

Correcting Ten Mistakes On Time

Psalm 90

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 12-27-2009

Introduction

Over the past three weeks as I have once again been evaluating how to be wiser in my use of time in the next year, I have had to ask myself the question: "What does it mean to waste one's life?" Every year I try to evaluate this question in my own life, and make readjustments. I don't think I have ever had a year that I am 100% satisfied with how I have handled my time. I have seen ways in which I have wasted my time. And that used to mean that I wasn't as efficient as I could be. But that's no longer my only criterion for waste. In fact, that criterion implies that work alone has value. But Jesus took His disciples aside for relaxation, didn't He? And I don't think that Jesus wasted time. He took the time to enjoy a feast. He spent time one on one with Peter, James and John. In fact, earlier in His life He took thirty years before entering the pastoral ministry? Was waiting so long a waste of time? No. He spent much time in prayer. Believe it or not, there are many Christians who know intellectually the importance of prayer, but who are so driven emotionally by productivity that they feel like prayer is a waste of time. So that's a wrong definition, right? Sadly, I still struggle with that false thought from time to time. Productivity is not the measure of our life; Christ is, God's Word is. God commands sleep. Well, if he commands sleep, then sleep must not be a waste of time in God's eyes. But Proverbs indicates that too much sleep is a waste of time. It's important that you not evaluate your time based on what others have done. That will just add stress to your life. The balanced Christian life is a hard one to achieve and I think it is only achieved as we have our eyes on Christ and we are governed by His Word.

This morning I want to give an exposition of Psalm 90:12 where it says, **"So teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom."** I have pulled from this Psalm ten common mistakes that we Christians tend to make with respect to time management.

I. **Thinking that we don't need to learn time management ("so teach us" with vv. 1-17)**

The first mistake is to think that we don't need to learn time management. Moses knew better. In this funeral psalm Moses pleads with God **"teach us."** "Teach us Lord, We need you to teach us." If you have not carefully mapped out your time, I can guarantee you that your time management is inefficient. Good time management never comes naturally. It didn't even come naturally to Moses. He has come to sense that there have been huge blocks of time in Israel's life that have been wasted, and that there were huge blocks in his own life that had been wasted. Jethro had to correct him in Exodus 17 and help him to be more efficient. We can learn from each other and encourage each other in this area.

Look at verse 9: **For all our days have passed away in Your wrath; we finish our years like a sigh.** Verses 1-11 are preoccupied with death, with God's anger and with wasted lives. You'll notice in the title of the Psalm that this is a prayer of Moses. When you look at Deuteronomy 33 you will see similar language to this psalm given by Moses at the end of his life.

Moses had just finished leading these Israelites for forty years in the wilderness and one by one they had died off. He's had more funerals than any other pastor. And finally he, Joshua and Caleb were the only ones left from the previous generation. He had seen an entire generation waste its life because of their grumbling, their rebellion and their lack of vision. It didn't have anything to do with being lazy. They wasted their lives because of bad attitudes. But what I find interesting in this Psalm is that Moses is not a pessimist over that fact. In verses 13-17 we read a beautiful testimony of faith; faith in what God can do if men and women will only number their days properly. So verse 12 is a plea to God to give His grace to a needy people.

We are all so prone to waste time. When I worked in the nursing home I heard many testimonies of people who wanted to live their lives over again because they had wasted so much of life. One man was an incredibly hard working, productive, efficient, businessman. Yet when he looked back on life he concluded that he had wasted his life. A funeral is a time when people are often filled with regrets. It doesn't need to be that way, and yet it so often is. That is a time when people resolve to do better with their lives. But Moses wants us to learn the lesson of death before we come to the funeral. In verse 14 he says, **"Oh, satisfy us early with Your mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad *all* our days!"** He says, "That's the ideal - not to have any regrets when looking back on life; being able to rejoice and be glad all our days." And for those who had already been through several of

those wasted years in the wilderness, he says in verse 15, “**Make us glad according to the days in which You have afflicted us, and the years in which we have seen evil.**” In other words, he is saying, “Lord, help us make up for lost time; help our lives to at least *count now* for something.” The last verse says, “**And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands.**” Moses wanted God to be in the center of their time and of their efforts. And we need God’s teaching in this area as well. If you want to avoid wasting your life, spend much time learning from God.

