

# Investing Time

August 6, 2006

Special Speaker: Josh Kelley

## INVESTING OUR TALENTS

Today's sermon is the second in a two-part series. Last week, we talked about the two tests we take before we enter heaven:

1. The Entrance Exam: What did you do with God's Son?
2. The Performance Review: What did you do with God's stuff?

Everything is God's stuff, it all belongs to Him. And every believer's life will be evaluated, to see what we did with what we were given.

If any man builds on this foundation [of Christ] using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day [of judgment] will bring it to light....

- Our reward in heaven is affected by how we do on this review.

If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

*1 Corinthians 3:12-15 NIV*

God has loaned us our time, talents, and treasure, and we are responsible for how we use them. Last week we focused on talents. The good news is that this is not a competition to see who accomplished the most, and we don't compare ourselves to others. God will examine how we did with the talents we were given.

- God is more pleased by the rate of return than the net.

God invested in us by giving us our talents and He wants to get a good return on that investment. I gave four investment tips:

1. Acknowledge and appreciate our talents: God has given everyone talents He wants to use.
2. Develop them: An undeveloped talent is a buried talent.
3. Take risks: Fear of not measuring up or of failure prevents us from using our talents. God prefers that we try and fail than never try.
4. Spend wisely: If we only spend our talents on ourselves, we will be out of balance. Like our Father, we should serve others.

I closed by asking where we find the time to develop our talents and spend them on others. Today, we are going to talk about how to invest the time God has given us.

## DEATH CLOCK

Remember “The Death Clock”? It describes itself as “The internet’s friendly reminder that life is slipping away...second by second.” You enter your information and it tells you your life expectancy. What makes it particularly morbid is that it gives you a specific day of death and a countdown clock, in seconds.

If you are interested, be warned that this is NOT a Christian website, and it links to some inappropriate material, but if you want to track your life, the website is [www.deathclock.com](http://www.deathclock.com). This website teaches us a profound theological truth. It is vital that we not just know and understand this truth, but that we fully integrate it into our daily perspective:

- You’re gonna die. Or as Psalms says:

Teach us to realize the brevity of life, so that we may grow in wisdom. *Psalm 90:12 NLT*

How is it that knowing life is short makes us wiser? Because wisdom in the Bible is not knowing facts and figures. Wisdom is the ability to make wise choices.

- If we know how precious time is and how short life is, we are far more likely to make wise choices in spending our time.

## THE GOOD INVESTMENTS

As with talents, our time does not belong to us. It’s on loan from God and we will have to give an account for how we used it. Like our talents, our time is best spent on things that will outlast this life: God and others. We all agree on the sort of things we should spend our time on:

- Worshiping God.
- Being with our family and friends.
- Serving other.
- Growing personally.

These things are the gold, silver, and costly stone Paul discusses. But then there are all the things we do instead:

- Surf the web.
- Our hobbies.
- Check our e-mail.
- Watch TV.

These are the wood, hay, and straw. Here’s a simple exercise to remind us how productive TV is: Force yourself to continue watching it after you’ve turned it off. If we ask ourselves which items are the most important, we would say the things on the first list. But if we ask which things take priority, too often it is the things on the second list.

These things aren’t bad. They become a problem when they displace things of greater value. When they do, it tells us that our priorities have shifted.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. *Luke 12:34 NIV*

This is equally true of time: Where your time is spent, there your heart will also be. So long as we’re living this world with limited time, we’ll have to make choices about how we will spend our time, the choice isn’t necessarily between good and bad, it’s between gold and straw.

- God’s plan is for these limits will teach us to choose the things of highest value.

Because we have limited time, we have to learn to use our time well. Some people are exceptionally gifted at this, they are well-organized and disciplined. It's their talent. It is certainly not my talent. I really have no business preaching this sermon, which has made it very hard for me to write it, which made it easier to avoid working on it.

- I spent my time checking my e-mail, surfing the web, and scaring our cleaning team.

But because this is not my strength, I have had to work very hard at getting organized, so I can use my time well. I have read books, gone to seminars, and I try to imitate Cheryl Neff.

- I like to go into her office and move papers around just a little and see how long she can handle things out of place.

## **STRESS METER**

In my quest to get organized, I've learned several important lessons which I want to pass on to you.

First, disorganization is infectious. When I get disorganized in one area of my life, the rest of my life also goes out of control. My desk is a great stress meter. There are three different stages:

- Busy, but happy
- Starting to get out of control
- Put me out of my misery

This is also true of my car, my bills, or my garage. Every thing is connected, and the more disorganized any one of them gets, the more disorganized the rest of them get. When that happens:

- I feel out of control.
- I waste my time on irrelevant tasks and video games.
- My self-esteem deteriorates.
- All of my relationships suffer.

That's the bad news. The good news is that it works in reverse: When I get any one area of my life under control, it becomes exponentially easier to get the other areas under control.

But for me, the single biggest step toward investing my time well is getting organized and managing my calendar, because when I have taken control of my calendar, I have taken control of my life.

## **ABC'S OF MANAGING YOUR TIME**

### **A - ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY**

I have to take responsibility for my choices. I am not a slave or victim of my calendar. I created it, I chose everything on it. I was recently complaining to Marilyn about not being able to carve out time for quiet time. She said "Funny, you're able to carve out time for the Xbox."

Until you take responsibility for your choices, you will never be able to change. Think of it this way: When we say, "I would do 'x' if I had more time," what we are in fact saying is, "Everything I am currently doing is more important than 'x.'"

## **B - BUDGET TIME**

We understand that money must be budgeted to be spent effectively. But it is even more important to budget time, because it is more precious than money. We like to say that time is money, but that's not true. Lost money can be regained, lost time cannot.

Budgeting is based on two principles: 1) When it's gone, it's gone, and 2) I want tell my time where to go, rather than it telling me where it just went.

- The key to budgeting is understanding the difference between fixed expenses and flexible expenses.

*Fixed expenses* are things I must do. These are things like spending time with God, being with your family, and earning a living. If I can live a healthy life without it, it's not a fixed expense. Like paying the mortgage, if these expenses aren't paid, there will be consequences, but it may take a while to notice.

- It may be easier to neglect your family than an urgent deadline, but the consequences are far more severe.

*Flexible expenses* are things I'd like to do. These are the things like hobbies, watching TV, or playing video games. There's nothing innately wrong with these things, in fact they can help us relax or connect with friends. Bruce encourages this by muting the TV during commercials and saying, "Visit!"

- How do we determine which time expenses are fixed and which are flexible?

## **C - CLARIFY YOUR PRIORITIES**

In order for us to invest our time well, we must set our personal priorities. These are guided by Jesus' words:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself." *Matthew 22:37-39 NIV*

From there, we must each set our priorities based on the Holy Spirit's guidance and our circumstances.

- Q Have you ever thought out your priorities?
- Q Have you ever written out your priorities?

I have five priorities: God, family, ministry, friends, and personal wellbeing. These five things are my life in a nutshell. Once you know your priorities, you can determine your fixed expense. Then you budget time accordingly. Fix these things into you calendar and protect them from being bumped.

- Only then can you allow flexible expenses fill up the gaps.

By budgeting your time, you ensure your true priorities come first, and then you will be able to invest your time into things that matter. That is a good investment of God's time.