

Stewarding Our Mind: How Should We Use Our Free Time?

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For most of us, a twenty-four-hour day can be divided into thirds. We spend a third of our day sleeping, a third of our day working, and the final third completing all of our other responsibilities and activities. This final third of our day includes preparing for work, getting the kids ready for school, commuting to and from the office, time with family and friends, going to church, and everything else that comes up along the way. Life is busy, and on average, two-thirds of our day is spent sleeping and working.

Our effectiveness to steward our time is often determined by how well we steward the eight hours of our day we are not working and sleeping. Furthermore, it could be said that the effectiveness in stewarding our *minds* is directly related to the management of our time.

What would you say if someone were to ask you, “How well do you steward your eight hours?” It is not uncommon in casual conversation to hear about people binge-watching Netflix and other forms of entertainment—I for one have been guilty of binge-watching television. I love sports and spy thrillers, so it is easy for me to sit in front of the television for hours. It is necessary that we take time to rest and enjoy healthy entertainment, but a problem arises if mindless entertainment controls the majority of the only eight hours of the day we have control over.

Renew Our Minds

Romans 12 is a powerful and popular portion of scripture, and in it the Apostle Paul speaks to the power of a renewed mind. Much of our opportunity to steward our minds well occurs in the eight hours of our day when we are not working and sleeping. Obviously, sleeping well and working well are important for godly stewardship of our lives, but we set the expectations for these sixteen hours by how well we steward the remaining eight. I would suggest that when we steward the eight hours well, we will sleep more peacefully, and we will work more diligently.

Renew Our Body

The first few verses in Romans 12 help us set appropriate expectations for how our eight hours should be spent. In Romans 12:1-2, the Apostle Paul writes, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (ESV).

Notice Paul's sense of urgency as he appeals to his audience to present their "bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God." Our entire physical body, including the mind, is to be presented to God as an offering, and this means those eight hours of our day become increasingly important.

Renew Our Choices

It is necessary that we point out Paul's use of the word *sacrifice*. If we are going to steward our time well, and thereby steward our minds well, sacrifices will have to be made. For me, that could mean missing a Kentucky Wildcats basketball game to make sure I spend quality time with the Lord in prayer and in his Word. Sacrifice could also involve eliminating mindless entertainment to practice good reading and learning habits.

Godly living involves sacrifice, and we must be willing to give up the things that don't matter for those that do. Presenting our minds to the Lord as a tool to be used for His glory will involve sacrifice, but the result of a renewed mind will far outweigh the discomfort of sacrifice.

Do Not Conform

In Romans 12:2, Paul continues to build a case for godly living by first telling his audience what *not* to do. He writes, "Do not be conformed to this world..." Sometimes, knowing what not to do is the first step in achieving success, and we are not to "be conformed to this world." We are in a cultural battle for the mind, and Paul is drawing a line between the two sides. There is a worldly mindset that seeks to conform our minds to its way of thinking, but there is also a godly posture that leads to a renewed mind.

Paul writes, "... be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." Notice that it is the renewed mind in Christ that positions us to discern God's will, a will that "is good and acceptable and perfect."

Renew Our Time

One of the primary opportunities for our minds to be renewed is in the eight hours of our day when we can spend time in God's presence through ecclesial community, the Word, and prayer. If we are constantly spending our eight hours on mindless entertainment and social media, we will be more susceptible to the lusts of this world. However, if we spend our eight hours in the presence of God, learning his wisdom for our lives, we will be positioned to have our minds renewed, and we will be better conduits of His grace to the broken world around us.

How To Renew Our 8 Hours

With this said, here are some suggestions for managing our eight hours well.

Begin by spending time in prayer and God's Word. There is no substitute for the presence of God, and while devotionals are great, they are not an equal substitute for the Word of God. It is through the Word that we discern the will of God for every area of our lives, and it is through prayer that we cultivate an intimacy with our Creator.

Next, increase your reading productivity. Instead of binge-watching something mindless, discipline yourself to do something mindful every day, like reading. For example, what is one book you could read right now that would help you make a new contribution to work and ministry?

Lastly, commit to watching an informative lecture each week. There are free resources available that provide lectures by top scholars in the fields of theology, political science, and economics. These lectures can inform our understanding so we can be a part of the solution rather than a part of the problem. Through my own reading, I am increasingly learning that theology affects everything: politics, economics, and how I do my work. Lifelong learning helps us steward our minds well, and stewarding our minds well is an act of worship unto God. what is one book you could read right now that would help you make a new contribution to your work and ministry?

Renew Our Commitment to Excellence

In the conclusion to his book, *Excellence*, Andreas J. Kostenberger asks, "Are you committed to excellence? If so, are you willing to do what it takes to achieve greater excellence for the glory of God and for the good of his people?" Excellence is something we should all strive for because we want to offer our best to the Lord. It would seem logical that if we are seeking to model excellence, we must use our minds well. To steward our minds is to limit mindless activity and accelerate mindful devotion unto God, and this will lead to a renewed mind.