

Resonate

BIBLE STUDY

**“THE TIME OF OUR LIVES:
BREAK TIME”**

In the past few weeks we have evaluated our schedules in light of eternity. We have identified time pinchers in order to eliminate them and have also made our priorities more manageable. We have hinted at the priority of the spiritual aspect of life; this week we will delve further into making our “break time” a holy time.

DAY 1

Today's Scripture:
Colossians 4:2

The Word

It is easy to detect what people are devoted to. In my house, books are prevalent. I buy books even though I have not read all the ones on my shelves. I have a friend who is obsessed with sports. He is constantly watching ESPN. His devotion to sports is very evident. My grandparents are addicted to soap operas. There is one they have watched for over thirty years!

All of us are different so what one person may enjoy may not be liked by someone else. Our different personalities, backgrounds, and interests cause us to be devoted to a variety of things. But the Word of God calls all believers to have prayer included in the list of “Things I am devoted to”.

Colossians 4:2

Verse 2: When I think of someone devoted to prayer, I imagine someone on their knee praying five hours straight. That is very discouraging to me. I have a hard time staying focused for five minutes. If you feel the same way, put your mind at ease. We are not going to be studying ways to get your knees in shape so you can pray on them five hours a day. We will look at how to spend time with God in a practical and meaningful way.

First of all, when you are devoted to something, you make time for it. I am devoted to reading, but I cannot sit around all day to read. But I do set aside every day for a time for my books. In order to be devoted to prayer, we need to set aside time each day for it. Schedule your time of prayer. Put it on your calendar and keep it like you would any other meeting.

Secondly, devotion requires focus. Remove any distractions that could interfere with your prayer time. The television needs to be off. Do not answer the phone or e-mail. This is your time alone with God. Get someplace by yourself and ask to not be interrupted.

The third part of devotion is perseverance. You are not going to become a prayer warrior overnight. But each day continue to make time for prayer and to stay focus when praying. You are developing a life-long habit. Just like any habit, it takes time to develop. Press on despite obstacles.

One of the greatest obstacles will be your emotions. Some days you will feel like praying and other days you will not. You need to persevere in prayer no matter how you may feel. Make it a priority just as you do other things in life. For example, we go to work whether we feel like it or not. We sit through a child's four hour dance recital whether we feel like it or not. You just do what you have to do. The same applies to your times of prayer.

Devotion to prayer begins with the determination to pray. It will not just happen. You need to make a plan and then carry out the plan. But it is worth the effort. Prayer will join you with the Creator, Almighty God, King, and Lord of the universe. He is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. He can help you and sustain you. He will surprise you with love and answered prayers. He is absolutely amazing. He is the Answer to your every need. He is willing to talk to you. Be devoted to talking to Him.

Up Close and Personal

Ask the Lord to help you to learn to be devoted to Him.

Schedule your prayer time for every day this week. What time will it be?

Where will you have your prayer time?

How will you remove any distractions so you can remain focused?

Who will you ask to hold you accountable to keeping your prayer time?

DAY
2

Today's Scripture:
Matthew 11:28-30; Psalm 23

The Word

Life can be overwhelming. There are many demands and pressures on us from many different angles. It can be hard to cope with it all. I have a friend who always answers my question of "How are you?" with "Crazy". She always feels stressed by the day to

day tasks of life. In her attempt to keep up, she feels that she is falling more and more behind. I can relate to how she feels.

This “crazy” life is too much for me, it is too much for you. The stressors of life can only be carried with the help of One Person. But you have to accept His offer.

Matthew 11:28

Verse 28: Are you weary? Christ is telling you to come to Him. Are you burdened? The invitation is yours as well. Do you desire rest? Jesus is willing to give it to you. Everything you need is found in Him, but you must come. Yesterday, we learned about being devoted to prayer. Now we understand some of the reasons for prayer. The prayers are not for God. He does not need our prayers; He is sufficient within Himself. Prayer is for us. We need God. Only in Him are we complete.

