you can look through the peephole, see who it is, then put your coat on and act as if you're just leaving!

Television. A recent Nielsen survey reported that in the United States children under six watch 27 hours of television a week, women over 55 watch 36 hours per week, and a high school graduate has spent 50 percent more time in front of the TV than in the classroom. All of us need to closely monitor our viewing habits, making sure the tube is not replacing another priority in our life. How can we eliminate time bandits? One step to eliminate them is revealed in the next scripture reading.

An important principle in time-management appears in this account. Martha was a hard worker. She was busy serving Jesus, while her sister chose to learn from Him. Martha was angry and complained to Jesus. She was caught by busyness. There is a great difference between activity and accomplishment. People tend to get caught in an activity trap. They get involved in a variety of tasks that do not contribute to their predetermined goal or objective.

We learn several time-management principles from this story. First, Martha was so busy she overlooked the important opportunity to learn from Jesus. People get caught up in the fury of action and assume they are accomplishing something worthwhile. Secondly, Martha was unaware that she had lost sight of the goal. She was distracted by her many duties. When we lose sight of the goal, we lose our proper focus. Then we begin to focus on activity, and that becomes our goal.

Thirdly, Martha criticized her sister because she wasn't busy. People caught up in busyness deceive themselves into thinking they are producing more than others

Time bandits

Scripture Reading

Luke 10:38-42

Suggested Hymn

Working, O Christ, With Thee
(Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal #582)

because they are busier. Fourthly, Jesus pointed out that Martha's pace was creating stress within her. This is an end result of busyness—stress and tension!

The second step in eliminating time bandits involves *incorporating interruption time* into your schedule. We need to learn to anticipate emergencies and interruptions in advance. There are scores of unavoidable emergencies that occur. For me, they always come on Friday. On Friday I simply don't take calls. It is my day for writing my sermon. But almost without exception, there is an unavoidable emergency. Perhaps someone becomes critically ill or dies. The great thing about scheduling interruptions is, if the interruption doesn't occur, you have additional time to devote to your prioritized task (*Read Ep 5:15-16*).

In order to make the best use of time, we need a system to help us identify time bandits. Therefore, we need to *monitor our personal calendars*. This is one of the most obvious, yet frequently neglected tools of time management—maintaining an organized personal activity schedule. Sometimes we dislike making a daily schedule because we don't want to be answerable to it. But monitoring our daily calendar helps to keep us accountable. Time bandits frequently disguise as legitimate activities. Therefore it is extremely important to record everything you do and compare it to your plan of action. Then make sure your actions are consistent with your priorities, or *enforce your priorities* (*Read Mk 1:32-38*).

Learning to set priorities and keeping them is one of the most important, but difficult aspects of eliminating time bandits. Someone has said that when you're up to your neck in alligators it doesn't help much to be reminded that your priority was to drain the swamp. Jesus had constant demands on his time. Needy people were everywhere. But in order to do what the Father directed, he had to decline some activities. In this passage Jesus worked overtime healing people and casting out demons. The next morning he got up before daylight and went out to pray. The disciples came around and said,

Everyone is looking for you. Boy, were they impressed yesterday! But Jesus said, *We need to go somewhere else. There is another place I need to be.* He never lost sight of his priorities. When demands threatened to interfere with His Father's will, he quickly said, *No*. Obviously there were still unmet needs back in the city, but Jesus had to stay by the important task at hand—his first priority.

There are many good activities that can capture our time. It is not always a choice between good and bad. These are the easy choices. We often need to choose between what is better and best. Like Jesus, we need to enforce the priorities in our lives and do foremost what God has called us to do.

Conclusion

What time bandits are putting your life *out of balance*? Maybe your work is suffering, and as a result your job performance is less than admirable. God stresses the importance of working hard, with honesty and integrity. A recent study reported in *Newsweek* stated that the average employee robs his employer of some four hours per week, costing 9.5 billion dollars overall. Maybe your church life is suffering. You might be overcommitted and may not be enjoying the pleasure and privilege of working for Christ. Or maybe you have been sitting back, saying someone else should get involved.

No one recognized the value of using time wisely more than Jesus. He knew he only had three years to train a handful of men, and in the end, He accomplished the task. That training climaxed with Jesus' ultimate act of service—the ultimate act of love—his death. Not just for the disciples or the Jerusalem community, but for each one of us.

