

A walk with Mr O (31)

We all have time

Mr O, since we last met I've been haunted by Ephesians 5:16, the verse which tells us that we Christians are to be 'redeeming the time, because the days are evil'. In 2024 I'm going to make sure that every minute counts for the Lord.

Every minute?

Yes, every minute – because I read somewhere that if we look after the minutes, the hours will look after themselves.

And yet the Bible makes no mention of minutes. It talks of years, months, weeks, days, hours, watches (periods of several hours), but never breathes a word about minutes. As far as the Word of God is concerned, minutes are an unknown concept.

But today we think about them all the time, as well as seconds. And in sport, of course, we even talk about hundredths of seconds.

God's Word has a much more relaxed view of time than we have. God's will is that we should use our hours well, but not get all uptight about how we are using each minute. He knows us better than we know ourselves. People who go around constantly thinking about minutes and seconds nearly all always end up hurried, tense, dissatisfied, judgmental and impatient. The world would be a happier place if we removed the minutes and seconds from all our phones and clocks.

Come on, Mr O! How could this modern digital world function if we did that?

I get your point. But let's take our eyes off the world for a moment and think about Jesus. His life was perfect. Often He was so busy that He had no time to eat. But He was never in a hurry. Not ever.

He knew that every hour of His life had been planned by His Father, and that there was enough time in twenty-four hours to do the whole will of God. Even interruptions did not disturb His peace, because He knew that they too were part of the divine plan. Christlike people walk through life. They do it steadily and purposefully. They don't run.

You're not saying, are you, that God has planned each of our lives as meticulously as He planned the life of His Son?

What do the Scriptures say? They make it plain that God has decided the exact amount of time that we shall spend on this earth, and that we Christians 'are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them' (Eph. 2:10). On our path every day there are God-given opportunities to do good. Our life's work is to spot those opportunities and to do as much good as possible. That's exactly how Jesus lived.

It looks as if I'll have to start thinking about 2024 in a different way.

Yes, the world is constantly bullying us to keep our eyes on the clock. The result is that many Christians go through life asking the wrong questions. Instead of asking, 'What's the time? How shall I use the next few minutes?', they should be saying to themselves, 'Here, right now, what good can I do?' In 2024, don't keep looking at the time. But do keep looking for opportunities to do good!

But surely that's a recipe for constant exhaustion!

No! we'll be fit for nothing if we don't have a good night's sleep. We shall need to spend one third of 2024 in bed! There will be enough time left in the other two thirds to do the whole will of God, and to do it without hurry or worry. And even then we won't be 'on the go' the whole time. Scripture reveals that the Lord expects us to punctuate each week with a Sabbath day, and each weekday with moments of leisure.

And there's something else. None of us can do everything. If one hundred people are drowning in the sea, but my lifeboat has room for

only fifty, what am I to do? I am to save fifty. That's all. The moment I try to save fifty-one I put at risk the fifty I've already saved. That's a hard, but essential, lesson to learn.

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