

Lesson Outline: Do You Have Time To Play?

Intro: What does it cost to live the “American Dream?”

A. Lesson text: Daniel 1:3-20 – Daniel refuses to compromise/submit

1. v3-5 – Daniel recognizes a stand must be made
2. v8-10 – God provides for Daniel
3. v11-14 – The art of asking but not compromising
4. v15-20 – The blessings of making a Biblical stand

B. 5 thoughts on time/resource management for a JH / HS audience:

1. Time is your most precious resource.
 - a. Enjoy the freedoms your schedule offers now. Be a kid!
 - b. There will never be enough time for everything that needs to get done
 - c. 1 Tim. 5:8 – make sure to provide for your own first
2. Get good grades!
 - a. Good grades will eventually save you lots of time and money
 - b. God wants us to be as smart as we can be – Col. 3:18-25
 - c. Having trouble in school or life? Ask for help!
3. Aggressively pursue scholarships.
 - a. A full-ride scholarship could be the best pay day some of us ever have
 - b. Avoiding school debt can free up time for the Lord’s work
4. Live what you’ve learned.
 - a. Living a God fearing life saves time, money and heartache...and your soul
5. Live somewhere else.
 - a. Remove yourself (for a while) from America’s hyperconsumerism
 - b. Gain perspective on what is really important in life
 - c. The stuff we buy has the biggest effect on our time

C. Quick shots

1. ‘Don’t let perfect be the enemy of good.’ – Voltaire (paraphrased)
2. Write it all down. – David Allen, “Getting Things Done”
3. Quotes to consider.

Conclusion: Christian’s must challenge the worldly concept of success to make sure they are a success in God’s eyes.

Lesson: Do you have time to play?

Reimagining the American Dream

You've heard the phrase, "Living the American Dream." What does that mean to you? Where do you see yourself living? What are you driving? What kind of job do you have?

For most, it looks something like a spouse, 2.5 children, a dog, house and 2 cars. Have you ever stopped to think how expensive the American Dream is? Let's think about it for a moment... Let's say an average house runs about \$150,000. By the time you pay 30 years of interest on that mortgage, you're looking at a cost of \$300,000 plus maintenance. The U.S. Department of Agriculture said that a child born in 2011 would cost \$227,000 to raise to the age of 18. Somehow you have 2.5 children, so you're looking at around \$565,000 to raise your kids. The ASPCA says that Fido will cost around \$1,000 a year, so let's kick in \$10,000 to cover Fido. Life is getting real expensive and we haven't even talked about eating, cell phones, the car payment and clothes for all the people in your family.

I didn't want to scare you guys at the beginning of the lesson. I wanted to get you thinking about the world that you will soon be entering. As soon as later this year, some of you will be heading off to college, trade school or the military to prepare for life in the real world. Would you be interested in the guidance that God has provided for you that would help you avoid financial ruin, divorce and emotional despair? As we are thinking about the game of Life, about managing time and resources, let's take a look at God's counterculture plan for your life and His guidance on managing your most precious resource – time.

By figuring out how to manage your time and resources NOW, you can begin your grand adventure as an adult with knowledge of how to avoid the pitfalls that will be all around you. Wouldn't it be easier to start down the right path, as opposed to making mistakes and 'coming to your senses' when you're 35 and realizing you have to make drastic and scary changes to get back to where God wants you to be? Getting started on the right path will take some work, and an extra amount of diligence for a teenager, but the payoff over the next 10, 20 or 30 years will be well worth it.

Let's take a look at a real life event from the Bible that I am sure you are very familiar with. Let's see if we can reframe it a bit this morning as I try to get you thinking about your future. Turn to Daniel 1. In 605 BC, the Babylonians were used by God to conquer the Israelites, His chosen people who had become very unfaithful. The Babylonians were masters of war, torture and conquest. Part of their strategy was taking the best of the young men of the conquered land and retraining them in Babylonian culture and custom. This is where we pick up in 1:3.

³ Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring into the king's service some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility— ⁴ young men without any physical

defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians. ⁵ The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service.

