



Topic: Priorities – So Much to Do, So Little Time

Bible: Psalm 90:12; Ephesians 5:15-17; James 4:14

We live in a generation that demands instant gratification, yet spend hours and hours on things that don't really matter.

This can leave us with little to no time to focus on what's import and the stuff that actually need to get done.

Learning time management isn't only helpful with this, it's Biblical!

Use this lesson to help students get their “priorities” right.

- Nick Diliberto, Creator of Ministry to Youth

Opening Game: How Much Is Too Much?

Divide students into teams. For a small crowd, have the whole team vote to choose an answer. For a larger crowd, have them select one person to represent their team by giving the answers. Ask the following trivia questions about how the average person spends their time. The answers are in bold.

1. How much time per month does the average American spend social networking?

1. 2 hours
2. 1.7 hours
3. 9.3 hours
4. **6.9 hours**

2. How much time per month does the average American spend watching television offline (meaning on an actual television, not on Hulu or Netflix)?

1. 12.5 hours
2. **59.4 hours**
3. 17.3 hours
4. 23.9 hours

3. The peak time for watching television online is:

1. On a lunch break
2. Right before bed
3. **During the workday**
4. Right after work

4. According to a report by NBC News, if you added up the minutes spent on social media in July of 2012 in the United States, how many years would they add up to?

1. **230,060 years**
2. 9,612 years
3. 143,462 years
4. 64,586 years

5. How much time does the average American spend on Netflix per month?

1. 14.2 hours
2. **10 hours**
3. 7.6 hours
4. 13.7 hours

Teach

There's no arguing that we live in a day where everyone desires instant gratification.

If we have to wait too long in a drive thru, we get mad. We get impatient while waiting on our food to come out of the microwave, because when you're craving popcorn, three minutes seems like an excessively long time. Any amount of waiting time at a doctor's office or a restaurant seems unbearable.

At the same time, one could say that this generation wastes more time than ever before. That doesn't make sense, does it? In fact, it seems like an oxymoron. If having to wait more than 90 seconds for a cheeseburger and milkshake is something that upsets us, surely we must hate wasting time.

Yet, as we learned a few minutes ago, the average America spends 94.2 hours per month on social networks, phone, email, and watching television. Think about that—that's almost **four days a month wasted on things that probably have no significant importance.**

So we act like we hate wasting time, yet we gladly give away four (maybe even more!) of our 30 days a month. With that in mind, I think it's safe to say that we could all benefit from learning to manage our time better.

High school is the best time to learn good time management, and the beginning of a new school year is the perfect time to learn something new. If you want to actually graduate with grades above D's this year, you're going to *have* to learn time management. If you learn good time management now, it will be easier to manage your time when you go off to college. If you can do that, it will be easier to manage your time when you graduate college and get thrown back into the real world. And if you think time management is essential in high school, just wait until adult life hits you.

As with any issue, the first thing we should do is see if the Bible has anything to say about it.

Read Psalm 90:12:

"Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."

What does it mean to number your days? Let's think about it. While we may not know the exact number of days we have to live, we do know that we don't have forever to live on this earth. So keeping that in mind—that we have a small number of days that make up our life—how do you feel about the way you spend

your days? Are you a planner, who takes care of the important things before moving on to do the fun things? Are you a procrastinator, who pushes everything of importance to the last possible minute? Or do you even think about how you spend your time, just letting whatever happens happen? And most importantly: Where does God fit into any of that?

Read Ephesians 5:15-17:

“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.”

Have you ever had a test that you just didn’t study for? You knew it was happening, you knew when it was, you knew what you needed to study for it...and you just didn’t? Maybe you didn’t because life got in the way of studying, or maybe because your priorities weren’t exactly how they should be. Either way, when this happens, there’s a common prayer that happens: “God, give me wisdom for this test!”

Did you ever think that maybe God already gave you wisdom for the test? You know, that test that you knew about. The one where you knew what to study, but just didn’t, even though you had the time and resources. Wisdom would have been using the time God gave to you and the brain God gave to you and studying!

