

Called to Use Time Well

What it means to steward time

by Leisa Anslinger



Finding Time, Making Time, Giving Time

We all know that if something is really important to us, we will find the time for it. Whether it's going to a child's sporting event, or a quiet dinner with a loved one, an investment of our time says someone or something is of value to us. Perhaps that is why the idea of stewardship of time hits such a nerve with people. We can almost hear our thoughts ticking... "So if it's important, I'll find time for it, which means if I don't give my time it's like saying that this does not matter...but the needs of others do matter, it's just really hard to find the time!" And so

and to connect our use of time with our life of faith.

But it's my time! What does this have to do with anyone else? If stewardship is about caring for and using the gifts we have been given, then being a good steward of time calls us to recognize that every minute, hour and day we live is a gift, to be used or squandered. While none of us wants to think we squander any of what God has given us, most of us have time we do not steward well.

Time is used in many ways.

We can categorize the ways we use our time: time for self and time for others, or time for work and time for play, or time for what we want to do and time for what we have to do. There is more to it than that, however. As we have already begun to explore, our use of time signifies value and priority: what is important is allotted time; what we don't value as much does not receive time. We say, "I can make time for this," or "I can't find time for that." It is also about attention. When we give time to something, we are being attentive to that person or activity. If all of our time is going toward ourselves or our immediate family, without concern for the needs of others, or if we spend every free moment in front of the television, computer or at our favorite activity, we are attending to

something, and not to another. We may spend so much time with others we neglect the need for self-care, for family, or for the need for a deeper life of prayer or for service. Jesus asks us to do for others as we do for ourselves. This calls us to balance and use our time well.

The challenge: The way we use our time is an expression of our love for God. This requires us to prioritize, and to assign time according to who and what matters most.

Let's get practical. First, we need to think about the ways in which we already use our time. Then we can consider what is most important, who needs our time, and how we can give it. We can develop a plan that takes all of this into account, and we are likely to find satisfaction in knowing we are using our time more wisely. We will consider these practical aspects on the reverse of this sheet.

Let's be spiritual. Putting it simply, our time is not our own. We do not know how many days or years we will live, and have responsibility to use the time we are given well. That's the essence of stewardship of time.

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it is. I often hear people say that it is easier for them to write a check than to actually give time themselves, even though giving money never seems easy. So, it is worth some time to think about this aspect of our lives,



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"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. ...By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (Jn 13:34a-35)



Practical Ways to Steward Time Well

Use your time well, on purpose

Being a good steward of time begins by deciding what is important, planning and living accordingly.

Plan your time: For a week, chart how you use your time. Be honest, brutal even! How much time is used well? How much time are you needlessly wasting? If how you use time is a reflection of what is important, what does your current use of time say about that? What should change? What needs time that is currently not part of your daily or weekly life? How will you plan time in the future to reflect your priorities?

Make time for prayer: Our time with God is the most important time we spend each day. Sunday Mass, reading the Bible, offering our needs and the needs of others in prayer, and listening to the inmost thoughts of our hearts with God is time we simply must "make" if we are to grow as people of faith.

Spend time in work: No matter our age or stage in life, being productive is important to our well-being and how we

contribute to others. If you have lost your job, seeking employment is, of course, your work! If you have a job, fulfill your responsibilities well. If you are retired, find good use of some of your time at your parish or in a local organization that needs your talents and skills as you are able.

Give time to others: Spend quality time with family; invest time in good and holy friendships.

Offer time in service: Plan your time so that every week or month includes outward service to others. No exceptions! When you are convinced you have no time, look at your chart -- and eliminate something that you do mindlessly or out of habit rather than consciously, intentionally and for the sake of someone who truly needs your attention, care, and service. Do not use "lack of time" as an excuse for not doing something that makes you uncomfortable or draws you out of yourself for the sake of another.

Take time for yourself: All of this is not to say you should not take time for yourself. Pray; exercise; rest; feed your body, soul, and spirit; participate in some healthy and appropriate leisure activity occasionally.



"In a busy society like ours, time is one of the most precious possessions we have. How we spend our time is perhaps the clearest indication of our progress in a life of Christian discipleship." (SDR, 66)



After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord -- and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet." (Jn 13:12-14)

How Are You Already a Good Steward of Time?

What does your chart tell you about the ways in which you are a good steward of time? We will always have ways to grow as disciples and stewards. How are you already a good steward of time? What areas of your life need attention in order to steward your time better in the coming year? Use this space to record your thoughts and your commitment for the future: