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## Important vs. Urgent

Time. We all have the same amount, 24 hours each day.

All of us face more options and demands than we can handle. When you ask someone how they are doing, you frequently receive a one-word response: busy.

Faced with this, for years there have been principles and seminars on time management. Today you can try any one of a huge host of apps to help you track and manage your time.

That brings us to the issue of the important versus the urgent. There is an old saying that there are “two kinds of problems, the urgent and the important. The urgent are not important, and the important are never urgent.”

Sometimes, even often, the church contributes to, encourages busyness. Paul’s instruction to Timothy, “to be diligent”, or “work hard”, has been misunderstood at times to mean “keep busy!”

Let’s look at two Biblical examples that show us the priority of the important over the urgent.

The first is the familiar account found in Luke chapter 10.

“Now as they were traveling along, He [Jesus] entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. And she had a sister called Mary, who was also seated at the Lord’s feet, and was listening to His word. But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, ‘Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do the serving by myself? Then tell her to help me.’ But the Lord answered and said to her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; but only one thing is necessary; for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.’”

Martha’s motives were good. She wanted to serve Jesus, and do her best for him. So she threw herself into the urgent of getting all the details done. Notice that Luke tells us she “was distracted with all her preparations.” She was distracted from the one thing that was necessary, the important thing of spending time with Jesus, learning from Him, honoring Him. Also notice that Jesus told



Martha that Mary chose the “good part, which shall not be taken away from her.” He would not, nothing no matter how urgent should derail us from the good, the important thing of spending time with Him.

We’ve been there with Martha. There have been times when the urgent things score a knock out punch to important things. In a busy day we can choose to put off time with God in His word and prayer. We can choose to attend to the urgent and forgo time with family, friends, even strangers who cross our path.

A second example is Jesus Himself. Mark chapter 1 records Jesus ministering to huge crowds, healing many. Then Mark tells us, “in the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and prayed there for a time.” Luke chapter 5 records “But the news about [Jesus] was spreading even farther, and large crowds were gathering to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.” Just one more of other similar times, after Matthew chapter 14 records Jesus feeding the 5,000 men plus women and children from five loaves and two fish, we are told, “After [Jesus] had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone.” Jesus knew and shows us the important took precedent over the urgent.

But then there is the question, “How do I determine what is really important?”

In Matthew chapter 6 Jesus tells us not to be worried about the urgent things such as our daily physical needs, but to “seek first [God’s] kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided to you.” The apostle Paul picked that up as he instructed, “keep seeking the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on the things that are above, not on the things that are on earth.” Having an eternal, heavenly perspective rather than a temporal earthly perspective will shine the light on what is truly important.

Another key passage from Paul is found in Ephesians chapter 5.

“be careful how you walk, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, in which there is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your hearts to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to our God and Father; and subject yourselves to one another in the fear of Christ.”

We can’t unpack that today, but notice the two opening directives: be careful how you walk and be wise, which lead us to making the most of our time. The important things include being a true worshiper of God at all times, being focused on His word, His purpose for us, His glory. As we work our way through the challenges, remember that James tells us when we need wisdom, which we

always do, we are to ask God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to us.

You and I will face the pressure of the urgent and important today. May God give us the insight and wisdom to choose to do the important.

*Pastor Lyle*