

***Classic Guidelines on the  
Use of Time, for the Employed***

***Workplace Faith Booklet #4***

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*"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. "Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven".*

*Matthew 5:13-16 NKJV*

*For many employed people, especially those with children or taking courses, a major problem is time poverty. Our week begins on Sunday and even worship seems difficult for many. Some classic guidelines on the use of time are outlined below. They appeared originally in *Holy Living*, by Jeremy Taylor, 1650, except for the first quote from William Law, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, 1728. Time with God is the key to relieving time poverty, for, as Luther is said to have replied when asked how he did so much, it would not be possible without spending the first three hours each day in prayer.*

*[Of related interest: "Being Salt and Light in the Workplace: A Manual of Classic Guidelines and Prayers"; "Classic Prayers and Guidance for Bible Study" and "Classic Prayers for the Employed" Classic Guidelines for Dealing with Workplace Stress and Temptation – all at [www.ccri.ca](http://www.ccri.ca)]*

# *Classic Guidelines on the Use of Time, for the Employed*

## *Sunday Worship*

*“It is very observable, that there is not one command in all the Gospel for public worship; and perhaps it is a duty that is least insisted upon in Scripture of any other. The frequent attendance at it is never so much as mentioned in all the New Testament. Whereas that religion or devotion which is to govern the ordinary actions of our life is to be found in almost every verse of Scripture. Our blessed Savior and His Apostles are wholly taken up in doctrines that relate to common life. They call us to renounce the world, and differ in every temper and way of life, from the spirit and the way of the world: to renounce all its goods, to fear none of its evils, to reject its joys, and have no value for its happiness: to be as new-born babes, that are born into a new state of things: to live as pilgrims in spiritual watching, in holy fear, and heavenly aspiring after another life: to take up our daily cross, to deny ourselves, to profess the blessedness of mourning, to seek the blessedness of poverty of spirit: to forsake the pride and vanity of riches, to take no thought for the morrow, to live in the profoundest state of humility, to rejoice in worldly sufferings: to reject the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life: to bear injuries, to forgive and bless our enemies, and to love mankind as God loveth them: to give up our whole*

*hearts and affections to God, and strive to enter through the strait gate into a life of eternal glory.*

*“This is the common devotion which our blessed Savior taught, in order to make it the common life of all Christians. Is it not therefore exceeding strange that people should place so much piety in the attendance upon public worship, concerning which there is not one precept of our Lord’s to be found, and yet neglect these common duties of our ordinary life, which are commanded in every page of the Gospel? I call these duties the devotion of our common life, because if they are to be practiced, they must be made parts of our common life; they can have no place anywhere else.” William Law, 1728*

## **Taylor on the use of time**

A summary of his main points concerning Sundays follow, and then his detailed comments on the use of time, according to his own numbering. Regarding Sundays, Taylor’s precept is -- *he keeps the Lord’s day best, that keeps it with most religion and with most charity.*

1. Keep daily devotions; enlarge on them on holy days.
2. Avoid all but necessary work and charitable work on Sundays.
3. Make Sundays days of joy and thanksgiving and helping the less fortunate.

4. Attend church early and cheerfully, stay for the complete service.
5. When not at devotions, visit the sick, reconcile differences, help the poor.
6. Bring to church your whole family and those in your charge.
7. The hard workers may engage in innocent and safe recreations on Sundays.
8. Thank God for excellent persons, apostles, or martyrs; imitate their lives.

