

Augusta First Baptist Church
Deut 10:12-22
Time: Managing the Unmanageable
Augusta 20, 2006
Series: Answers to Life's Top Pressures

Deut 10:12-22

12 "So now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you? Only to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, 13 and to keep the commandments of the LORD your God and his decrees that I am commanding you today, for your own well-being. 14 Although heaven and the heaven of heavens belong to the LORD your God, the earth with all that is in it, 15 yet the LORD set his heart in love on your ancestors alone and chose you, their descendants after them, out of all the peoples, as it is today. 16 Circumcise, then, the foreskin of your heart, and do not be stubborn any longer. 17 For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, 18 who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. 19 You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. 20 You shall fear the LORD your God; him alone you shall worship; to him you shall hold fast, and by his name you shall swear. 21 He is your praise; he is your God, who has done for you these great and awesome things that your own eyes have seen. 22 Your ancestors went down to Egypt seventy persons; and now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars in heaven."

The Top Ten Answers for Our Top Ten Pressures Sermon series will focus today on *How To Balance Your Schedule*.

Can any of you imagine a world without clocks? Think about it – no alarm clock to startle you awake and no wristwatch to leave you in a panic because you are late... Yet it is because of our clocks, watches and calendars that we find ourselves saying: "I just do not have enough time in the day!" Haven't we all made that statement at one time or another? There never seems to be enough time to get done all we want or need to accomplish. I have heard from members of this church share their frustration in meeting all the commitments and demands on their day and feeling as though they never have time for themselves. The irony for me was that for the last couple of weeks I have had a heavy schedule that included three funerals, all of which encroached upon my study time for this message. And the last time I glanced at my job description, preaching the Sunday message was pretty important.

Not only do we not seem to have enough time in the day, but things do not move as quickly as we would like. Do you have, what some call, "Hurry Sickness?" Do you inch forward beneath a red light, revving the motor and waiting like Richard Petty for the light to go green? Do you microwave your popcorn for 3 minutes and then glare at the timer for it to hurry up or find something to do while those three minutes slowly count down? Are you the type who looks over the five or six checkout lines at the grocery store madly assessing which one is the shortest? Are you the type who commutes to work putting on make-up while drinking coffee or checking your email? Have any of you ever eaten your meals over the kitchen sink?

Hurry Sickness.

Let me clarify something about today's message: it is not about tools for balancing our schedules or time [pile up the *Day Planner*, *palm pilot*, calendar]. So, if you think that I have some snazzy Biblical advice about how to make all our minutes fit into the day, I am sorry, I don't.

In fact, the Bible, it can be argued, is patently unconcerned about time as we know it. In Hebrew there is no general word for "time." In fact the Hebrew verbs do not have any real tenses – no past, present or future. An action is either completed or not. What Henry David Thoreau said of time could well be a Hebrew phrase: "Time is but a river I go a fishing in."

The New Testament is much the same. Some words in Greek that can be used for time:

chronos – which basically means the time on a clock or a calendar. A set period that can be measured. The word ωρα from which we get the word "hour" can also be used this way. "Time" as one member phrased it is quantitative. "*Chronos*" however, is rarely used in the Bible.

kairos – while it can be translated as time, its meaning refers to an occasion or a season more than a measurable unit. Time as such is not so much quantitative as it is qualitative. "*Kairos*" refers to a "God-given" possibility.

All this to say, is that most ancient cultures had no concept of time as we understand it. Time management is a modern problem that we invented! Mechanical clocks were not even around until the 13th century and that was primarily in western society. The minute hand was not invented until the 16th century!

Therefore, this message does not have three, four, or five points of time management. This message is more like what Curly said to his urban cowboy friends in the movie *City Slickers*: "You city slickers get wound up 50 weeks out of the year tying yourself up in knots and you think you can come here for two weeks and get your lives untangled. [he holds up a pinky finger] Only one thing is important...and you have to figure out what it is.

Our tools for time management are not the Bible's concern. But that "one important thing" is eternally important.

As I said the Bible is largely unconcerned about the tools we use to balance schedules and keep time. What the Bible is concerned about is our **value** of time. Everyday we awake with a fresh deposit of 86,400 seconds per day; over 31 million seconds per year. I receive the same as you. Presbyterians get the same as Methodist and so on. We can waste them, spend it playing, working, or sleeping. But what we cannot do is save them. Once they are gone, they are gone.

The people of God were moving towards inheriting the long awaited promise and there would be so much that would distract them: blending cultures and beliefs; lack of care for the marginalized (v. 18 "*justice for the orphan and the widow...19 You shall also love the stranger*); and simply forgetting *who actually held the day for them.*"

Life is like that – there is much competing to get on our calendars, on our schedule. We have our share of distractions. It is like juggling an arm load of balls – some are rubber, some are plastic, some are glass. Sometimes we let all the wrong balls fall and break. In the business world research has shown those organizations that have one to two goals accomplish 1 to 2 goals; 3-5, accomplish 0-1; those that have more than 5 accomplish none. "Who begins too much accomplishes little."