Matthew 11:29-30

Verse 29-30: The phrase that sticks out to me is “rest for your souls”. All over the world people are searching for this rest. Some spend thousands on vacations, only to return more tired than when they left. Others search for rest in the retirement, only to find life unfulfilling. There are some who read books or visit counselors to seek guidance to the place of rest but they are left with more questions than answers. Even religion is sought for rest but many feel only burdened by rules and regulations. Everyone wants rest for our souls but the promises allude us.

Jesus guarantees this rest. If we come to Him and learn from Him, the rest will discover us. Our souls will be awakened by the gentle and humble Teacher who will lead us into refreshment of our bodies, spirit, and emotions.

Psalms 23:1-4

Verse 1-4: Restoration of the soul is the answer to our every search. We pursue people, activities, beauty enhancers, sports, and so much more in order to find this rest. Some of them give us temporary pleasures but then leave us empty. So the search continues. But God is offering us a rest that will continue. One that will not fade away. Of course this rest is not based upon circumstances for we know the roller coaster of life offers no guarantee of permanent “good times”. So, what is this rest?

Rest is experiential knowledge of who God is and thus knowing our every need is met. It is beyond knowing about the Lord but having experienced the hand of Jesus in our lives. It is facing the struggles of life with Someone. It is seeing Him do a miracle on your behalf. It is being comforted by the Counselor of our souls. It is knowing a joy that surpasses the circumstances of life and propels us to the hope of heaven. It is knowing that He truly works everything out for good on our behalf. Not that every situation will work out the way I want it to, but the way heaven wants it to. I can rest that the One with all Knowledge has a plan, that the Almighty will defend me, that the Bridegroom loves me, that the Savior has helped me, that the Judge has pardoned me, that the Creator made me. That is rest.

What are you burdened with? What is overwhelming your thoughts and emotions? Does life feel “crazy”? Go to Christ. Spend time with Him. He is waiting for you. He is willing to lead you into a life of rest. It is possible for you, for it is based on Christ not on the battles raging in your life. You can have rest on the battlefield.

Psalm 23:5-6

Verse 5-6: Despite what you may be experiencing, heaven is before you. Hold onto the promise of your glorious future. But today, hold onto the Lord. Go to Him. Speak to Him. He will walk with you through your trials, through your joys. Learn from Him. His Word will carry you. And you will experience rest.

Up Close and Personal

Go to Christ in prayer. Allow Him to speak to you as well.

What burdens are you carrying?

How have you searched for rest apart from the Lord?

How do we bring our troubles to Christ?

DAY
3

Today's Scripture:

Colossians 4:3-4; Matthew 26:36-38; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 26

The Word

I still remember the day she rebuked me. I had been working in the office for a few months. I had never had a secretary before so I did not know how to hand things over to anyone else. She finally told me, “I’m here to help you. Let me do things for you.” Slowly but surely I learned how to give her tasks to do. My load was immediately cut in half as she took over all of the office duties that I had been laboring over myself. I felt so free at work. I realized the importance of utilizing the help available.

We cannot carry the demands of life alone. We need one another. Often we are so pressured with things around us because we refuse to allow others to help us, or share

the load, or pray for us. We must be open about our shortcomings so others can help us carry the load.

Colossians 4:3-4

Verse 3-4: Paul, the greatest missionary who ever lived, asked for prayer. He wanted others to help him carry the burden of evangelizing the nations. Paul knew that he could not handle the pressures alone. What do you need help with? Have you asked anyone to help? Is there a person whom you have shared your situation with so they can pray for you?

I am always moved by the vulnerability of Jesus. The Lord of the universe made Himself transparent before His friends. He asked for help. Think on that: the Creator asks the creation for help.

Matthew 26:36-38

Verse 36-38: Jesus wanted others to carry some of His emotional pain. In the hours before His death, the Lord wanted His closest friends to be with Him, to pray with Him. How much more do we need one another! We are not meant to journey in life alone. The pressures in life can be lightened if we would allow others to intervene to help us. But they can only do that if we let them know we need the help.