Is your life in balance? Maybe you're missing the all-important ingredient of having a well-balanced life, a totally fulfilled life which has blessed meaning and purpose. This life is the only one worth living—a new life in Christ. Our heavenly Father offers it to you. Take it. Accept it. Trust Him. God is in the business of changing lives.

*The secret to
time management
is not learning
how to save time
or get more of it
—the secret is in
knowing how
to use it.*



Magnificent gemstones

Introduction

As part of a time-management seminar, the presenter placed a large pot on a table. He reached beneath the table and pulled out some sizeable stones, filling the pot with them. He then asked, *Is the pot full?* The whole group answered, *Yes*. Leaving the pot on the table, he reached below and pulled out a bucket of gravel. As he poured gravel into the pot, it settled around the stones. Again he asked the attendees, *Is the pot full now?* In response, one smart aleck in the crowd called out, *Probably not*.

The presenter then pulled out a bucket of sand and dumped it into the pot. As he shook the container, the sand shifted in and around the stones and gravel. Again he asked, *Is the pot completely full?* By this time, the group was wise to the game, and collectively said, *No*. Next the speaker took a pitcher of water and poured it into the pot, filling it to the brim. He then asked, *What is the point of this demonstration?* Full of wisdom, the group responded, *No matter how busy you are, you can always do more*.

Yes, he replied, *But what else could be said when it comes to the meaning of this demonstration? The point is that when we have all of this stuff to put into our pots, if we don't put the big stones in first, there will be no room for them in the end. Actually, we will never get them in at all.*

The human dilemma

Isn't this exactly the dilemma of many of us who try to live lives of integrity in our demanding world? We want to produce things that are of ultimate value while we try to fit everything else in. This is precisely what we are searching for—the big stones, the real essentials of life that will stimulate authentic growth. Our lives are often so crowded that we have no room for what we need most. We desperately want to *get a life*, but we find no time to explore what that life could possibly be—a life that puts important things first.

Ryne Sandberg, one of the best second basemen to play the game of baseball, suddenly announced his retirement on June 13, 1994. A ten time All-Star for the Chicago Cubs and the recipient of nine Golden Glove awards, he was in the second year of a four-year, \$28 million contract. In a highly emotional press conference, he confessed that he had *lost the edge*. The thirty-four year old legend went on to say: *I didn't have what I felt I needed to go on the field every day, give my very best and live up to the standards I set for myself.*

While he shocked the sporting world with the news, is there anyone who can't identify with the feelings he expressed? To all appearances Sandberg was successful and wealthy—yet he admitted to being poor. Here was a man who had everything but the essentials he needed.

The big stones of life

What are some of the *big stones* of Christian living? *The first one is what we believe*—knowing, loving, and being intimate with the God. The God who, through faith in Jesus Christ, brings a genuinely abundant life. This is not of course an abundance of things, but *the Life* filled with the *One* thing. But this fire of faith dies unless it is stoked. So *the second big stone, is growing in our faith*. We grow in our discovery of who God is by establishing intimacy with Him through regular devotion in Bible study and prayer. However, these two magnificent stones, carried securely in the soul's crucible, do not automatically maintain their value and weight. Of themselves they do not chase away the blahs of disbelief and discouragement.

We have to do something with our faith, and that is the third rock. This rock is the rock of sharing together and supporting the Church—the body of Christ. We need to stand behind the people of God with their faulty but amazing commitment to the good news of Jesus Christ. Truly, we live in a world that needs good news!

Earlier we read from 2 Timothy. This is one of the *big rock* passages of the Bible, and its value is inestimable. Scripture records two letters Paul wrote from prison to his friend, Timothy. Paul had a convicting impression that he would not leave Rome alive, and so at the end of this letter, he writes with amazing transparency, inspired resignation and penetrating honesty: *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race. My time for departure has come (4:6-7)*. In this passage, Paul gives his young friend the necessary encouragement to carry on with the work that

Scripture Reading

2 Timothy 3:14 - 4:5

Suggested Hymn

God of Grace and God of Glory
(Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal #607)

Timothy had already learned at his side. Paul gives Timothy the gems he needs, so that he can carry on the work that Paul will leave behind. It is our privilege to sit beside Paul and view a few of the great gems he describes in 2 Timothy, so that we may place them in the containers of our own lives.