II. Acting as though God did not create (and thus own) time (vv. 1,2,4; see Gen. 1:1)

The second mistake that we can make is to act as though God did not create and thus own time. The biblical idea that God created time was a revolutionary concept. Pagan mythology says time has always existed and that God is just as subject to the vicissitudes of time as we are. And yet the Bible declares “**In the beginning God.**” There was a beginning, and God already existed before that beginning. This Psalm starts off by asserting that God existed before time existed. The first phrase of this Psalm deals with God’s control of time: “**LORD, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.** [But its not just time. Verse 2 goes on to describe eternity] **Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.**” This may not seem too profound, but it really is. Since God created time, that means that He is the owner and Lord of time and we are merely stewards of it. We don't own time and it is sinful for us to act as though we did; to use our time any old way that we please as if it belonged to us. God alone is God; He alone is the Lord of time. And thus Ephesians 5:16 tells us that we must redeem the time since the days are evil. In the Old Testament whenever property was redeemed, it was being paid for by a third party so that it could be restored to its rightful owner. Well, God is the owner of time, we are His servant stewards and He is asking us to go out into the marketplace of the world and to redeem time that is now being used for the world, the flesh and the devil and to begin to use it for God.

God claims all of our time. He claims our sleep, our recreation, and our work. God wants time apportioned to witnessing, earning income, relaxing, ministering in the church, nourishing the family, providing conjugal rights and eating. God wants us to buy back or redeem time that has been subject to the lordship of self, the lordship of the spouse or

children, and God says, “There is no other lord over time.” We are to give it all to Him so that whether we eat or drink or whatever we do, we are doing it to God's glory. So before we can even think of redeeming time we need to recognize that God owns it, and then act consistently with that. We need to pray every day, “Lord, how do you want me to handle this time?”

III. Acting as though God does not control time (vv. 1-5,9,10,12)

A third mistake is to act as though God does not continue to control time. There are several Scriptures here that show God's control of time. Verses 1-2 imply God existed before time and is sovereign over time. Verse 4 shows that God is outside of time. And in the following verses Moses goes on to describe how God is the Lord of time controlling every moment of our lives. He gives more time to some and He takes away time from others. Some live 70 years, some 80 some less. He controls our time.

I think sometimes we doubt this. When time gets impossibly short, we think it's impossible for God as well. But if God creates time, then God sustains and controls it just like every other aspect of creation. Have you every asked God for more time to get some project done? I know that I have many times. And there are different ways that God has answered such a request. Usually He does it by changing you and making you more efficient or by changing your circumstances, but there have been times where He changed the structure of time itself. God gave Joshua an extra day of light to be able to win their battle. He caused the sundial to go back for Hezekiah. He also added fifteen years to Hezekiah's life. He is the Lord and controller of time. But whether by miracle or providence, God controls time. Sometimes He takes away time from us by making us sick, or by causing us to miss our plane or get caught in a traffic jam.

But the knowledge that God is in control of your time can be a tremendously liberating concept. When God brought Israel to Canaan to conquer the land He brought them in the fullness of time. Things were ready, but the Israelites didn't trust God's organization of time. They got scared. I used to get all bent out of shape when traffic would make me late to a function. It used to make me extremely nervous. But if God is the one who is taking away your time, it gives you a totally different perspective. That means that there was a reason for your missing the connecting flight last week. It means that God had a reason for letting you get behind in your work with the flu. Knowing that God is sovereign over time will help you not to blow your cool when your time is being wasted by the bozo in front of you who is driving 29 miles per hour instead of 30 miles per hour. When there are circumstances that are beyond your control you need to realize that

God is the one who gives time to you and who takes away time from you and our attitude should be the same as Jobs that whether He gives or takes, we will bless His name. The wilderness generation had to learn that lesson the hard way.