Daniel was among the choice young men who were to be 'reprogrammed' to be part of the king's service. As you probably remember, Daniel drew a line when it came to eating food and wine from the king's table. The Babylonians worshipped their pagan gods with sacrifices of meat, wine and other foods. A portion of these sacrifices were allotted to the king and his court. Their consumption of food offered to pagan gods symbolized their commitment and submission to the gods. Daniel would have known this, and knew eating this food would be a clear violation of his loyalty to the God of Israel.

Daniel was definitely in a tight spot. So many of his countrymen had been slaughtered when the Babylonians conquered the land. Others were starving and dying under Babylonian oppression. So many people would have been happy to have the crumbs from the king's table, but Daniel knew that consuming this food would be wrong. But when you're in captivity, how much room do you have for making special requests? The size of the challenge didn't matter, Daniel had resolved not to defile himself with this food that was offered to pagan gods, as we see in v8:

8 But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official [Ashpenaz] for permission not to defile himself this way. 9 Now God had caused the official to show favor and compassion to Daniel, 10 but the official told Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you."

Did you catch v9? God caused the official to show favor and compassion on Daniel. When we are willing to make a bold stand to put the will of God first, He will work in our favor. This idea is reiterated in the New Testament in Matthew 6:33, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." If we put God first in our decisions, His blessings and favor will become evident in our life. The unexpected will happen.

Daniel was resolved to not defile himself, but was also sympathetic to the predicament Ashpenaz found himself in as the servant of the king. Daniel offered a deal to the chief official, a pretty bold move for someone in captivity.

11 Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, 12 "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. 13 Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see." 14 So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.

God was definitely at work in the life of Daniel! Notice, he never compromised his stance on abstaining from forbidden items of the king's table. In v13, Daniel offered Ashpenaz the opportunity to compare

his appearance with that of the other young men, but never said he would eat the food of the king's table if things didn't turn out right.

As you all probably know, things turned out great with the young men of God who were faithful to their Lord. Picking up in v15:

15 At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. 16 So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.

17 To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.

18 At the end of the time set by the king to bring them into his service, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. 19 The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. 20 In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanterers in his whole kingdom.

These young men were blessed with knowledge and understanding 10x greater than any of their peers. This was clearly a blessing from God for their faithfulness to Him. The lesson for us - sometimes God's way requires tough decisions, sacrifice and risk.

We started this discussion by talking about the American Dream. That dream comes with a HUGE price tag. To afford all those things both husband and wife need to be working good jobs, or you are looking at one person working a very high paying job. Here's the catch, most high paying jobs pay you that 6-figure salary in exchange for your time. I have several friends and family members who have jobs that pay \$100,000 and above. I rarely see them. They travel across the country, most of them spending 30-50% of the work week away from home.

When I was in the corporate world, I was working for a wireless contractor as an RF engineer. I would help fix holes in the coverage area for major wireless providers like ATT and Sprint. I lived in southern New Hampshire, worked in Boston and had sites in NH, MA, RI and CT. I was 23, was well paid and drove a nice company truck. My work hours were 8am – 5pm, but I was often on the road well before 8am headed to a site. And I was often out much later than 5pm. The turning point for me was a meeting with a client one Tuesday night. The meeting was at 7pm and I was at the client's office in Rhode Island, a good 2 hours from my house. As the meeting went on and on I began to look around the room. I was young and single, but knew at some point in life I wanted a family. I knew a fair amount about the personal lives of the people sitting at the table with me. They were divorced, in debt (even though they had huge salaries), and generally unhappy. That night on the ride back home I knew that something had to change.

Like I said, I was young and single, so change was easy enough. And you are at a point in life where you don't even have to change...you just have to get started on the right path. Let's spend the rest of our

time together talking about some practical advice, specifically for people your age, that you can put into action when you get home.

1. Time is your most precious resource.

You are at a unique stage in life. You probably have more time available to do nothing than you will ever have again. And that is good...this is a time where you should be enjoying your free time, doing things that kids do. But, time is the most precious resource you have been given by God. It's something you can't get back, you can't make more of, and we don't know how much we will get. In James 4:14 we read that "You are just a vapor that appears for a little while then vanishes away." This isn't meant to be a negative statement, but a wake-up call to the preciousness of the time we have on this earth.

