Taking Control of Time

Introduction

1. Every man understands the pressure of dealing with what seems to be ever-increasing demands upon his life and time.

2. Many men retreat and withdraw when faced with such pressures. Others find themselves becoming agitated and angry. Such responses occur because real or perceived demands produce stress upon our lives. Stress results in spiritual, emotional and even physical reactions. Unresolved stress produces negative consequences in our lives.

3. Growing in godliness involves learning how to address, overcome and avoid the stresses of life:
   a. Some stresses will always be present in life. We must learn to address these in a way that does not allow them to dominate or destroy us.
   b. Some stresses are like mountains that must be climbed and conquered. We must take action to overcome and defeat them before they overwhelm us!
   c. Some stresses can be totally avoided by properly ordering one’s life.

4. There are numbers of people who are being consumed by stress that could completely be avoided if they learned to manage their lives effectively.

5. In this lesson we will investigate the Biblical principle of “life management”—how we as Christian men can give the Holy Spirit control of our lives so that we are not progressively consumed by chronic stress or quickly annihilated by acute stress.

A. The Biblical Principle of Dominion

1. Have you ever talked with someone who was facing a major crisis point which could have been avoided had they been better “managers” of their lives? Have you ever been this person?

2. Often times, as Christians, we fail to take the appropriate responsibility for certain priorities, decisions and direction in our lives. When we experience a crisis because of this failure, we sometimes become angry with God or “over-spiritualize” the crisis event.
3. Genesis 1:27-28 teaches us a divine principle often called the “Dominion Mandate.” It is a call to human responsibility regarding life and all of God’s creation. Having made man in His image, God gave man specific responsibilities:
   a. “Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth.”
   b. “Subdue the earth.”
   c. “Rule over the created order.”

4. The principle is this: God gave man a certain degree of intelligence, wisdom, authority and power to establish, set and control his environment, his world. In fact, God commanded man to take responsible action in the world He had created. The obvious implication is that responsible action would produce an ordered, healthy and safe environment while irresponsible neglect would produce disorder and potential disaster.

5. This principle has practical application for our lives. There is a sense in which we are to take authority over the different areas of our personal lives, to bring these under God’s authority and His rule. This decisive, responsible action on our part results in an ordered and healthy environment, and an ordered environment is a less stressful environment.

For Discussion
1. Read Matthew 11:28-30. How does this passage relate to the principle of taking personal authority and responsibility for our lives under Christ’s authority and direction?

B. The Need for Dominion over Our Time

1. There are many areas of our personal lives where we must learn to take dominion if we are to avoid and reduce stress. One of the most significant areas involves the management of time. Good “life management” involves proper “time management,” for life consists of time—minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, years.

2. When we have failed to prioritize, budget and control the use of our time, we invite disorder and stress into our lives. Business consultant and management expert, Peter Drucker states, “Time is the scarcest resource and unless it is managed nothing else can be managed.”

3. The Bible clearly teaches us about the importance of managing our time. Moses understood the valuable resource of time and he prayed that God might “teach us to make the most of our time” (Psalm 90:12, NLT), that we would use our days effectively and efficiently, investing in those things which have lasting or eternal value.

4. It is sad to think about how many people live from “crisis to crisis” and how many men never achieve their God-given potential, never leave behind anything of significance or eternal worth from their lives because of their failure to properly manage time. We waste our lives when we waste our time!
5. Becoming a Godly man involves taking dominion over one’s time. In his classic book *Spiritual Leadership*, J. Oswald Sanders quotes these words:

“I think one of the cant phrases of our day is the familiar one by which we express our permanent want of time. We repeat it so often that by the very repetition we have deceived ourselves into believing it.” Sanders adds, “The problem is not that of needing more time, but of making better use of the time we have...Others may have more ability, influence, or money than we, but they have no more time.”

6. Sanders then makes an interesting observation and asks some probing questions:

“After making a generous allowance of eight hours a day for sleep and rest—and few really need more than that—three hours a day for meals and social intercourse, ten hours a day for work and travel on five days, there still remains no fewer than thirty-five hours unaccounted for in each week. What happens to them? How are the extra two days in the week invested? The whole of man’s contribution to the kingdom of God might well turn upon how those crucial hours are employed. They will determine whether his life will be commonplace or extraordinary.”

**For Discussion**

2. Read Psalm 90:12 and Ephesians 5:15-17. What do these passages say to you about the importance of time?

3. What is the greatest obstacle to the effective management of your time?

4. Describe someone you know who manages their time effectively. What do you admire about this person? What qualities or benefits do you see in their lives as a result of their effective use of time?

**C. Taking Control of Our Time**

1. Time management is an expression of our life management and our values. We all have time for the things we value. The way we use our time also determines the expression of these values and the spiritual quality of our lives.

2. In Ephesians 5:15-17 we find the Apostle Paul addressing this topic of time management. From these verses we see that:
   a. God calls us to wise living.
   b. Wise living involves a knowledge of God’s will, His priorities.
c. We are called to invest our time wisely in activities that are consistent with His will and priorities.

3. To accomplish the instructions given to us in these verses, we can use a simple five-step procedure:
   a. Determine God’s priorities for your life consistent with the principles and instructions in His Word. Write these priorities down.
   b. Acknowledge the time resources available to you. Start with the 168 hours per week God has given each of us.
   c. Review the current use of your time. Look closely at the way you presently spend your time. The key is to be ruthlessly honest about the amount of time spent on each activity (talking with your spouse, watching television, at work, in recreation, in procrastination, etc.)
   d. Re-order your time utilization on the basis of God’s priorities. Establish a time budget. Predetermine the disbursement of your time, as much as possible, by a prepared weekly schedule.
   e. Regularly re-evaluate your time usage. Compare the actual with the projected time budget. Sometimes you will need to make adjustments when circumstances change. At other times, you will simply need to remind yourself to “stay with the program” as a point of personal discipline.

4. God has called us to take dominion over certain areas of life. We must learn to take control of our time if we are going to be effective in our walk as Christian men. When we do this we are able to avoid a significant amount of stress in our lives and to bear fruit for the Kingdom of God.

For Discussion

5. What difference would better time management make in your life?

6. What basic priorities has God established in His Word for us as Christian men? What other specific priorities are important for you personally?

7. How can you integrate these priorities more effectively into your daily life?

8. Take time to pray for one another. Pray specifically for God’s priorities to be established and integrated into our lives as Christian men and reflected in our use of time.