

Making the most of our time

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There's no end of advice on making the most of your time:

- Have a clear goal.
- Make a plan.
- Don't start your day with email.
- Eat right and exercise.
- Spend time on your priorities.
- Learn to say no and mean it.
- Get a good night's sleep.
- Let go of any worries that won't matter in five years anyway.
- Use things and love people, not the other way around.

I've tried all of these things and more, and even though I can't do any of them as well or as consistently as I would like, working at such practices has made me more productive and happier as a pastor, writer, blogger, and household diva. I get a lot done in a day, and I love the people I do it with.

But is this what it means to make the most of my time? It sounds good as far as it goes, yet when Martin Luther wrote, "I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer," I don't imagine that he meant to squeeze another three hours of work and relationships into the hours that remained. Instead, prayer alone with God was an essential part of his day.

That's why Jesus rose early in the morning to pray, why he taught his disciples to pray "give us *this day* our daily bread," why he urged them to take some time apart from the crowds. It's why he prayed before eating and after Lazarus died, in the garden before his arrest and on the cross as he breathed his last. In oppressive circumstances and in the face of great need, prayer remained an essential and daily part of Jesus' life and ministry.

As I seek to make the most of my time, I also need prayer. Ephesians 5 puts it this way: we are to "make the most of the time" by

- Understanding the will of the Lord
- Being filled with the Spirit
- Singing to the Lord in worship
- Giving thanks

All these are elements of an active prayer life. How else are we even to begin to understand the will of the Lord or to be filled with the Spirit? How else are we to sing to the Lord and give thanks? It's hard to imagine these apart from prayer.

And so tomorrow, before I even think about my to-do list, I want to make the most of my time by pausing to give thanks for a new day. I want to say a little hallelujah during my morning workout. I want to pray as I read and reflect on Scripture, to take a moment for table grace and silence and allowing the Spirit to fill me. I want to pray for and with other people as part of my ministry.

This is how I imagine making the most of my time: by weaving prayer into the fabric of my day.