One way of reflecting this in your schedule is by having what I call flextime. It's time that is scheduled for either catch-up or for getting ahead on projects you don't have in your schedule, but that you want to do. That way if God wants to add something new into your schedule that you had not anticipated, you don't have to get stressed out about it. You've got time to catch up. Now I still tend to struggle with this because I don't tend to put much margin in my life, but I try. And the value of flextime is that if God makes you efficient and you get way ahead, then the catch up time can be used to get unscheduled projects done. But having flexibility in your schedule lets' God blue-pencil in your schedule.

IV. **Acting as though time were not on our side (v. 1, 6a, 14-17)**

A fourth mistake that we make when we are harried and flustered is to act as though time is not on our side. I have many times treated time as an enemy. And the bulk of verses 1-11 shows people who see time as their enemy. Now there are hints in those verses that it is not our enemy. Verse 1 hints that God is on our side throughout all time, and verse 6 points out that just because grass withers should not make us forget that it also grows up and prospers. But it is in verses 14-17 where we see time as our friend – Verse 14 says, **“O satisfy us early with Your mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days! Make us glad according to the days in which you have afflicted us...”** Both the days of affliction and the days of gladness are God's loving hand. Verse 17 – **“Let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands.”**

I think the testimony of the whole Psalm is that time is on our side if we are on God's side, but time is not on our side when God is angry with us. Verses 13-17 indicate that when we are right with God He causes every day of our lives to have meaning and He establishes the work of our hands. The overarching principle here is that when God commands you to do something He always gives you enough hours in a day to do it. Time is not an enemy seeking to do you in. Time is on your side. God has sovereignly orchestrated events in such a way that if you are faithful as a steward, you are guaranteed of having enough time to get what *God* wants done, done. You may not have enough time to get everything that *you* want done, or

everything that someone else wants you to do, but you always have enough time to get what *God* wants done accomplished.

Ecclesiastes 3 says, "**To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven**" (v. 1) and he lists out many of those times and purposes. Our problem is that we many times fail to discern what God would have us to do because we are not conversant with the principles of Scripture. Ecclesiastes 3:17 says, "**God shall judge the righteous and the wicked, for there shall be a time there for every purpose and for every work.**" We are going to be judged for how we number our days; for whether or not we make proper use of what he calls here the "**time for every purpose and for every work.**" This principle is extremely challenging; but it's also comforting. When I have planned everything as well as a finite person can do, and I have said, "if the Lord wills I will do such and such" and God changes things around so that I miss the plane that I was supposed to catch in Denver, I can be at tremendous peace knowing that God has a perfect purpose for changing my schedule. Time is on my side. I do not need to fret or fume. A few months ago I shared the story of how my mother missed a flight that later crashed. Even if she had never discovered the purpose for missing that flight, she could be confident that God was in control of her time, and that time was on her side – it was not against her. If God is for us, who can be against us? Not even time can be.

V. Thinking that we can manage our time without taking inventory of our time ("number" v. 12 with vv 1-17; Numb. 13-14)

A fifth mistake that we make is to fail to take inventory of our time. In verse 12 it speaks of numbering our days. Numbering your days is a form of accounting. I have a list of ten good books that can help you to number your days by means of Biblical principles. I'm not going to give you a time management course this morning. I only want to deal with a few basic principles that are hinted at in this Psalm and which you will find illustrated in Numbers 13. Moses' lament in this psalm is the lament that Israel refused to use their time to God's glory, and I believe Numbers 13-14 forms the background to this psalm. So if you would turn there with me I want to look at what it was in Israel's history that made him imply that Israel had not been numbering their days properly. What was it that caused God's wrath?