--German proverb

Consider the Time Matrix, a helpful model in understanding how we spend our time:

I. Most Important, Most Urgent

Doing your taxes, deadline driven projects (sermon)

II. Urgent But Not Important (quadrant 3)

Telemarketing call at 7pm; junk mail, characterized by high drama, but low impact. Surely we can all think of meetings that illustrate this. Because they are urgent they feel important, but turn out to be not all that important.

III. Not Urgent and Not Important

People go when they are burned out, end of the day solitaire, web surfing, over-plan to the point of wasting time (training in excess of 3 hours in marathon)

IV. Important But Not Urgent (quadrant 2)

Tends to be highly neglected because it lacks urgency.

What is the one thing that if you did it consistently would transform your life? Prayer, time with family, exercise... The things that will transform your life are important but not urgent.

In balancing your schedule, it is essential that we know what time it is. The Bible breaks this down to the bare essentials:

*12 So now, O Israel, what does the **LORD your God require of you?** Only to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God **with all your heart** and with all your soul, 13 and to keep the commandments*

God doesn't require that we be a success in the world's eyes...God doesn't ask that we should make a lot of money or be popular or make the highest grade in class or get the promotion. We don't have to be mom or dad of the year and our houses don't have to be spotless. *12 So now, O Israel, what does the **LORD your God require of you?** ...Only one thing is important...*

Nine times in Deuteronomy alone the phrase "with all your heart" is used. Israel, you give Yahweh your God all your heart and no matter what encroaches on your schedule, it will find proper balance.

That is why as a church our mission statement is so important:

*To Love the Lord
And Share His Love
With our Community
And World*

The struggle many of us face is that our heart is so often divided, diluted, or confused.

Relate to God with all of your heart and it will transform everything on your calendar. It will change how you relate to your spouse and to your children, it will change how you conduct yourself at work; it will change the kind of student you are; and it will affect every, yes every relationship here on this earth.

If you cannot figure out how God can be a part of something on your schedule, then do you really need it on your schedule in the first place?

In one of the earlier scenes from the movie *Dead Poet Society*, Robin Williams plays the role of a literature teacher in a prestigious boys' school in New England. He gathers his class around and he says to them:

Now I'd like you to step forward over here. They're not that different from you, are they? Same haircuts. Full of hormones, just like you. Invincible, just like you feel. The world is their oyster. They believe they're destined for great things, just like many of you, their eyes are full of hope, just like you. Did they wait until it was too late to make from their lives even one iota of what they were capable? Because, you see gentlemen, these boys are now fertilizing daffodils. But if you listen real close, you can hear them whisper their legacy to you. Go on, lean in. Listen, you hear it? --- Carpe --- hear it? ---

Carpe, carpe diem, seize the day boys, make your lives extraordinary.

How do you approach life? With a sense of mediocrity or joy? Life is filled with opportunities and possibilities. The reality is we have all been given the same 84,600 seconds per day to spend. And one day God will call us up for an accounting. How will we have done with the most important investment of all – our life?

The other evening around the supper table, the question was asked of me if I wanted to be cremated. This conversation reminded me of a story I read about customized caskets to meet our personal taste. There are caskets designed for the NASCAR fan called "The Race is Over." You can order a casket with the colors of your favorite college or university, complete with an embroidered mascot. For the golf fans there is one called "Fairway to Heaven," or for the more conservative you can purchase a casket called "Angels," with a design depicting the familiar Raphael's cherubs on a marble-like background. My favorite? Well, that would have to be the one that is designed to look like it is wrapped in paper and stamped "Return to Sender." Who said caskets have to be grave? I want one that says: "I told you I was sick."

It really doesn't matter what our container is when we are dead. What is important is how we use our container when we are alive. It is amazing the efforts we all go to planning for our ultimate demise. Wills, insurance policies, estate planning, last wishes and customized caskets are just some of the things

we do. Some of us will admonish our children on what we want and do not want for our funeral services. Truth is our life will be judged not on the final container we are planted in, but how we use the one God gave us.

Paul the apostle writes: ***“See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!”*** (2 Corinthians 6:2). It reminds us that we are to be about “seizing the day.” This is not a matter of pursuing the next grand event. It is not simply about living life in a magnanimous and noble way. For most of us, I suspect seizing the day is more about blooming where we are planted and doing ordinary things in extraordinary ways.

Henry David Thoreau is best known for his book Walden. It was in the opening pages that he made the observation that most men live their lives in quiet desperation. The greatness of his book is not with elegant story telling, or high drama filled with one adventure after another. Walden is all about observations of everyday things. He spends an entire chapter writing about the sounds the frozen lake makes. He wrote several pages about building a fire – from collecting the lighted knots to splitting the wood. Greatness for Thoreau was not in the grand but the everyday.

How can I say this without sounding melodramatic? It is not meant for every one of us to embrace a destiny of greatness – at least as the world so defines greatness as popularity, fame and influence. Each of us, however, has been given one solitary life to live. We cannot live in the shadows of someone else’s, nor can we hope for a better life somewhere in a future not promised. No, we are ultimately responsible for our own life. To seize the day is to find meaning in what we do. Whether we push a broom, nurse a baby, represent the law, administer medicine, preach sermons, or answer phones, seize the day – it is God’s holy gift to you. Seize the day and make it significant by living within the moment.