### ***Rules for employing our Time.***

*2. Let every man that hath a calling be diligent in pursuance of its employment, so as not lightly or without reasonable occasion to neglect it in any of those times which are usually, and by the custom of prudent persons and good husbands, employed in it.*

*3. Let all the intervals or void spaces of time be employed in prayers, reading, meditating, works of nature, recreation, charity, friendliness and neighbourhood, and means of spiritual and corporal health; ever remembering so to work in our calling, as not to neglect the work of our high calling; but to begin and end the day with God, with such forms of devotion as shall be proper to our necessities.*

*4. The resting days of Christians, and festivals of the church, must in no sense be days of idleness; for it is better to plough upon holy days than to do nothing, or to do viciously: but let them be spent in the works of the day, that is, of religion and charity, according to the rules appointed. ...*

*7. In the midst of the works of thy calling, often retire to God in short prayers and ejaculations; and those may make up the want of those larger portions of time, which, it may be, thou desirest for devotion, and in which thou thinkest other persons have advantage of thee; for so thou reconcilest the outward work and thy inward calling, the church and the commonwealth, the employment of the body and the interest of thy soul: for be sure, that God is present at thy breathings and hearty sighings of prayer, as soon as at the longer offices of less busied persons; and thy time is as truly sanctified by a trade, and devout though short prayers, as by the longer offices of those whose time is not filled up with labour and useful business.*

*8. Let your employment be such as may become a reasonable person; and not be a business fit for children or distracted people, but fit for your age and understanding. For a man may be very idly busy, and take great pains to so little purpose, that, in his labours and expense of time, he shall serve no end but of folly and vanity. There are some trades that wholly serve the ends of idle persons and fools,  
....*

*9. Let your employment be fitted to your person and calling. Some there are that employ their time in affairs infinitely below the dignity of their person; and being called by God or by the republic to help to bear great burdens, and to judge a people, do enfeeble their understanding and disable their persons by sordid and brutish business. ... . He that is appointed to minister to holy things must not suffer secular affairs and sordid arts to eat up great portions of his employment: a clergyman must not keep a tavern, nor a judge be an innkeeper; and it was a great idleness in Theophylact, the patriarch of C.P. to spend his time in the stable of horses, when he should have been in his study, or in the pulpit, or saying his holy offices. Such employments are the diseases of labour, and the rust of time which it contracts, not by lying still, but by dirty employment.*

*10. Let your employment be such as becomes a Christian; that is, in no sense mingled with sin: for he that takes pains to serve the ends of covetousness, or ministers to another's lust, or keeps a shop of impurities or intemperance, is idle in the worst sense; for every hour so spent runs him backward, and must be spent again in the remaining and shorter part of his life, and spent better.*

...

*17. Set apart some portions of every day for more solemn devotion and religious employment, which be severe in observing: and if variety of employment, or prudent affairs, or civil society, press upon you, yet so order thy rule, that the necessary parts of it be not omitted; and though just occasions may make our prayers shorter, yet let nothing but a violent, sudden, and impatient necessity, make thee, upon any one day, wholly to omit thy morning and evening devotions; which if you be forced to make very short, you may supply and lengthen with ejaculations and short retirements in the day-time, in the midst of your employment or of your company. ...*

*21. Let him that is most busied set apart some solemn time every year, in which, for the time, quitting all worldly business, he may attend wholly to fasting and prayer, and the dressing of his soul by confessions, meditations, and attendances upon God; that he may make up his accounts, renew his vows, make amends for his carelessness, and retire back again, from whence levity and the vanities of the world, or the opportunity of temptations, or the distraction of secular affairs, have carried him.*

## **A Prayer**

*For grace to spend our time well. O eternal God, who from all eternity dost behold and love thy own glories and perfections infinite, and hast created me to do the work of God after the manner of men, and to serve thee in this generation and according to my capacities, give me thy grace, that I may be a curious and prudent spender of my time, so as I may best prevent or resist all temptation, and be profitable to the Christian commonwealth, and, by discharging all my duty, may glorify thy name. Take from me all slothfulness, and give me a diligent and an active spirit, and wisdom to choose my employment; that I may do works proportionable to my person and to the dignity of a Christian, and may fill up all the spaces of my time with actions of religion and charity; that, when the devil assaults me, he may not find me idle; and my dearest Lord, at his sudden coming, may find me busy in lawful, necessary, and pious actions, improving my talent entrusted to me by thee, my Lord; that I may enter into the joy of my Lord, to partake of his eternal felicities, even for thy mercy's sake, and for my dearest Saviour's sake.*

*Amen.*