

“Rocks For Your Life”

Psalm 31:1-5

www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=psalm+31:1-5

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October 11, 2009

Are you living by what is most important in your life?

There was a man who had so much work to do at the office; he began to bring work home each night. He would walk into his home with a full briefcase. After dinner he was buried in his office until after the children were in bed. One night, his young second grade son, perturbed by this state of affairs, asked his mother as he was going to bed, “Why does Daddy bring work home every night so that he can’t be with us?” His mother explained that it was because his father was behind in his work at the office. The little boy replied, “Why don’t they put him in a slower group?”

Hecticity! We all know this problem! We eat fast food in the car between too many and too closely scheduled appointments. Too little sleep is common. We have too much to do in any one day with the resulting feelings of guilt and shame. The Internet is driving most companies to become 24/7 organizations with the result that family life, church life, individual life begins to diminish to nothing. Technology has created more work, not less. With cell phones, beepers, and Palm held devices that download email, we are constantly accessible to anybody from anywhere. Hecticity! We cry out with frustration: “My time is not my own!”

Of course, you are right. Your time is not your own. Time is a gift from God! You are only a steward of God’s gift of time. You might think that time is yours to do with as you please. You might think that you have all the time in the world. But, time is one of God’s greatest gifts. Time is more important than money. We fantasize about winning a million dollars in the lottery. But, God gives us something vastly more valuable than mere money. God gives you today!

“This is the day the Lord has made,” the Psalmist says, “let us rejoice and be glad in it!”

Time is that gift that is yours only for today. You have no guarantee about tomorrow. And yesterday is gone. Jesus came proclaiming that God’s time was now fulfilled. **(Mark 1:15)** www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=mark+1:15 The Greek word describing this God filled time is *kairos*. It is divinely ordained and divinely filled time. Jesus says that time is now filled with God’s presence. Time is no longer just something to be endured or survived. Time is a gracious present of God’s presence in your life. You are God’s blessed steward. You have an opportunity to work for and with God to transform our world. Each day you live God gives you something far more important than money---God gives you time.

The question emerges when we realize that time is a blessed and significant gift. How can I best value God’s gift? How can I fully live in “God awareness” each moment of each day? Billy Graham observed “Every morning we have 86,400 seconds before us to spend and to invest. Each day the bank named “Time” opens a new account. It allows no balances, no overdrafts. If we fail to use the day’s deposits, the loss is ours.” (“Time,” Decision, January, 1985) You are God’s steward of God’s gift of time, how will you best value it each day. What can you do each day to maximize God’s gift of time in your life.

Let me suggest that you consider a metaphor. A high school science teacher wanted to demonstrate a concept to his students. He takes a large mouth jar and places several large rocks in it. He then asks the class, “Is it full?” Unanimously, the class replies, “yes.” The teacher then takes a bucket of gravel and pours it into the jar. The small rocks settle into the spaces between the big rocks. He then asks the class, “Is it full?” Most students again say: “yes”.

The teacher then produces a can of sand and pours it into the jar. The sand fills up the spaces between the gravel. For the third time he asks, “Is it full?” Now most of the students are wary of answering, but again, many reply, “Yes.” Next the teacher takes a pitcher of water and pours it into the jar. The water saturates the sand.

At this point, the teacher asks the class. "What is the point of this demonstration?" One student responds, "No matter how full one's schedule is in life, he can always squeeze in more things."

"No", replies the teacher. "The point is that unless you first place the big rocks in the jar, you are never going to get them in."

The same is true in our lives. The big rocks represent the important things in our lives...God, family, friends, personal growth. If we fill our lives with small things...as demonstrated by the gravel, sand and water we will never have time or space for the important things.

God helps us to keep our priorities in the proper order.

Big Rocks indicate God's value system in your life.

What does Jesus tell us are the "Big Rocks" of life? A wealthy attorney came to Jesus with that very question. "What is the most important law in all of God's laws?" he asked. Jesus responded with the "Big Rocks" answer. *'You shall 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 a second is like it: *'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'* On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. **(Matthew 22:37-40)** (www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=matthew+22:37-40) The three big rocks that fit into the jar of your life are summarized in this critically important saying of Jesus. Do you want to live a blessed life? Put these three rocks in first each day.

1. Worship God daily.

To love and honor God is to worship God daily. Worship on Sunday with this community of friends is only the icing on the spiritual cake each week. Let your day be filled with an awareness of God. Remember that you need to connect with God each day to better know how you will spend the time you are given. A beginning point is the devotional prepared each week and given to you in the Herald or by way of e-mail. I have an appointment each morning with God. Last week I was tempted to give up my time with God to do something else. Then I remembered, I would not give up time with someone else who had an appointment. Isn't my appointment time with the owner of all time the most important meeting of the day? Because we cannot see God, because we get wrapped up in the urgent but not important aspects of the day, we do not pay attention to the most important "Rock" of all, our time spent with God. Decide right now when and where you are going to meet with God next week. Daily you will spend time with God. You will worship God on a regular basis and keep God's Sabbath time for being with God. If you get this rock in the jar of your life first, you will find everything else will go much more smoothly.

2. The second "Big Rock" is your positive grace filled relationships with your neighbors.

Here we must follow Jesus' lead and point out that all God's children qualify as neighbors. However, in the real time truth of living the most important people we meet each day are our family members. In the hecticness of life it is our wives, husbands, and children who are most left out. They are the neighbors we most overlook and forget. We hurry about from here to there and we take for granted the people God most expects us to love and cherish. Carl Jung, the famous Swiss psychiatrist once remarked; "Hurry is not of the Devil; it is the Devil." We need to place great importance upon the quantity and the quality of our family and friend relationships! Children need time with their parents not doing anything but goofing off. Spouses need to spend time with each other just being together. Families are not to be a breeding ground for growing human doings. Rather, we are called to help each other grow into better human beings. You need to decide today to place your family and friends in the second most important spot in your time stewardship this week. Take each of your children or grandchildren on a date. Take your spouse out on a date. Turn off the television and take a walk. This is one of God's big rocks! In the eternal scope of life how you spend your time with your family, friends, neighbors, and strangers is one key element that God will question you about.