I remember a friend upon moving lamenting how no one helped her though she had the difficulties of being a single mom. I felt so bad that I had never offered to watch her children or run errands for her or clean her house. But later I recognized the fact that I would have willingly helped in anyway if only I had known her need. We must share with one another.

God has given us one another. We need each other. No one is to go through life alone. The church is the body of Christ. All of us belong to one another.

1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 26

Verse 12-13, 26: Doing life together. That is the church. It is walking side by side through good times and bad, experiencing the journey with one another. You do not have to bear the pressures of life alone. There are people with whom you are connected to in Christ who will come alongside you and ease the load. All you have to do is ask.

Up Close and Personal

Ask the Lord to help you to open up to others and ask for help.

What do you need help with today?

Who can you share your problems with? If there is no one at this time, ask the Lord to help you find another believer with whom you can share life's burdens with.

Is there anyone you know going through a difficult time?

How can you come alongside that person and help?



Today's Scripture:

Colossians 4:5-6; Ephesians 5:29

I was in a department store when I ran into someone I knew. I had not seen this gentleman in a long time so I asked him how things were going. He began to share his struggles about his job and trying to decide whether to move or not. He was debating how the move would affect his children and so on and so forth. A woman I had not seen in over two years came over to say "hello". I had heard she was recently diagnosed with a progressive form of cancer. From everything the doctors had said, the prognosis was not good. As I listened to this man continue to tell about the difficulties of considering the move, I became more and more conscience of how trivial his story seemed when standing next to a woman who was dying.

Problems range from minor to major. When we are in the midst of trials, often we forget that others are suffering as well. I think we can get so wrapped up in our own stories that we miss opportunities to minister to others. That lady listened patiently to the man's story. She showed such kindness. I would have said, "Hey, I'm dying. Your problems are not so bad." But she didn't do that. She was willing to minister to him in spite of her own personal pain.

Colossians 4:5

Verse 5: We are told to be wise in the way we act toward outsiders, namely those outside the body of Christ. Our interactions with others encourage people away or toward the Lord. When we are too focused on ourselves, we will miss valuable opportunities to reach others with the good news of Christ.

If our schedules are too busy, when will we be able to share about the Lord? We will be too busy about our next work project or community activity then the person who needs to hear the salvation message.

I still remember the young girl sitting on the plane. She was a few years older than me, dark hair and dark eyes. I was on college break. I had been on a terrible schedule for the past few weeks due to finals and spending time with friends. I had literally been up all night so I was looking forward to sleeping on the plane. She saw me carrying my Bible and asked, "Are you afraid to fly?"

"No," I smiled, "I just like to read it."

"Why," she asked.

"Because I want to learn more about Jesus." The stewardess came around at this point for a final check before take-off. The girl looked up at the stewardess so I took the opportunity to lay my head against the wall. I fell asleep in less than a minute. I did not wake up until the end of the flight. As soon as I opened my eyes, the first thing I saw was my Bible. I recalled my earlier conversation and looked at the girl beside me. I smiled but I realized the opportunity was gone. We taxied into the airport. I tried to make small talk in order to lead back into our previous discussion but it was too late.

As she walked off she turned to look at me and said with a smile, "Enjoy reading your Bible." I was so ashamed. I was not wise in my opportunity. My busy schedule led me to desire sleep over being a witness. I will never forget that sinking feeling as I looked back down at my Bible.

Colossians 4:6

Verse 6: Our conversations need to reflect the Lord. In order for this to happen, we need to know the Lord. We learned earlier this week about prayer which is an important daily activity. In conjunction with prayer we need to add Bible study. It is from the Word of God that we grow wise.

The Word of God teaches us the ways of the Lord for it was written for us to learn about God. He wants us to know Him. Jesus wants to tell you about Himself. The way to come to know more about Him is to read the letter He wrote expressing Himself to you. The Letter is found in the 66 books of the Bible. What you learn from the Word, you can share with others.

In your time with the Lord, include reading the Bible. Each day expect to learn something else about the Author. Ask Him to reveal more of Himself to you. When opportunities come, share what you learn. Then your conversations will know how to answer everyone.

