

Tools for Wise Leadership

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

Series 13: Leadership Stewardship

Talk 11: Stewardship of budgeting Time

Welcome to the programme Tools for Wise Leadership.

We have been focusing on the issue of stewardship in Christian leaders. Having explored various areas of stewardship we then, in the last programme, focussed on stewardship of time or what is normally called time management. If the purpose stewardship is to add value to what has been entrusted to us, the question we were considering is whether we are adding value to the time God has given us. That must be the reason Paul said. “Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.”

Last time we discussed the Steven Covey concept of time management which tries to assess whether our time is being spent in the most effective way. We saw that our activities can be divided into 4 time quadrants. Quadrant A consists of activities that are IMPORTANT and URGENT like rushing an injured child to hospital. Quadrant B consists of all the activities you may do which are NOT IMPORTANT but which are URGENT like answering a call where the caller is just engaging you in small talk and is just sharing some funny jokes with you. Quadrant C consists of things that are IMPORTANT but NOT URGENT. Bible reading, prayer and spending time with people, particularly members of your family is in this category. Quadrant D consists of things that are NOT IMPORTANT and NOT URGENT. As we saw last time activities in this quadrant include gossiping, social media like Facebook and some TV programmes.

So here is an important leadership question: Where is your time going? For most of us in Christian leadership, we find most of our time going to things that are urgent, and we get caught up in the cult of busyness. What we so often do not realize is that when we neglect things in quadrant C that are IMPORTANT but NOT URGENT, we help to pile up activities in quadrant A that are both important and urgent.

A biblical example might illuminate this. Eli was a godly leader. However he neglected his family because he was so busy doing God's work. His two sons Hophni and Phineas developed into rogue guys who brought disgrace to the family and to God. Dealing with the disaster that Hophni and Phineas caused became an IMPORTANT and URGENT matter. This could have been prevented if Eli had spent time grooming these boys.

The principle here is that we need to deliberately, consciously make time for things that are important before they become urgent. Spending quality time with God is important. Do not postpone it until spiritual depression builds up into an urgent issue. Spending quality time with your spouses and children is important. Do not neglect it until a threat of divorce or the rebellion of children creates important and urgent situations. Rest and recreation are important. Do not neglect these things until your health suffers and creates the need for urgent attention. Start working on your assignments now. Do not wait until the deadline is so close that the assignments now become urgent. Service your car while it is still running well. Do not wait until a roadside breakdown becomes important and urgent.

Jesus said: Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. We can equally say how we spend our time is a good indication of where our priorities are.

We need to emphasize two principles:

Firstly, budget your time to reflect your convictions and values

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Secondly seize the time to reflect your time budget

So firstly, budget your time to reflect your convictions and values. Time is always short. We cannot extend the day to more than 24 hrs, nor the year to more than 12 months. Our lives will also come to an end, maybe sooner than we expect. The older we grow the faster time seems to go. As one poem says:

"When as a child I laughed and wept, Time crept
When as a youth I dreamt and talked, Time walked
When I became a full grown man, Time ran
When older still I daily grew, Time flew;
Soon shall I find in travelling on, time gone;
And face eternity begun, Time done.

When time is short and you do not budget it, the result will be chaos.

When time is done and we look back what will we find? Possibly that we have been very busy, but have accomplished little or nothing of significance. We may find we were like a person walking against the direction of a moving escalator. We are busy but we are not covering any distance.

So we need to budget our time to ensure that our priorities and values are reflected in what we actually spend time doing. Now budgeting time is similar to budgeting money. We must always give God the number one priority in our budget. It's like budgeting money for God before any other thing.

Second, after time for God, comes other fixed commitments. This is the have to time which must not be compromised. These fixed commitments must include times for the most significant others, like family members. You will not be able to take things to heaven. But you will take people and present them to God. Fixed commitments must also include time for the work to which God has called you. I dare also say that fixed commitments must include time for rest and restoration so that we do not burn out.

Third on our time budget are the discretionary activities. These are the "want to's" – things you want to do after satisfying the things you have to do.

After doing the time budget we then secondly have to seize the time to reflect your time budget. Gordon McDonald in his book "Ordering your private world" gives laws of unseized time. For example unseized time flows towards my weaknesses. You might find that you are spending 80% of your time doing what you are not good at, thereby depriving what you are good at of quality time.

Then he says unseized time comes under the influence of dominant people in my world. Instead of fulfilling your agenda you find that other people are always forcing their agendas on you.

Next, unseized time surrenders to the demands of all emergencies. You come under the tyranny of the urgent. You are busy but not productive. Dawson Trotman said, "Activity is no substitute for production, and production is no substitute for reproduction":

So seize time for the Lord of the work like Mary who sat at the feet of Jesus and did not bow down to pressure from Martha. Spending time with Lord is an expression of worship. He is worthy of the time for worship and intercession. You also become more like the people you spend most of your time with. So spending time with God will make us more godly. Moses spent time with God with the result that the glory of the Lord shone on his face. On the other hand Aaron spent most time listening to the voices of people with the result that he made the golden calf for people to worship. We spend too much time listening to people (TV, friends, etc.) instead of listening to God. Not surprising that world is able to squeeze us into its mould!

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Then let us seize time for our families. If activities are so many as to squeeze out time for the family, then they are too many. Not giving time to mould our children means that other influences are playing havoc with our children. We should then not be surprised if our children turn weird and wild. That is what the priest Eli discovered. His two sons Phineas and Hophni turned weird and wild because he had not time for them as they were growing up.

Then seize time for the work of the Lord. Jesus was a good example of seizing time for God's work. In Jn 4:34 he said, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work." He also said: Work while it is still day, for night comes when no man will be able to work.

Seize time for rest and restoration. We are experiencing a tired generation which knows no rest! And yet God said the Sabbath rest is a necessity!

Let me conclude by saying: your time belongs to God. Be committed to being a good steward of it for his glory. Budget that time to reflect you convictions and values. Then seize the time for God's glory.

Until we meet in the next programme, please practice these Tools for Wise Leadership.

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