This verse says to be careful to live as wise. How does that relate to time management? More than you might think. Look at it this way: how you spend your hours adds up to how you spend your days. How you spend your days adds up to how you spend your life. So if you’re spending your days wasting time and avoiding what you need to do, that is essentially how you are spending your life. And that, my friend, is not wise.

This verse also urges us to “make the most of every opportunity...do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.” Do you know the best way to understand what the Lord’s will is? By spending time with Him! By praying and reading the Bible. The more you are spending time with Him, the easier it will be to make the most of every opportunity.

Read James 4:14:

“Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.”

Ouch. That one stings a bit. Your whole life—the one you're so concerned about, the one filled with good and bad and happy and sad—it's but a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. In other words, your life is just a little blimp in the grand scheme of time. So why not make the absolute most of it?

There's this idea that to enjoy life, you need to be a free spirit who is spontaneous and goes with the flow, never planning anything. Sure, many people choose to live that way. But the bottom line is this: if you want to make the most out of your life, you can only do that by learning to manage your time.

Whether or not you decide to take charge of your time, it's going to pass you by anyway. Monday-Friday you are going to go to class, get homework, have exams, write papers. The four years of high school are going to happen regardless of if you manage your time. But if you want to make the most of them, and you want to live them the way the Bible says you should, managing your time in a wise way is a must. So how do you do that?

Here are three simple ways to get the most out of your time.

1. Make God your number one priority.

No matter how busy you get, no matter how much you have to do, no matter **what**, spending time with God needs to be your number one priority. If that means you have to get up earlier, then wake up earlier. If that means you have to sacrifice something extra, then so be it. This is one choice you will not regret making.

2. Prioritize the things in your life.

Regardless of how you may feel, high school is a priority right now. That means that for the school year, classes, tests, papers, and projects come before late night movies and weekends spent doing nothing with your friends. One of the best ways to remember your priorities is to get a planner or a calendar and write down when things are due, when you need to study, etc.

3. Hold yourself accountable.

After you know what your schedule should be, pray over it. Ask God to help you achieve all you need to achieve in the time that you need to achieve it. Ask Him to help you manage your time better. Then, find someone who will hold you accountable to this. Maybe that's a leader here, or maybe it's another person who's also trying to manage their time better. Either way, getting a weekly text asking how you're doing with your time can be a great motivator! Another way to hold yourself accountable is to write these verses down—the ones that talk about

how we should spend our days—and put them somewhere you can see them. After all, spending hours on twitter isn't really enjoyable when you're looking at a verse that reminds you of how short your life is.

Closing

You will learn a lot of new things this school year, and I hope that time management is one of those things. It isn't just a good skill to have; it's also a step in the direction of living how God has called us to live. You only live once and you only live for a short time. There are going to be things you have to do, there are going to be things you want to do, and there are going to be things that God calls you to do. It can seem like a lot and can pile up fast. If you're prepared by having the right mindset—the mindset that knows God has blessed you with this life and you want to make the most of it that you can—this year will be so much better for you.

High School is only four years of your life. If you want to make the most of those four years, learning to manage your time is one of the best places to start. And God is the best one to help you with that. Ask Him to help you this year—He loves you more than anything and wants to see you succeed with the life He has blessed you with.

Small Group Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think it is so easy to waste time?
2. When you're wasting time, do you think you're taking time for granted?
3. What effect does wasting time have on your relationship with God?
4. In the past, is time management something you've taken seriously?
5. Have you ever thought about time management as something that God would want for you?
6. What are some steps you could take this week to help you manage your time?
7. Do you think time is a gift from God? If you do, does that change the way you think about spending your time?
8. Would you say that the way you are managing your time now is bringing honor to God?
9. What is the biggest challenge you face in your personal life when it comes to managing your time?

10. One of the verses compares our life to, “a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.” How does that make you feel when you think about the way you currently choose to spend time?

11. How do you think this school year could be different from previous years if you manage your time?