

“If only I had more time!” How often have you said that? In a sense, time is a universal leveler, because the powerful and rich have no more of it than do the lowly and poor. Furthermore, neither the rich nor the poor can accumulate time. Once it is gone, it is gone forever. The course of wisdom, then, is to make good use of the time we have. How? Consider four strategies that have helped many people to invest their time wisely.

HOW TO INVEST YOUR TIME WISELY

磨刀不误砍柴工 [---誤---]

mó dāo bù wù kǎnchái gōng

Sharpen axe wont interfere w cutting tree

Strategy 1: Be Organized

Prioritize. “Make sure of the more important things,” the Bible advises. (Philippians 1:10) Prepare a to-do list of things that are important or urgent or both, keeping in mind that what is important—buying food for dinner, for example—may not necessarily be urgent. And what may seem urgent—catching the start of your favorite TV program—may not be important.*

* See “20 Ways to Create More Time,” in the April 2010 issue of *Awake!*

Think ahead. “If an iron tool is dull and one does not sharpen its edge, he will need to exert much effort,” says Ecclesiastes 10:10, adding: “But wisdom helps to achieve success.” The lesson? Sharpen your ax, as it were, by planning ahead so that you can make the most effective use of your time. Set aside or eliminate nonessential tasks, which do little more than consume time and energy. If you find that you have time on your hands because you have caught up on your work, why not move on to a job that is scheduled for later? By thinking ahead, you increase your productivity, like a wise workman who sharpens his ax.

Simplify your life. Learn to say no to things that are unimportant or that do little more than consume time. Too many activities and appointments can add needless stress and can rob you of joy.



Strategy 2: Avoid Time Stealers

Procrastination and indecision. “The one who watches the wind will not sow seed, and the one who looks at the clouds will not reap.” (Ecclesiastes 11:4) The lesson? Procrastination is a thief of both time and productivity. A farmer who waits until conditions are perfect may never sow seed or reap his harvest. Similarly, we could allow life’s uncertainties to make us indecisive. Or we may feel that we have to wait until we have every scrap of relevant information before making a decision. To be sure, important decisions warrant research and deliberation. “The shrewd one ponders each step,” says Proverbs 14:15. But the reality is that many decisions involve some uncertainties.—Ecclesiastes 11:6.

Perfectionism. “The wisdom from above [or from God] is . . . reasonable,” says James 3:17. Of course, high standards are commendable! Sometimes, though, we might set standards so high that we invite disappointment and even failure. A person learning another language, for example, must be prepared to make mistakes, aware that he will learn from these. A perfectionist, however, would likely shudder at the thought of saying something incorrectly—an attitude that would impede his progress. How much better to be mod-

est in our expectations! “Wisdom is with the modest ones,” says Proverbs 11:2. Moreover, the modest and humble do not take themselves too seriously and can usually laugh at themselves.

“YOU DON’T REALLY PAY FOR THINGS WITH MONEY. YOU PAY FOR THEM WITH TIME.”

—*What to Do Between Birth and Death*



SOME REVEALING FACTS

50.2 HOURS

The time that the typical employee in Canada spends in work-related activities each week, based on a sample of 25,000 workers.

242 MINUTES

The time, on average, that people in the United Kingdom four years of age or older spent watching TV each day in 2011.

8 MINUTES

The time that fathers in India spend talking with their children each day. Working mothers there spend about 11 minutes talking with their children; and stay-at-home mothers, no more than 30 minutes.

Strategy 3: Be Balanced and Realistic

Balance work and recreation. “Better is a handful of rest than two handfuls of hard work and chasing after the wind.” (Ecclesiastes 4:6) Workaholics often deprive themselves of the fruitage of their “two handfuls of hard work.” They simply have no time or energy left. The lazy, on the other hand, opt for “two handfuls” of rest and squander precious time. The Bible encourages a balanced view: Work hard *and* enjoy the rewards. Such rejoicing is “the gift of God.”—Ecclesiastes 5:19.



Do not scrimp on sleep. “I will lie down and sleep in peace,” said a Bible writer. (Psalm 4:8) Most adults need about eight hours of sleep a night to gain the full physical, emotional, and cognitive benefits. Concerning the latter, sleep is a sound investment of time because it aids in concentration and consolidates memories, thus fostering learning. Sleep deprivation, however, impedes learning and contributes to accidents, errors, and irritability.

Set realistic goals. “Better to enjoy what the eyes see than to wander after one’s desires.” (Ecclesiastes 6:9) The point? A wise person does not let mere desires take the reins of his life, especially desires that may be unrealistic or impossible to satisfy. Hence, he is not seduced by clever advertising or easy credit. Instead, he learns to be content with what he can actually attain—“what [his] eyes see.”

HOW MUCH OF YOUR TIME IS IT WORTH?

Before you buy something, convert its monetary value into the time it would take you to earn that amount of money, “and then see if it’s still worth it,” suggests author and psychologist Charles Spezzano.

Strategy 4: Be Guided by Good Values

Consider your values. Your values enable you to gauge what is good, important, and worthwhile. If your life were an arrow, your values would aim that arrow. Good values, therefore, help you to set sound priorities in life and to make the very best use of your time hour by hour and day by day. Where can you find such values? Many people look to the Bible, recognizing its superior wisdom.—Proverbs 2:6, 7.

Make love your foremost value. Love “is a perfect bond of union,” says Colossians 3:14. We cannot be truly happy and emotionally secure without love, especially within the family. People who disregard that fact, perhaps giving priority to the pursuit of riches or a career, actually invest in unhappiness. Yes, for good reason the Bible makes love the preeminent value, mentioning it hundreds of times.—1 Corinthians 13:1-3; 1 John 4:8.

Set aside time to address your spiritual need. A man named Geoff had a loving wife, two happy children, good friends, and a rewarding job as a paramedic. Nevertheless, his work often brought him face-to-face with suffering and death.

“Is this how life is supposed to be?” he asked. Then one day he read some Bible literature published by Jehovah’s Witnesses and found satisfying answers.

Geoff explained what he was learning to his wife and children, and they too became interested. That started the family on a spiritual journey that enriched their lives and helped them to invest their time far more wisely. Their study of the Bible also gave them the wonderful hope of everlasting life in a world free of futility and suffering.—Revelation 21:3, 4.

Geoff’s experience calls to mind the words of Jesus Christ, when he said: “Happy are those conscious of their spiritual need.” (Matthew 5:3) Are you willing to set aside a little time to address your spiritual need? To be sure, no other investment will give you the wisdom to make the most, not of just each day, but of your life as a whole. ■

WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU?

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|----------------|-------------------|
| FAMILY ____ | COMMUNITY ____ |
| WORK ____ | SPIRITUALITY ____ |
| EDUCATION ____ | LEISURE ____ |
| FRIENDS ____ | HEALTH ____ |