VI. Failing to think in terms of God's purposes for everything (Numb 13-14)

Well I think the first and most obvious cause of God's anger mentioned in this Psalm was that Israel lived their lives in terms of their own

goals and purposes rather than God's. And this is the sixth mistake we often make – to fail to think in terms of *God's* purposes for everything. This may seem like such a basic principle that it doesn't even deserve mentioning. But the truth of the matter is that we Christians often do not consciously eat and drink and do all to the glory of God. When you went to the movies this past week, my guess is that at least some of you would not be able to answer the question, "Why did you go? What godly purpose did it serve in terms of God's kingdom?" In fact, some of you might be thinking I am rather radical in even suggesting that you should have a purpose for going to the movies. You will need to argue with Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:31. "**Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.**" Now there are good purposes for going to some movies. But we need to consciously be living in terms of those purposes.

In Edward Dayton's book on Time Management he said, "If you don't care where you are going, any road will get you there, and it really doesn't make any difference how much time you take." I think that is a good description of the way many Christians live. They know what they are doing, but they don't know why. They have never allowed God's purpose to be their purpose in their day-by-day lives. They don't have goals.

In Numbers 13:2 God had promised to give Israel the land of Canaan. He had promised that many times before that they would surely inherit it. That was a settled issue and not in dispute. He then commanded the Israelites to spy out the land. The purpose for sending in spies was given in Numbers 13:17-20.

Numbers 13:17 ¶ Then Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said to them, "Go up this way into the South, and go up to the mountains, Numbers 13:18 and see what the land is like: whether the people who dwell in it *are* strong or weak, few or many; Numbers 13:19 whether the land they dwell in *is* good or bad; whether the cities they inhabit *are* like camps or strongholds;

He wanted them to be well informed on the task before them. But what did the majority of spies do? They wanted to ditch the task. Rather than letting God's purpose control their fact-gathering mission, they did the opposite. They gradually allowed the land that they spied to determine their agendas and goals. They were driven by circumstances rather than by a vision of what God wanted them to do. That automatically meant that they were not living by faith. They had gotten the cart before the horse. And we do that many times. We get deflected from God's purposes because we are not driven by purpose - we are driven by events.

For example, many men come home from work with no particular purpose in mind of what they want to do with their family. The T.V. happens

to be on and because the show looks interesting, they quickly adopt a spontaneous goal - to watch T.V. And so they plop down and start channel surfing, and before they know it, they have blown four hours of time. And what is true of that one event is often true of all of our lives. *Events dictate our ever-changing purposes.* James warns us about that. It describes the double-minded man as being unstable in all his ways, like a wave of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed. Faith on the other hand lives by clearly set goals, does not doubt and is thus single minded. If you have never established personal goals for every area of your life, then you have not even started with the *basics* of numbering your days. You can't number your days wisely if you don't know where you are going. Yet few American families can quickly outline their yearly goals for seven or more areas of their life.

I have with me a handout that I made for my Time Management course, and it helps you through the process of making general and specific goals for your spiritual life, your family life, your Christian service, your social life, your intellectual development, your physical development, your occupational goals, your financial goals, and your emotional development. If you want a copy, I can get it for you. Just let me know. But I can guarantee you that if you aim at nothing you will hit it. And what is even worse, if you do not have a purpose that glorifies God, you will by default end up fulfilling a purpose that does not glorify God. The first reason for the wrath in Psalm 90 was that Israel had abandoned the most basic principle of godly time management - they had failed to allow God's purpose to govern their lives. Verse 11 says, "**Who knows the power of Your anger? For Your wrath is as great as the fear that is due You.**" That's an interesting verse because it says that God's anger is proportional to the fear that we owe Him but that we do not pay.

