

How many of you would say, *“I would love to have a little bit more time maybe for myself to rest or do something I enjoy?”* How many would say, *“If I had more time, that would be awesome?”* How many of you would say, *“I would love to have more time to spend with the people that I love?”*

How many would love to have more time to spend with God? In reality, most of us would love to have more time to invest in these important places. But if the truth were to be known, if you actually had more time, if God just said; *“Poof, now there’s 25 hours in a day!”* it is very unlikely that most of us would actually spend our time doing those important things.

The reality is, culture just has a way of overwhelming whatever margin we have. If you just look at the last time you had a day off that you didn’t expect, chances are pretty good that you didn’t spend eight glorious hours in God’s presence. Chances are pretty good what you did is you ran errands, or you caught up on chores, or you got ahead at work, or you caught up on some emails. Chances are there were many things that felt urgent to you that overwhelmed what you say is truly important. It’s just kind of way life is.

Have any of you have ever driven a car whose wheels were out of alignment? The car just naturally pulls to one side, and if you don’t consistently fight it, the pull will take you off-center to the side. In reality, all of us, we are out of alignment by nature to God. By nature, we are sinners and the pull is away from God, toward this culture. In reality, culture pulls us off-center into a margin-less lifestyle.

If you missed the preliminary emails, you may be saying; *“What are you talking about, margin?”* Let me just give you a working definition: **Margin is the amount available beyond what is necessary.** It is the difference between what you have and what you need.

In our scheduling lives, margin would be having more than enough time. It would be having extra time. It would be having time to help someone who is in need without wiggling out that, *“Oh my, I don’t really have time for this, there are so many other things I need to do!”* Margin would be having time to listen to our children and not working in our minds. Margin would be having time to be interrupted and be glad about it, *“I’m so glad I could be here to help you.”* Margin would be having to rest, to relax, to reflect. Margin is having a great amount of time with the people that you love. Not always fighting because we just can’t seem to connect intimately. Margin is having plenty of quality time with God. Margin, for most of us, is the very thing that we do not have.

“Be very careful, then, how you live--not as unwise but as wise,  
<sup>16</sup> making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.  
<sup>17</sup> Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.”

**Ephesians 5:15-17 (NIV)**

Be very careful, because if you are not very careful, you need to understand that there is a pull away from the most important things, to the lesser important things of this world. Fight against the pull of culture, fight against it! The default stance of living is not wisdom, it’s foolishness.

Be careful then how you live, how you plan, what you say yes to, what you say no to; be very, very careful to fight against the pull of this culture. Be very careful how you live, or culture will drag you away from the things that you say matter most into a margin-less and meaningless lifestyle.

For example, if I said to you, *“Hey, can you do such and such next Saturday?”* Chances are, most of you would kind of look at your calendar and say, *“Are we free? Well, if we are free, then we can do it.”* So, you ask, *“Are we free?”* It’s not a bad question, but not the best question. Or, you might say, *“Well, is this right, or is this wrong? Well, since it’s not wrong, it must be right, so we will do it.”* But, a better question to ask when it comes to our scheduling is not is it right, or is it wrong, or is it free? But, a better question to ask would be this, *“Is it wise?”*

**In light of \_\_\_\_\_, is it wise?**

I would encourage you, when you are making decisions about your schedule, to fill in the blank with whatever is important in your life right now. It could be this, *“In light of our future hopes and dreams, is adding this thing wise?”*

- In light of our current family situation, it could be in light of the fact that our marriage is not where God wants it to be, is it wise to take on something else?
- In light of the fact that we have two children in diapers right now, is it wise to do this?
- In light of the fact that we have a 17-year-old, who only has one year left under the care of our home, is it wise to be taken out of the home for this?

“Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow.  
What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.”

**James 4:14 (NIV)**

**So how do we schedule wisely?** I would argue that most of us are scheduling foolishly, rather than wisely. I will give you just one very simple statement, we have said this before and I promise we will say it again; the answer to the question of how do we schedule wisely is this ...

**Say “No” To Many Good Things To Say “Yes” To The Best Things.**

Too many good things quickly become the enemy of the best things.

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world,  
but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test  
and approve what God’s will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

**Romans 12:2 (NIV)**

Change the way you think. Don't think like everyone else. Whenever I'm normal, that means I'm pulled toward the culture of this world, but you see, the closer I am toward God, the more different I am than culture.

The closer I am to the heartbeat of God, the more differently than we live and invest our time than so many other people. You may appear weird to others. But that's okay, because normal is not working! What is normal is ...

- Marriage ... divorce
- Kids ... rebellion
- Relationally ... emptiness
- Scheduling ... overwhelmed, overworked, frenzied, stressed, miserable, busy and yet being empty!

### **Illustration: How's it going? Busy!**

**Busyness does not equal productivity, importance or meaning.** I would argue that so many people are being robbed from a life of meaning, not because they are not committed; but, because they are overcommitted. Just because you could do something, does not mean that you should do something.