Four gems for the crucible of our soul

Look at the first gem Paul describes: *Continue in what you have learned and firmly believed* (2 Ti 3:14). At first glance this gem doesn't appear attractive, because Paul is implying that a person can actually fall out of belief. That's the implication behind the word *continue*. Faith can slip from our grasp. Have you ever been surprised at your weakness after an illness that has kept you in bed and away from exercising your muscles? How unsteady you were. How much energy it took to perform even the basic functions of daily life! This is what Paul is pointing to—the muscles of faith grow weak through inactivity.

But Paul also says that believing the truth of Christ and his teaching is medicine for strained and struggling muscles. It is useful for teaching, reproof, correction, training and developing proficiency. Bible study is like physical therapy—it improves *faith-muscle* functioning.

Paul describes a second precious rock in 4:1, using words that we tend to overlook because of their common use in his writings: *In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus*. These words depict the very cornerstone of our faith. Paul says it in his letter to the Ephesians: *Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone* (Ep 2:20).

A person cannot go wrong with a foundation like this. When we are building a house, if we are wise we spend inordinate amounts of time being sure that we get the foundation square and plumb. We know that if the foundation is not right, there will be no end to the corrections that have to be made. Being sure of the foundation is absolutely crucial. But after the foundation and cornerstone are laid, Paul follows with a beautiful collection of gems: *Be persistent (in good times and bad), convince, encourage, don't let that patience of yours drop and droop* (4:2).

Curt Jones tells of a time he and his wife were all set for a quiet evening at home. As they were relaxing, the doorbell rang. Standing at the door were two neighbor girls, ages six and nine. With considerable poise, the older one handed Curt a package saying, *This is your valentine*. Jones invited them in and opened the package to find a box of delicious chocolates. He offered some to the girls but they said, *No, we gave them up during the special time of consecration we are having at our church*.

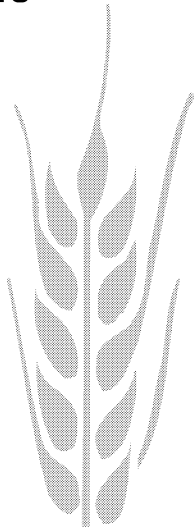
So Jones went to the dining room and brought back some nuts. But when he offered them to the girls, the older girl declined, saying with weighty sophistication: *I consider them the same as candy*. But the younger one studied the dish and carefully selected some nuts. Within minutes she helped herself four times. Curt Jones remarked, *I see you did not give up nuts*. And she replied, *Actually, I did, but I still eat them*. Jones concluded: *Unknowingly, this little girl brought into focus the perennial problem of the human race—our difficulty generating the power to do what one has committed to do and to refrain from doing what one has determined not to do*.

A cartoon I saved dramatizes a conversation between a young woman and her physician. The patient asks, *What can I do to feel better without giving up what's making me feel so bad?* And that is where Paul ends up. He lists in quick succession, (4:5) some final gems: *As for you, always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, [and] carry out your ministry fully*.

Putting it together

So how do we put all this together? Nancy Mairs, who describes herself as a lapsed Catholic, writes about her return to church in her memoirs, *Ordinary Time*. She says that even though her beliefs about God were uncertain and in formation, she began attending church again to prepare *a space into which belief could flood!* That is a powerful idea. We are in worship so that we too might prepare such a space. We need to be a congregation of beautiful gemstones, caring enough to provide a place in which our prejudices and even some of our traditional values are challenged. We must be praying for one another, worshiping and serving together, and celebrating the Good News of Jesus Christ.

*I have so much to do
today that I shall spend
the first three hours in prayer.
—Martin Luther*



Introduction

I have a dream that recurs every now and then. I've had it for years—all the way back to high school. Most recently it goes like this: It's Sabbath morning, I'm standing in my pajamas getting ready to shower. Suddenly I hear the organ playing and realize that it is just in the next room. I open the door, look into the sanctuary and see that church is about to start. Everyone is there milling around, and I haven't dressed yet. For some reason, I have to cross the sanctuary to shower and dress. I tell someone up front to get things started. Then I slip along the side aisle, hoping no one will notice. I try to dress but I can't find my suit or shirt or shoes, and time is running out. Before I go on, I realize that I don't have a sermon. So I come out to the podium without my shirt and start talking, terrified because I have no words. At this time, mercifully, I awaken.

This dream theme is fairly common. It's thesis is clearly the pressure of time. Life is passing, and I'm not keeping up with it. I have been talking about what people want most. If I had to make a guess, I think time would come out near the top of everyone's list. We are so busy. Often I've asked, *How was your week?* And the answer is, *Oh, it's been terrible. I've been so busy, I can't even stop to breathe.* There are profound spiritual perspectives on time in Scripture, and it's no accident that the one I've chosen today is often read at funerals. It is about the passage of time.

The first insight about time is that God is outside of or beyond time. *Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God (Ps 90:2).* C.S. Lewis says in *Mere Christianity* that, to God, the past, the future, and the present are all one. God is somehow in all times.

Time

Unless you're a theologian, this may be mumbo-jumbo to you. Except that it leads to a second insight which is, that unlike God, we feel the pressure of time. *A thousand years in God's sight are but the passing of a day (90:4),* says the Psalmist. If that's true, God clearly doesn't have to consult his Palm Pilot. But we do. We are as the grass that grows in the morning, and when the afternoon sun hits it, it withers and dies.

Remember Mr. Peabody's Time Machine? It was a popular cartoon show. Mr. Peabody was a dog with glasses who had a time machine. With his boy, Sherman, they'd travel through time to make sure history worked out as it was supposed to. If I had a time machine, I can think of things in my history I'd change. But this is the stuff of cartoons. We are stuck in time and feel its passage. I feel as if my life is being pulled through a small hole, and all I get to live in is the tight spot it's being pulled through. We know there's going to be a future, we remember the past, but we only have the present moment.

The third insight from the psalmist's prayer and my focus is: *Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom (90:12).* What does this mean? As I was growing up there was always a little box on the front page of our local paper that appeared at Thanksgiving time. It said, *Only 30 shopping days until Christmas.* Merchants placed it there to pressure people to buy. It certainly worked for me. I was hoping my parents noticed the number of shopping days left too! I suspect numbering your days is as close as an ancient hymn writer would get to time management. I attended a time-management workshop once and didn't get much out of it. That's because it was mostly about scheduling, which is a literal form of numbering your days. There are schedule people and non-schedule people. I have a friend who maps out the entire day: *7:30: get up. 7:35: brush teeth.* I can't do it. I have a general list of big things to accomplish and try to cross out some things before the day is over. Real time management, at least for us right-brained people, has more to do with attitudes than with keeping a careful date book. When do you feel like you're using your time most wisely? Most people would say, *When I get a lot done.* So the shape of time for most of us is productivity. A new attitude might totally reshape our sense of time, however. And, to me, that is what the Psalmist is offering—a reason for being careful about time which differs from the reasons we usually give.

How are you going to govern this limited commodity—time? You have heard it said: productivity. It's how much you get done. I say there is a deeper and far more spiritual governing principle: wisdom. I want to suggest that you move from governing the use of your time by the principle of productivity, toward the principle of wisdom—the getting of, developing of, and the use of wisdom. The goal of life then centers on all that fills the inner man and inner woman. Let me suggest three ways to number our days in this way.

Scripture Reading

Psalms 90: 1-12

Suggested Hymn

O God, Our Help
(Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal #103)

I. The wisdom of owning less

Our church has a yearly rummage sale to benefit the Amistad Foundation. The people benefitted are the Native Americans of the Copper Canyon and Sierra Huichol. These people absolutely would not understand what we mean when we talk about having so much stuff. Many of them live in caves or stone huts. They need food, clothing and medical care. My friends, we don't own our things. Our things own us. We have to maintain, move and clean them. More things equal less time. If we move from an outer governing principle of time, like productivity and stuff, to an inner reason like wisdom, it will change our attitude toward being a consumer.

We ate breakfast in Scotland with a couple who asked us about the United States. *We heard, they said, that Americans only get two weeks of vacation. That's true, I said. Most of us only get two weeks of vacation.* Americans get an average of 20 holidays, as opposed to 35-40 in Europe. *It's worth the world to us to take time to kick back and relax, they said. More than money or more things.* I'm not saying it's easy. We live in a very consuming society. In the spiritual dynamics of time management, we must learn what activities will maximize our getting wisdom. So this is first: more stuff equals less time.

