

Using Time Wisely

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“P

rove it.”

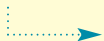
Tim was tired of the pressure he was getting from his managers about the long hours his employees were working. Times were tough, and the only way for his company to stay ahead was for his people to push harder, work longer and produce more than the firm down the street. That it forced them to make sacrifices at home wasn't his problem. They could always find another job if they didn't want to make those choices.

He'd never lied to anyone. He told them when he hired them that they would have to work as hard and as often as he did if they wanted to stay employed. And he did lead by example.

Lately, though, the management team was challenging his assertion that working harder was good business. Their argument, that there's a law of diminishing returns that applies to labor, didn't hold water as far as he's concerned. So he issued a challenge to them. Prove it.

Not anecdotes. Not “chicken-soup feel-good stories” but solid evidence he could sink his teeth into.

If you're his management team, where do you start?



Scripture Passage

Proverbs 31:10-31

Study

Anyone in the workplace understands what the world means by time management: how to squeeze more results into our day. Most of us have tried one regimen or another, with about the same degree of success we've had with our diets.

Time management can also mean getting the things with the highest priority done with the time we have available, thereby getting the greatest value out of our time. But deciding on priorities can be a mind-numbing process.

Rather than trying to develop another time management technique, this study will focus on some of the *goals* of a time management regimen.

Start the study by describing the major activities in your life. Complete the chart on

the following page. By the last heading (beneficiary), we mean the person or group who reaps the primary benefit of the time you spend in that activity.

If you were to select adjectives to describe the woman from the chart above, what would they be?

Now look at your own list. If you were to select adjectives to describe yourself from the chart, what would they be?

What about others? If they used your list to describe you, what would they say?

Where in Proverbs 31 do we find an explanation for this woman's excellence, and what is it?

What does this suggest for your own life?

"...fears the Lord." What does that mean here?

How do Jesus' words in Matthew 6:33 intersect with the list of the Proverbs 31 woman, and with yours?

How does the *purpose* behind time management influence the *activity* of time management? What reasons do you have for desiring a better use of your time?

What would you do with time freed up by better utilization? What one thing should you add to (or subtract from) your life this week that makes your use of time more honoring to God?

Common Sense and Eternal Principles

- No two people have the same sets of priorities. Our priorities must be established by God's assignments in the various seasons of our lives.
- One effective way of measuring how we're spending our time is to examine who is benefiting. The more often the beneficiary is ourselves, the greater the likelihood our priorities are askew.
- God wants to be the author of our priorities, and therefore our schedule.
- God sometimes calls us out of our default priorities to confront special assignments.
- While God only seeks a percentage of our income for His tithe, He wants all of our time. Everything we do has a purpose in His service ... or not. The difference depends on how willing we are to be surrendered to His use.