VII. Failing to anticipate obstacles to our goals (Numb 13-14; Prov. 18:13; Luke 14:28-33)

The seventh mistake that we sometimes make is to fail to anticipate possible obstacles to our goals. When Moses sent out the spies, the purpose was to anticipate how to handle obstacles to God's goals. The purpose was not to give up. It was a fact-finding mission. Proverbs 18:13 says, "**What a shame - yes, how stupid! - to decide before knowing the facts!**" It is not spiritual to fail to plan. Turn with me to Luke 14:28-33. This is a passage that shows the importance of trying to anticipate possible obstacles to our goals and ascertaining how to best achieve our goals.

Luke 14:28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has *enough* to finish it—

Luke 14:29 lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see *it* begin to mock him,

Luke 14:30 saying, “This man began to build and was not able to finish.”

Luke 14:31 Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?

Luke 14:32 Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace.

Luke 14:33 So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.

We must not only have everything in our lives flowing out of godly goals, but we must understand the costs to implementing those goals. That was why God sent the spies into the land. So a seventh principle God was giving them to help them number their days was to evaluate all the possible obstacles to implementing God’s purpose and goals. What are the walls that we need to knock down? That is part of planning. One of Marlin Maddoux’s favorite sayings is “People don’t plan to fail, they just fail to plan.” Israel simply was not numbering its day wisely.

VIII. Failing to establish solutions to those possible obstacles (Numb 14 versus Josh 2-6)

Now the second generation did. They not only took seriously point VII, but also point VIII. They sent spies, they determined what obstacles were in the way, and they sought to find solutions to those obstacles. And that is the eighth mistake – a failure to brainstorm on what possible solutions might be present to the obstacles that might come up. When there was sin in the camp and they were defeated, they took godly action and corrected the problem. They were solution oriented, not escape oriented, and God used them to conquer the land. When your brain is frozen because of the huge obstacles that come against you, take time out to engage in some brainstorming with creative people. Try to think out of the box and see if there isn’t an opportunity God is opening up to enable you to actually achieve the audacious goal that God has set before you.

IX. Unwillingness to take risks

The ninth mistake that we frequently make is to be unwilling to take risks. I’ve had people tell me that they are not risk takers when they pass up incredible opportunities. What they don’t realize is that they have just traded a short-term risk for a long-term risk, but because it is way off in the future, they don’t worry about it. But good planners will calculate risks, and try to minimize the risk through planning, and that is what the previous point was

all about. But we can never eliminate all risk. Only God is totally without risk because He knows all things, owns all things, and has all power. But no human creature knows everything, so any decision has a degree of risk about it. But we cannot do away with all risk. That is what the ten spies tried to do. They tried to have a perfect world of no risk. What they didn't realize was that they risked being set aside by God when they didn't go into the land. They traded one risk for an even worse risk. Instead, Joshua and Caleb said in verse 30, **"Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it."** Why? Because they didn't have a grasshopper theology that was driven by circumstances. They realized that if God is for us, who can be against us? They were willing to take risks with men because they knew the greater risks of displeasing God. It's impossible to avoid all risk. It's just that some risks are not immediately threatening. We need to try to keep all the potential risks in mind and pick the ones that best glorify God. And when it comes to time management, one risk is losing a huge portion of our life's allotted time through waste. Robert Lee likened the use of time to a bank account. He said,

If you had a bank that credited your account each morning with \$86,400, that carried no balance from day to day, allowed you to keep no cash in your account and finally every evening cancelled whatever part of the amount you had failed to use during the day, what would you do? Draw out every cent - of course!

Well, you have such a bank and its name is "Time." Every morning it credits you with 86,400 seconds. Every night it rules off - as lost - whatever of this you have failed to invest to good purpose. It carries no balances. It allows no balances. It allows no overdrafts. Each day the bank named "Time" opens a new account with you. Each night it burns the records of the day. If you fail to use the day's deposits the loss is yours.