II. The wisdom of doing less

In the wonderful old book, *The Wind in the Willows*, author Kenneth Grahame paints a picture of Ratty and Mole, living in contentment in a little hole in the river. In the story the wordly character is Toad. The other animals recognize toad as a good character, but he's always driven to do something new, get something new, or try something new. And he's always in trouble because of it. As you read, you clearly get the picture that wisdom does not lay with the wealthy Mr. Toad but with the simple-living Ratty and Mole. This classic achieved fame largely due to its marvelous description of idleness.

How often in your busy life have you penciled in, *idleness*? Even in our leisure we feel compelled to watch or listen to something. How about the need for idleness? Some of us are addicted to the feeling of being busy. This feeling is not often accompanied by a sense of accomplishment. Think about your busiest day last week, and then ask yourself how much of what you did has any enduring quality. Do you ever have days that go by in a fog when you can't tell one from another?

There is wisdom in deciding to do less. Many people in the world ought to be more ambitious, but that's not true of most of us. We often sacrifice our time to achieve things that won't last. Some people are addicted to work, and it costs them dearly in terms of family and friends. Some go on vacation and are busier than when at work! Now, this is very much a spiritual point. The Psalmist asks us to number our days to apply them to wisdom. There is little wisdom in working constantly for *things!* What we're talking about here is learning to be satisfied. I have a friend who is enormously successful. He's proud of his success, but that's the only thing that seems to bring him joy. There is much more to life than success. Sometimes that means being content and thanking God, sitting down and shutting up.

III. The wisdom of knowing what counts

The Christian who would recapture his time needs to set priorities. Let me list some priorities for you. Reading stories to children. Praying. That's a big one. You can't pray in a hurry. Hugging and kissing the people you love. Tending flowers. Stroking purring cats. Reading the Bible, or any thoughtful book. Making model airplanes. Sitting on your porch in the evening. Talking. Did you know that the average time a husband and wife spend talking is 13 minutes a day? Having a picnic. Thinking.

Next to all of these, work is a rather lower priority. You could even make the argument that having a spotless house is rather a lower priority. But we spend our time working and cleaning, working and cleaning. The Lord has told us what is good: to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. Teach us to number our days because time is short. If you have passed three score and ten, does it seem like 70 years have gone? Most people say it went in a flash. Life passes quickly. I have never heard anyone on his deathbed say, *Oh, I wish I had spent more time at work. Oh, how I regret not washing my windows more often.* People regret quite different things—the time they didn't spend reading to children, hugging and kissing, contemplating, praying, tending flowers. My friends, let us use our time to seek wisdom.

*So teach us to number
our days, that we may gain
a heart of wisdom
—Psalm 90:12*

Book Reviews

Anyone familiar with Emilie Barnes' books on organization will immediately identify this work as hers. Author of more than 15 books on effective living, Barnes condenses her best ideas and packs them into her well-ordered volume, *Emilie's Creative Home Organizer*.

Unlike other time-management books and seminars, Mrs. Barnes places heavy emphasis on *quality* use of time rather than the *quantity* of time saved. Even though the thrust of the work is time and energy-saving tips, its predominant theme is making more effective use of the time we have. The goal is not to free-up more work time or acquire more *things*, but to truly enjoy life.

As a time-management person, Barnes' attitude toward home care seems surprising at first. Home to her is not necessarily *house beautiful*. Rather, a beautiful home is filled with *the spirit of loveliness*, a spirit of warmth and caring. . . a place where you can express the uniqueness of your God-given talents and nurture your relationships with the people you love. To accomplish this, Barnes says, you must be organized. *Make homemaking an exciting adventure, rather than drudgery and a thankless job.* Well, I'm not sure about the exciting adventure, but her tips and sidebars certainly help make homemaking easier and less taxing.

Simplify and unclutter your life, Barnes says. And she gives hundreds of tips to help the reader do just that—not by following her system, but by finding a system that works for each personality. She strongly advocates handling large jobs using the *salami method*—slicing off one manageable piece at a time, setting realistic goals, and finding ways that are right for one's energy level and style of doing things. Set goals, not for a perfect house, but for a happier home. And always, she urges the reader, *simplify, simplify, simplify.*

If you can't find time to do what you want, make time, she says. Do that by (1) delegating tasks to others, (2) eliminating some work entirely (3) incorporating the help of family members (4) using small amounts of time and (5) planning the use of leisure time.

