



Quality Time

1 Thessalonians 3:12 And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all *men*, even as we *do* toward you:

It would be nice to die and go to heaven, having no regrets as to how we spent our time here on earth. When we get there, we won't have any boxes of personal possessions, no photographs, no video tapes. All we'll have is ourselves - and anyone we can convince to come with us!

Every morning we are written a check for 86,400 units of the most valuable asset we can imagine. There is no bank whereby we can save some and use them later, for once they are used, they are gone forever. Even if we are asleep, we are still spending them. No apologies can bring them back to use them again more wisely, we have to learn the hard way every day. What is it? Time. 86,400 seconds. You can't buy it with money, you can only invest it wisely and then pray that God blesses it.

Every Sunday I see people that I love whose lives aren't as busy as mine. I shake their hands, saying to myself, "I sure wish I had called them this week just to cheer them up!" I might see a young lady struggling and say, "I wish our girls would care enough to call her and just chat. She needs more than a Bible study, she needs love from the sisters."

I see young men who are starving for the attention of women, who are experienced manipulators from the world, and I say, "I wish there was another me to befriend them and disciple them, so that they don't find one our girls and marry them prematurely." The old-fashioned cure-for-all-sores, relationships with women, won't satisfy the need like knowing the will of God and how to fulfill it. Will any young men take time for them?

We have our friends, and we have our ministries. Most of us are getting a little too professional in our Christianity, for we are loving our close friends in circles that are hard to expand, and we are willing to teach Home Bible Studies to the rest. The lost need so much more than Home Bible studies - they need friends to fill that empty gap in their lives. Can we offer them both, or will we offer just one or the other?

When someone comes to the Lord, a vacuum is created in many sections of their lives. They suddenly have no music and no friends. This is not something someone can stand for long without either fulfillment or relapse. We need to care enough to spread ourselves around, and the wisdom to spot who might be needing our attention.

Colossians 4:5 Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

We are exhorted to approach sinners with the truth.

We are to use wisdom in our approach.

Witnessing is considered "redeeming the time."

This person has invested lots of time into nothingness.

If we can save him, we will have captured his loss.

Remember, heaven goes wild when one sinner repents.

I have spent my life (by the will of God) in an encouragement ministry and a strengthening ministry. I'm sure it pleases God to have me edify the saints, but now I want to spend as much face-to-face time with young saints and sinners as possible. I have my computer projects and my papers to write, but I want to spend less quality time with my computer and more quality time with people: my wife, my family, my church and my neighbors. I will still try to be

productive intellectually, but I want to focus on people - investing my treasure of time wisely.

Will it inconvenience my life a little? It sure will. Hell is certainly going to be an inconvenience, that will be an absolute, so I think that the temporal sacrifice that I make cannot be compared to the weight of glory a man or woman shall receive from my little inconvenient investment.

John 13:35 By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

The church is considering a “hospitality ministry” sometime in the near future. I think there is something we all can do that is hospitable and that maybe we are grossly overlooking. I know we are a busy people, but can we just add to our labor of love a few finishing touches?

Encouraging phone calls. It takes almost no time at all, so like prayer it is easy to be neglected. After all, since we can do it anytime, we don't need to rush to do it now! The next thing you know, it's now too late and you blew another day and another chance to call someone.

Plan your week to call and encourage some people you know who don't have many friends and just be a friend! You'd never guess how many happy-looking people would be overjoyed to hear a friendly voice from a caring friend. (Story of Myron inviting me to sit with him)

Having people over for dinner. Take a stab and invite a family to dinner that you don't know by name. In a church this big, its easily possible for a family or for young people to be simply overlooked in our familiarity. I was in the Army and I often wondered, why do some guys get invited over for dinner, but I never do? Thank God a Hillbilly family of simple, SIMPLE stock took an interest in me and made me welcome!

Luke 14:12-14

12 Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor *thy* rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee.

Luke 14:13 But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind:

Luke 14:14 And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

Take a hint from the Lord and love somebody that isn't so pretty or so blessed. The world flocks over those who are pretty and talented, but it takes character to love someone just because they are a child of God. The rewards are not just spiritual, but they are enjoyed while earning them!

Letter writing. You don't need to make Australia Post rich by use of this mode of ministry. (Tell joke about Lawyers kid who wrote letter). Putting things in print is like writing them in concrete - they are lasting. Putting things in print is like writing them in the sky - they are prone to be shared. A discouraging topic should be avoided, confessions should be shared personally, but an encouraging letter of appreciation is like apples of gold in jugs of silver.

I have many personal letters of appreciation that I regret I cannot take with me to heaven, but they shall never perish while I'm alive - I will carry them with me through life to remind me that my life is not wasted. No better gift can I have than to know my life meant something to someone else, and giving others that satisfaction is a simple but overlooked pleasure. (Tell of the teacher who had all the kids write something nice about all the other students).

1 Thessalonians 5:11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

Fellowship. My last, but not least, topic of overlooked ministry opportunities is communication amongst the brethren. Some people zoom out to their cars as soon as church dismisses. That should not be! Church is not supposed to be a “platform ministry” like a movie where people can attend, but they don't affect the ending. Fellowship is ministry.

1 Corinthians 12:7-11

7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another *divers* kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:

11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

Every Christian is important to the body of Christ! We need each other, and the only way we can benefit from each other is if we mingle before and after services and get to know each other! I personally don't believe church is over until the doors are shut and the last couple saints have said their "Good-bye"s. Dismissed, yes, but over? No!

Some people, and these are the ones we should try to reach, leave immediately because they don't feel like they fit in. They might try just standing around for a while, but since people ignore (overlook) them, they feel the pain of rejection as they watch people reach over them to hug each other, but nobody wants to hug them, or shake their hands, or talk to them. To relieve this pain of rejection, they leave quickly so nobody will realize that they are being ignored, adding insult to injury.

Friendship is a two-way street, and if you want to have friends, you must show yourself to be friendly. Let's not require our visitors, new saints, and ugly saints to exercise the Scriptural principles - let us remove the burden from them and make them feel welcome! Whether our rejection of them is imagined or not, to them it is very real and the pain hurts very bad - even in the middle of an Apostolic church.

Romans 14:19 Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.