Learn to say, "No." If someone asks you to do something that is not going to be the best use of your time, "No!" You may say, "Don't I have to give a reason?" "No!" No is a complete sentence!

### **To what are you currently learning to say "no"?**

### **Illustrations: Technology, Exercise, Church Activities, Men's Small Group**

There are two things that are phenomenally important to your relationship with God, but, as soon as the margin is squeezed out of your life, these two most important ingredients are also squeezed out of your life. As soon as you get rushed or overwhelmed, the two most important things that we should never let go of are often the very first things to go. What are those two things? What Matters That Is Missing?

#### **1. Intimate Time With God.**

Intimate and consistent time realigning daily with God, because by nature our hearts are out of alignment. Daily we realign our hearts with the Word of God, with His truth and with His presence.

"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness,  
and all these things will be given to you as well."

**Matthew 6:33 (NIV)**

Prior to this seminar, I asked you to spend 5 minutes just being in the presence of God. This week, I challenge you to double it, go to 10. Open up God's Word this week daily, first thing, and just take it in. Realign your heart to the things of God and watch as the rest of your day, things are more productive and more in place because you have sought first the Father of all.

### 2. Intentional Times Of Rest.

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.  
29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart,  
and you will find rest for your souls.”

**Matthew 11:28-29 (NIV)**

Come to Him ... those who are overwhelmed, hurting, parents, business owners, financially worried ... and He will give you rest! The very thing that many of us do not have; rest in our souls, if you will come to Him.

Most of us, when we get busy, and when we lose margin, we feel like we cannot afford to take a day of rest. God worked six days and on the seventh day what did he do? He rested! One of the 10 Commandments ... take a day of rest.

Too many of us subconsciously feel that we are too busy or too important to truly take a day of rest. “*You have no idea how important I am! You have no idea! I can't do that!*” What are you saying? God's principles are not true, that is what you are saying. You don't truly believe that to rest will make you more productive and more spiritually healthy; it's a faith issue, it's one of the first things to go.

You think that you don't have time for these important things and the reality is, **you don't have time for the most important things because you are out of alignment with God.** I will not surrender to culture and I am fighting with everything in me to be different, to be weird, because normal is not working. If you don't have margin, you are missing out on the most important things. Realign daily with time with God; rest in your souls. Or, you can just be normal.

### Let's Pray!

God, I ask that the truth of Your Word would penetrate our hearts, that we would truly be very careful then how we live; not as unwise, but as wise, making the most of every opportunity God, because the days are evil and they pull us off track. God, forgive us for taking our hands off the wheel and becoming like the rest of the world, when You want us to be conformed to the image of Your Son, Jesus.

- *I am a follower of Jesus, but I don't have consistent intimate time with God. How clever do you think your spiritual enemy is to have convinced you that that is not the most valuable part of your day?*
- *I am a follower of Jesus but I'm so busy and so often overwhelmed that I find it difficult to rest and then when I do I often feel guilty?*

May we would feel the weight of neglecting that realignment moment with You every day, and may this seminar be the beginning of a consistent discipline that would forever alter our lives. For those who do not rest, I pray that we would truly honor you with a Holy day set aside, free of work, investing in relationships, getting to know you God; that the six would be so much more productive. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### Discussion Questions:

1. Paul encourages us to be wise in how we use our time so that we can make the most of every opportunity. In order to make the most of our limited time, we should ask the question "*In light of \_\_\_\_\_, is it wise?*" before making decisions about your schedule. What would you put in the blank when asking that question? Is it your goals, your family's needs, your marriage, your relationship with God or something else?
2. Paul instructs us in Romans 12:1-8 to follow God's plan for our lives in using the gifts He gave us instead of falling to the patterns of this world. The "normal" pattern of today's society is busyness, meaning that if we are not busy we are not productive. What things in your life are keeping you too busy? How is that busyness affecting all areas of your life?
3. Describe a time when you said "no" to something good that ultimately allowed you to say "yes" to God's best.
4. What are the things in your life that you value most? Does the way you use your time reflect those values? Why or why not?
5. When we are weary from the busyness of life, Jesus encourages us in Matthew 6 and 11 to focus on what matters most—spending intimate time with God and finding rest in Him. How important is your intimate time with God? How does that time impact your daily life? How is the rest you find in Christ different and more satisfying than other kind of rest or comfort?

*Use these prayer tips to guide your time with God ...*

- Confess those areas of your life in prayer that are causing too much busyness. Ask for God's help.
- Ask God in prayer to give you the strength to say no to good things so that you can say yes to His best.

- Commit to God the things you will do immediately that will allow you to create more margin in your schedule.
- Spend intimate time with God in prayer. Pray however you feel led and allow God time to speak to you.
- Share your burdens and concerns to God in prayer and allow Him to comfort you.