It ought to grieve us when we fail to use our time to God's glory as surely as burning money would grieve us. Jonathan Edwards made as part of his daily resolutions, "Resolved, to live with all my might while I do live. Resolved, to never lose one moment of time, to improve it the most profitable way I can."

X. Failing to see the benefits of time management (v. 12,13-17)

When we do that, the dividends are high. This is the last common mistake – to fail to see the benefits of time management. There are enormous benefits to numbering our days aright, and verses 14-17 list some

of those benefits. The last phrase of Psalm 90:12 says, “**that we may gain a heart of wisdom.**” God really doesn’t need our work anyway, does He? He could do everything that has been accomplished by godly saints of the last 6000 years in the snap of a finger. The reason He allows us the privilege of work, play, rest, challenges, risk, etc. is for our benefit. The more we manage our time, work, play or do whatever God wants us to do at any given moment, the more we grow in wisdom, grow in grace, in our knowledge of God and love for Him. It’s a developmental thing. God is developing saints for all of eternity through the things we are going through right now. And time management pays dividends into our lives.

Let’s read verses 13-17 again, and as I read these verses notice the satisfaction of life that is described in contrast to the wasted lives of those who died in the wilderness. “**Return O LORD! How long? And have compassion on Your servants. Oh, satisfy us early with Your mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days! Make us glad according to the days in which You have afflicted us, and the years in which we have seen evil. Let Your work appear to Your servants, and Your glory to their children. And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands for us; yes establish the work of our hands.**” Those verses talk about growing in fellowship with God, satisfaction with life, rejoicing all our days (that includes the bad hair days!), experiencing God coming through in our lives. You know, when you shoot for impossible goals and see God come through like he did with Joshua and Caleb, it just increases your faith and confidence in God.

I don’t know about you, but I want 2010 to be a year of labor, and rest and worship that has counted for eternity, that is made beautiful by the Lord, and that is established by the Lord. I want to be able to rejoice in God’s provision and to find satisfaction in living. If yours has not been such a year, then take this Psalm to heart and ask God to make every moment of 2010 to be of eternal significance. Amen.

Conclusion

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Introduction

Is relaxing wasting time? Give some reasons why or why not?

What is the error of thinking only of efficiency in work when trying to not "waste time."

Ten common mistakes:

I. Thinking that we don't need to learn time management ("so teach us" with vv. 1-17)

What must we do if we are to have the blessing of verse 17 in our lives?

For each picture note the mess we would have without time management?



II. Acting as though God did not create (and thus own) time (vv. 1,2,4; see Gen. 1:1)

What are some ways that we tend to deny God's ownership of time?



III. Acting as though God does not control time (vv. 1-5,9,10,12)

What are some ways that we tend to doubt God's control of our time?

IV. Acting as though time were not on our side (v. 1, 6a,14-17)

What was the lesson from Grandma Kayser's "wasted time" when she missed her flight?

V. Thinking that we can manage our time without taking inventory of our time ("number" v. 12 with vv 1-17; Numb. 13-14)

What would your day look like if you took inventory of its minutes?



VI. Failing to think in terms of God's purposes for everything (Numb 13-14)

For how many areas of life have you listed measurable, concrete, God-glorifying goals?

VII.....Failing to anticipate obstacles to our goals (Numb 13-14; Prov. 18:13; Luke 14:28-33)

Why is proverbial "preventative medicine" better than "remedial medicine." Do you anticipate obstacles to goals?

VIII...Failing to establish solutions to those possible obstacles (Numb 14 versus Josh 2-6)

Are you a problem solver when obstacles to goals come up, or do you tend to give up?

IX. Unwillingness to take risks (Numb 13-14)

What did pastor mean when he said that we all take risks, but that frequently we choose a long-term risk instead of an immediate risk? Why is maturity related to long term vision? What is present-orientation?

X. Failing to see the benefits of time management (v. 12,13-17)

What are some benefits that you can already see you would have if you numbered your days better?

Conclusion