Barnes covers a broad list of topics, ranging from how to clean and maintain your home to how to enhance one's inner beauty. Some of her tips are familiar to the connoisseur of her writings, but new and helpful hints also surface.

Emilie's best-known books are *More Hours in My Day* and *Survival for Busy Women*—Harvest House Publishers. Others on her list are *15-Minute Money Manager*, *15-minute Organizer*, *15-Minute Perpetual Calendar* and *15-Minute Meal Planner*. At least two 15-minute devotional books top off her list.

Each chapter of *Emilie's Creative Home Organizer* centers around one area in a woman's life—housekeeping, cooking, money management and personal and family health. Common sense ideas are interspersed with gentle reminders that the goal of increased efficiency is not to cram more into the day, but to have time for what really matters in life. This is key in her writing and results in blessing to the reader. As she motivates homemakers to accomplish tasks more efficiently, it becomes easier to get excited about tackling dreaded household jobs, unkempt closets, and lists of unreturned phone calls. As a result one has more time for the Lord, family, and oneself.

What impresses me most about *Emilie's Creative Home Organizer* are the basic biblical concepts she uses to strengthen her theses. For instance, in her chapter on finances, she says, *We are stewards for God, stewards of our lives and possessions, since both belong to Him. . . Good money management is not bondage; it is freedom from the 'right' to do what we want, giving us instead the power to do what we should. . . Money management is really more about your attitude toward the use of money than a systematic plan to which you become a servant.*

I like that. Barnes gives a biblical reason for being careful with our resources, including our time, our money, and our health. Her implied philosophy is summed up in 1 Corinthians 10:13: *Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*

If you have read Barnes' other management books, this is a great compilation of her ideas; if not, it's a quick read of huge time-saving ideas no person should be without.

Charlotte Ishkanian, Editor of Mission Quarterly, General Conference Sabbath School Personal Ministries



Emilie's Creative Home Organizer

by Emilie Barnes
Harvest House Publishers
Eugene, Oregon, 1995
US\$ 8.99

Book Reviews

In this powerful book Calvin Miller builds upon his dynamic contribution to the world of Christian spirituality. Incorporating a very readable and interesting style, Miller speaks to the heart and mind. This work encourages the Christian who is seeking a deeper relationship with God. He challenges the conventional wisdom of cultural Christianity with a vision for intimacy with God which Miller shows is possible in the contemporary world.

You cannot read this book without being challenged to re-evaluate your lifestyle and priorities. It is not enough to want to know God without being willing to be like God. While there is no four-step recipe for this intimacy with God, Miller invites us to a journey, plumbing the depths of what God can mean to us, *where eyes see the Invisible, ears hear the Inaudible, and minds conceive the Inconceivable*.

Miller's rich prose paints word pictures that draw one deeper still into exploring who God is in our lives. He challenges us to search out the disciplined life that will help break the tyrannies of contemporary culture. He invites us to enter into the listening life that opens our hearts to the reality of God. He invites us to discover our calling in God and to focus our lives around who we are in Him. And he confronts us with the need for a *confessional life*—a life which reveals God to those around us by word and deed.

This is one of the more powerful books I have read this year. It has so called and drawn me, that I am returning for a second and contemplative read. Join me in the journey of seeking the depths of God with Calvin.

Benjamin C Maxson, Director, General Conference Stewardship Department

We wouldn't have so many bad hair days if we weren't wearing so many hats. How many hats are you wearing? Wife? Mom? Daughter? Friend? Employee? Church worker? Volunteer? Housekeeper? Taxi driver? Nurse? Cook? The more hats we wear, the more life loses its luster and becomes a daily grind where we're always behind, always rushing, never getting enough sleep, and sick and tired of being sick and tired. And somewhere in the hustle and hurry, we lose ourselves, our relationships, and our God. How do you stop living like a gerbil and start finding time for the things that really matter?

