

I've always been struck by the section in the historic examination for those seeking full-connection where candidates are encouraged *to be diligent, to never be unemployed or triflingly employed, and to never trifle away time*. Far from being a mere nod to the protestant work ethic; Wesley is inviting us to be faithful stewards – to not treat time as if it were insignificant or unimportant. This shouldn't surprise us considering that for centuries Christians have pursued methods, disciplines, and practices that would help us order the hours of the day, and the days and months of the year in a way that glorifies the one about whom it is said, "...with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day." (2 Peter 3:8b)

Here at the beginning of a New Year many are considering how they will use time. Some will resolve to reduce their screen time, others will increase the time invested in health and exercise, and many will seek to devote less time to the office and more time to family and friends. Leadership in ministry, is in part, about how we steward time. Who among us has not experienced the frustration of being pulled from one "urgent" matter to the next only to find yourself exhausted by week's end and feeling that little Kingdom work has been accomplished. Now, of course, ministry is often about how we manage the interruptions and disruptions of our well-planned schedules and when those "interruptions" and "disruptions" take the form of funerals, pastoral care, and holy conversations they are among some of our most sacred work. But, my experience has been that when I have manage time more faithfully, the so-called "interruptions" seem less disruptive and find their place more easily into the rhythm of the day and week.

Most leadership experts suggest that it requires 80% of our time, each week, to manage-well what we are already committed to doing. In other words, if we faithfully lead the ministries entrusted to our care in a way that maintains the status quo we will have invested 80% of our time to that end. If approximately 10% of our weekly leadership time is given to ministry beyond our primary setting, for example, district, conference or community activities, we have 10% of our time to invest in intentional, strategic leadership that will help build future momentum. This means that, *if we steward our time well*, on average, we have only 4-5 hours per week to lead in a way that, by the grace of God, makes real change and progress happen.

As servants who have been entrusted with the authority to lead God's people it might be helpful to think about how God is inviting us to steward the time we are given. Here at the beginning of a New Year perhaps we can pause and prayerfully consider...

- Is my ministry grounded in and flowing from time with God in order that I might invest well in others?
- What can I invest in, over a period of time, that no one else can do in quite the same way?
- What are 4-6 strategic things I can do over the next 4-6 months that will uniquely contribute to strengthening the ministry and mission of the place I serve? *These should find their way on your weekly calendar. This is the 10% that will enable you to lead to the next level strategically and intentionally.*
- Am I making the most of the 10%
- What am I willing and able to say no to in order to create sacred space for prayerful, intentional, strategic, leadership?

- Is there someone I can invite to graciously hold me accountable for a different way of stewarding or managing time?

Fruitfulness in ministry is, of course, the work of the Spirit. And yet, how we lead matters. The gospel invites our very best and God is honored when we use the gift of time well. When we don't use it well our leadership becomes like a bottle-neck limiting the flow of energy and creativity. And yet, a small change in how we order our time can have a significant impact on our leadership capacity and more importantly on the health of our souls. My prayer for us in this New Year is that the Spirit would perfect in each of us a more faithful stewardship of time so that from the rising of the sun to its setting the Lord will be praised. (Psalm 113.3)

Peace and blessings for a fruitful and faithful New Year!

*David*