I want to get to the point in life where I say the right words in every situation. I have stuck my foot in my mouth on multiple occasions. But I keep learning so that I will be able to speak beneficial words to everyone.

Ephesians 5:29

Verse 11: I want to speak words in a way that is beneficial to others. By learning the Word of God, my conversational words are transformed. I speak with grace instead of

anger, irritation, or criticism. My words are seasoned with “salt” so it is easily taken in by others. It leaves people wanting more of a conversation with me than wanting to avoid me next time I walk into the room. By knowing the Word, I can speak the Word to others thus making the most of every opportunity that comes my way.

Up Close and Personal

Confess any opportunities you missed to share Christ. Ask the Lord to be wise in future interactions with others.

How does your busy schedule sometimes prohibit your sharing the good news?

What changes do you feel that you need to make?

Earlier this week, we set aside a prayer time. If possible, schedule your Bible reading during this same time. Write down when this will be.

What book of the Bible will you begin to read? How many verses will you attempt to read each day?

DAY 5

Today's Scripture: Colossians 4:7-18

The Word

My great aunt died yesterday. I did not know her well, she lived far away and I had only seen her a few times in my life. I was her nephew's child. She did not have to keep in contact with me but she did. I received a card from her every birthday as well as every Christmas. She would write and tell me a little bit about life in Minnesota. I was amazed at her perseverance because I rarely wrote back. Yet, she continued. She even wrote to my niece, her great-great niece, for over fifteen years although she had never met her. My great aunt was an amazing communicator through her letters, an art form lost in this high-paced, high-tech age.

I sat and reflected yesterday about the gift this woman gave me. She taught me the power of keeping in touch. A woman that I had not seen in years, kept me close to her heart despite the distance. I want to learn how to do the same. Today, stopping to make a phone call does not seem like such an inconvenience. Making lunch plans for tomorrow outweighs the work that is pressing in on me. E-mails are more in depth and personal instead of just a sentence or two. My great aunt had a gift of keeping in contact. It is vital for life.

Colossians 4:7-18

Verse 7-18: Paul kept in touch with others. He knew the power of contact. He wanted others to be encouraged by him and he wanted to be encouraged by others. The priority of relationships in his life is evident by all the names listed above. These men were friends of Paul; he allowed his life to intermingle with theirs. He was on a world-wide mission to spread the gospel of Christ, but he knew that his mission was worthless without others.

I do not know what you may be living for, but I know that at my great aunt funerals they will not talk about her work or hobbies or anything else that we think is so important each day. Instead, they will share about her as a wife, as a mother, as a sister, as an aunt, as a great aunt, as a friend. In the end, relationships are all that matter. I have heard it said that at the end of your life you do not wish you had spent more time at the office; instead all you long for is more time with the people in your life.

Let us look at life from the end to now. If you were to die tomorrow, what would you do today? Who would you shower with love? Who would you apologize to? Who would you call? Our schedules, so crammed with meaningless things, needs to be freed up for the people that make life worth living. God created us for relationships. We cannot neglect them. We never know how long we will be on earth to enjoy them. Death shows up unannounced. But since we know that all of our lives on earth will one day end, we can live with the end in mind and make the most of our relationships now.

I want to tell you about the greatest relationship of all: the one with Jesus Christ. He captured my heart over two decades ago. I have had my ups and downs in life. Yet, like my great-aunt, He continued to pursue me even when I did not have much contact with Him. His letters tell me about His love for me. He proved that love dramatically one time by dying on the cross for my sins. He took my place. Can you believe how much someone like me is loved? And to prove His power, He rose from the dead. He makes that resurrection power available to me, because He loves me. He wants to offer that same relationship to you. All you have to do is believe in what He did out of His love for you.

Up Close and Personal

Spend time alone with the Lover and Savior of your soul.

What relationships in your life need to be revived or renewed?

How do you need to improve these relationships?

When did your relationship with Jesus begin?

How do you invest in your relationship with your Lover and Savior?