In *Time for All That's Important*, popular author and women's ministries leader Tamyra Horst says there's more to life than just getting everything done—there's balance. More than just making it through the day—there's rest. In these pages, you will learn how to:

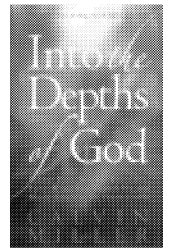
- Be who God made you to be
- Say *No* without guilt
- Live within your means
- Define and stick to your priorities
- Establish a God-focus
- Find the balance between *doing* and *being*

Trials and busyness will always be a part of our lives, but balance comes in knowing how to separate the important from the merely urgent. This book will show you how.

Reviewed by the staff of Dynamic Steward

Stewardship of Time is Stan Toler's second booklet in the Stewardship Starters series. If you are looking for a collection of unique quotations and concise lists of pointers regarding the best use of time, this easy read will be of help. Some of its short, crisp sections include, *The Value of Time*, the *Top 12 TimeBusters*, *Time for Work*, and, *Using That Extra Time Wisely*. The work is predominantly a book of well-chosen quotes on time and helpful organizational ideas.

Claire L Eva, Assistant Director, General Conference Stewardship Department



Into the Depths of God

by Calvin Miller
Bethany House Publishers
Minneapolis, Minnesota, 2000
US\$ 13.59



Time

by Tamyra Horst
Pacific Press Publishing Association
Nampa, Idaho, 1999
US\$ 9.99



Stewardship of Time

by Stan Toler
Beacon Hill Press
Kansas City, Missouri, 1998
US\$ 7.99

Resources

Bibles from Zondervan . . .

The Leadership Bible offers 52 weeks of practical studies on contemporary leadership issues. You'll discover how to improve your personal development skills and relationships by following biblical leadership principles. Each workweek, you'll cover a personal quality such as courage or humility. Or a practical skill like conflict management. Or a relational concern—power and influence, or servant leadership. (*Retail price US\$ 29.99*)

The NASB Study Bible is a resource library at your fingertips! At its heart is an abundance of in-text study notes. Over 20,000 notes, adapted from the best-selling NIV Study Bible, draw on today's leading experts who provide valuable commentary right where you need it. No need to flip pages to obtain important insights on biblical words, verses, and passages. Here is the most complete, detailed set of study notes available for the New American Standard Bible. And it just gets better! An exclusive, center-column reference system guides your study with over 100,000 references. (*Retail price US\$ 129.99*)

Editorial

Amy, our fair-haired five year old, was learning to count. The goal of her kindergarten class was to count to 100. While encouraging her along one day, she tilted her round cheeks upward, looked at me with liquid blue eyes and queried, *Mommy, when are there no more hundreds?* Taken aback with the depth her question posed, I replied, *Oh, honey, hundreds go on and on. They never end!*

Since that encounter, the concept of numberless numbers has repeatedly provided me with a tiny window into the fathomless knowledge that our God lives not in time, but eternity. It is we, His earth-bound children who reside within the perimeters of time and who therefore have been given time as a *gift*. How shall we then live within the limits of the seasons we have been granted?

After Christmas my husband, Will, and I took a short excursion to Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. It was a journey, as it were, back in time, for we observed the ways of the austere Amish people of the area. We viewed neatly ordered farms with no sign of electrical wires about. We passed horse-drawn buggies on snowy roads and byways. One pastime that I particularly enjoyed was perusing the many Amish craft shops in the area. Of special interest were the beautiful hand-stitched quilts that Amish women spend hour upon hour creating. One quilt design is a type of *memory* quilt. Patches or fabric squares are taken from countless pieces of family clothing or cloth, which represent meaningful experiences in the life of that family. All of the pieces are stitched together to create a complete portrait, expressing a life of shared memories in the family's history.

I like to imagine our lives as such a work, each experience or particular period—pleasant or painful—significantly representing our story. As we give ourselves to God, He gently gathers the fragments of our lives, with all of our joyous experiences and difficult patches of time, and stitches them together lovingly, creating a meaningful, valuable design.

This issue of *Dynamic Steward* considers the theme of time and how we might live more effectively for God in the moments we are given, with a view to the hundreds that never end. Solomon says, *There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven (Ec 3:1)*. And this, we observe, is true. May it be our desire that God be Lord of our time. Then we will find meaning in every square of struggle, and beauty in every patch of delight that embraces a life well spent in Him.

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