

Managing your minutes

WHAT WOULD YOU do if someone gave you 36.8 million dollars? That's not likely to happen, but God has given you 1,440 minutes to spend every day—36.8 million minutes over 70 years.

Sir Walter Scott said, "Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time, for that's the stuff life is made of."

Some analysts argue that the currency Americans value most today is time, not money. Customers are willing to pay more for greater convenience, considering time more important than cash. This explains the increasing

number of convenience foods like pre-cooked macaroni and cheese (who has time to boil water anymore?), the continuing growth of the fast-food industry (despite widespread concern about high-fat diets), and why Americans stay away from church events they perceive as a waste of time.

Here's the bottom line on time management: We find time for: (1) what we really want to do, (2) what we simply have to do, and (3) what we believe in most deeply.

The guy who loves fishing doesn't mind leaving for the lake at 4:00 a.m. A loving grandmother gladly fits her grandkids into her schedule. The teenager who loves sports doesn't have to be forced to play basketball every day. The man who complains, "I don't have time to go to church," but watches TV 15 hours a week, is being less than honest with himself. We find time for what we really want to do. Activities like these are "self-motivators."

We also find time for things we simply have to do. We could call these "must-motivators." When you have bills to pay, you go to work and earn a paycheck even when you don't feel like it. When you're in school, you must do your homework even when the class isn't your favorite. In December, 1936, track star Jessie Owens went to Havana to run in a race promoters called the "Christmas Dash"—a 100-yard dash

against a racehorse named Julio McCaw. Known then as the world's fastest man, Owens earned \$2,000 for participating in this spectacle. He won the race and set a new world's record of 9.9 seconds, faster than his own previous record. When someone asked why he was willing to race a horse for \$2,000, Owens replied, "I had four gold medals, but you can't eat four gold medals." He did it because he believed he had to.

But the strongest motivators of all are "mission motivators." It's easy to see why someone would want to be

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an ice-cream taste-tester or a bat-boy for a major league baseball team. But why do people spend large amounts of time on difficult and demanding pursuits? Why climb mountains and run marathons? Why endure months of intense military training or grueling years of medical school? Why do family members spend long days and nights at the bedsides of the sick? Why do Christians volunteer to serve on difficult mission fields? They invest time in these activities because they believe deeply in the value of the pursuit.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus asked, "Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?" Christians shouldn't waste time; nor should we invest it only in things we "must" do or even just what we "want" to do. Followers of Christ ought to be mission motivated, investing our time in the kingdom of God. Then we will no longer need to worry about tomorrow, for the eternal God holds our time and our tomorrows in his hands (Matthew 6:25-34).

And that's true no matter how many of our 36.8 million minutes we have left. ■



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