3. **Jesus urges you to love yourself.**

Most of us can find more wrong with ourselves than we can with anyone else. The “What if’s... If only’s... I wish I had’s... of the past still haunt us with guilt and shame. Our present physical condition can always be improved. We complain about not being smart enough, pretty enough, strong enough, fast enough, or slow enough. In fact, if I am not careful, this sermon can more easily trigger self-hatred than motivate us to get our life priorities in line with God. Let me be clear then, that one of the “Big Rocks” God wants you to include each day as God’s steward of God’s time is time for you to grow in love for yourself. Spiritual growth, emotional growth, physical health can only happen when you provide time to reflect, to share with a trusted friend, to exercise, in other words to care for yourself. Again, I quote Carl Jung who everyday wrote into his appointment book time for himself. Once a patient who had been turned down for an emergency appointment that very afternoon saw Dr. Jung walking alone by the side of the lake. He later complained that Dr. Jung was wasting time when he could have helped him. Dr. Jung replied that without his time alone with himself he could help no one. You need to plan this week an appointment with yourself. Pray for strength to turn off the negative tapes in your head and allow God’s love to spread all through your mind. Let go of yesterday—Jesus has already forgiven it. Forget about tomorrow—you have no assurance it will come. Celebrate today and let the “Big Rock” of love and care for yourself become a daily habit.

Little Rocks come only after the big rocks!

Once the “Big Rocks” are in place in your life it is time to consider the little rocks. Your job is gravel in the eternal scope of life. Stephen Covey, one of the business gurus of time management says that he has spent lots of time with many senior executives at the end of their careers. He says that he has yet to talk with any of them who say they wish they had spent more time at the office. They do have regrets about the lost years with their children and the multiple failed marriages. They do have regrets about wasted opportunities to help make the world a better place. A job, a career, a vocation is important, but it is on the second level of God’s time chart. As a steward of God’s gift of time, you need to keep your job in an eternal perspective.

Some people are blessed to have a job that is also a God given vocation. I remember my father’s comment about being an insurance salesman. He saw his work as providing support and financial help in times when families most needed it. When a death occurred he made sure the insurance check was personally delivered in a timely fashion. His job was his vocation. But, the trap in this case is that such a job can become your life. Then you forget no matter how important the calling it is still “Little Rocks.”

Some people who have a job just to have money to live find it easier to say no to the multiple demands of the job. However, some people who have a money making job lose themselves in too much overtime making so much money that they never live to enjoy.

No matter what your job circumstance, it is only “Little Rocks.” You can be the President or the janitor of the company and your job is still only “Little Rocks.”

Sand can fill in the cracks between the rocks!

There is so much that fills up a day. Shopping, community activities, cleaning, washing and ironing clothes, keeping up with the checkbook, hobbies of all kinds, and so much more. It is nothing but sand in the jar of life. In the eternal perspective it is of little or no consequence. It has to be done, but it must not be the consumer of your time. Let me suggest that as God’s steward your attitude toward the sand of your life is more important than the actual doing of the job. Brother Lawrence from the 15th century gives us a timely lesson about the sand of our lives. He was a cook in a monastery who wrote the book, “The Practice of the Presence of God.” Joyfully do the menial work of your life, he encourages. Joyfully clean the dishes as if Jesus would be eating on them next. Joyfully clean your house as if Jesus was coming to visit. Joyfully clean the clothes as if Jesus was going to wear them. After all, Brother Lawrence would say, Jesus promised that when you loved the “least of these” among us you are loving Him. Let your attitude this week be one of God’s stewards with the sand of life. After all, sand is used to polish diamonds and to start the growth of pearls. The sand time of your life can be minimized and enjoyed with a Christ filled attitude.

Water can fill up the jar!

The last items in the jar of life for a steward of God are the things that fill up life. If they are placed first in your life, then you can put little else in the jar. When water is placed last it adds some interest, but does not flood out the most important things. What is water? Let me suggest: television watching, sports of any and all kinds, movies, entertainment, and others things that bring little or no value to life. Let me give an example. The current parent peer pressure is making sure your children are involved in organized soccer, football, cheerleading, etc. Sunday morning is fast becoming practice time. God last and soccer first on Sunday is the reality. The parental argument follows the questionable logic of peer pressure. After all, she made the travel team! He will be among the elite of the children's soccer world. Maybe, she or he might make it to the Olympics one day. "Hello!!" Is anybody really thinking? I urge you to take God's perspective. When you stand before the Almighty God and God asks you what priorities you chose for raising your children are you really going to say that soccer practice on Sunday morning was more important than worship? Are you ready to say, "but all the other parents were doing it"? The time your child has to learn of Christ's loving presence in their life is minimal. It's so important that you know what is Rock and what is water in life and teach this distinction to your children by word and by deed.

You are God's care taker of Time today!

As a steward of God's time are you willing to place water before the "Rock" of God? I urge you to identify how you are living with water rather than the Big Rocks. You are hurried because you do not have the Big Rocks in your life jar first. You are feeling unblessed because you are out of touch with God's priorities. Let Jesus teach you. He said the *kairos* of God is now here. God's divine presence is in the world. The Holy Spirit is present with you each moment of each day. God wants to bless you and your family, but cannot as long as your life is filled with sand and water and not based upon the solid rocks of God's Kingdom. I urge you to begin right now living as God's faithful steward of God's precious gift of time.