Andy Stanley wrote about this concept in his book "Choosing to Cheat." His premise is that everyone cheats when it comes to time. There are simply not enough hours in the day to get everything done that everyone expects. Every day you are going to leave some people feeling cheated. Too often, the people we cheat out of our time and energy are the people who are closest to us. We let our family languish so we can keep the boss happy. In his 125 page book, Stanley encourages Christians to consider who should be getting the short end of the stick when it comes to time.

Let me use myself as an example of Stanley's thought process. Who could be a minister at the Bridgewood Church of Christ? There are about 30 people on this campus who would be well-qualified to do my job. At our church, there are tons of people who could step up and take on various aspects of my work, if I called on them to do so. There are very few things at Bridgewood that are uniquely things that only I can do. Who can be the husband to my wife Brianne? The ring on my finger and the vows that I said to her on April 10, 2004 before God and man, testify that only I can fulfill the role as her husband. Being her husband is a role that only I can fill. Who can be a Dad to my two girls, Avery and Claire? Again, that is a role that only I can fill in their lives.

Too often we use the most precious resource we have, on the things that just about anyone can do. I owe it to my church as a paid minister to give them an honest day's labor. And you, when you have a job, owe your employer an honest work effort. But we shouldn't cheat our family out of the time that is theirs and the role that God has put us in as a parent, spouse or child. In 1 Timothy 5, Paul is writing about the responsibility of children and the church to widows. In 5:8 he writes, "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." Remember, when Paul was writing this, they didn't have nursing homes for aging parents, that is a relatively new concept as we have gotten too busy to care for aging parents in our own homes. When you are building your lives, choosing careers, and making big purchases, don't allow yourself to get buried under a pile of debt and commitments that will consume all of your time and energy.

2. Get good grades!

This is a group of Junior High and High School students. One of the best places I can tell you to invest your time is in getting quality grades at school. This will pay off huge in the coming years, something we

will talk about in the next few points. I even believe that getting good grades at school is something that is backed by the Bible. In Colossians 3:18-25, Paul is addressing the rules for a Christian household. When addressing bondservants (or slaves) in v22-23 he wrote, "Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men."

The concept of bondservants or slaves as found in the Bible is challenging for us to comprehend since we tend to associate slavery with what we have seen in the United States and other places in modern history. In Bible times, many people would sell themselves into slavery because they couldn't afford to live or put food on the table. It was a long-term employment with no option to opt out. So, bondservants were told to work hard, not to be pleasing to the master but as if they were working for the Lord. Most of you probably don't go to school by choice. We are required to go to school up to a certain age. But an education is a great gift. I believe with my whole heart that God wants Christians to be as smart as they can possibly be. So, you should work at your grades in school, not as if you are trying to stay out of trouble with your parents, but as if you are trying to bring home a report card that God would be proud of.

One quick side-note.... I come from a family of educators. My Mom taught in elementary and junior high schools. My Dad taught in high school and then became a college professor. My sister is a college instructor and department chair. My parents always told me, and my sister would also reinforce, that learning is something you learn to do. There are tips and tricks to becoming more efficient in studying and test taking. If you feel like you are spending too much time on school work, ask your parents or a teacher to assist you in finding some resources to help you become a better student. It might not be pleasant at first, but shaving a few hours off your schoolwork each week would be worth it in the end.

This leads us to our next point...

3. Aggressively pursue scholarships

If you have worked hard in school and kept good grades, you might be thinking about going on to college. If you haven't looked recently, college is expensive! Books alone can run \$400 to \$600 per semester. Tuition can be as high as \$45,000 to \$50,000 a year. There is good news though. As a high school junior or senior, you have the opportunity to have one of the highest paying jobs you might have in your entire life.

I encourage you to treat applying for scholarships and learning more about schools as if it were your job. Most high school students would be doing great if they had a job that paid \$12 an hour. Your job as a full time scholarship applicant could bring you a return equal to \$100 or more per hour of work. Colleges and other organizations have money out there for the taking, you just have to apply for it and meet the qualifications. Scholarships are also one of the easiest pay days you will ever receive. Most academic scholarships from a college only require you to maintain good grades and a good standing as a student.

Getting 60%, 80% or 100% of your college expenses covered by scholarships helps you and your family. You have the opportunity to graduate from college without the burden of school debt that could have been as high as \$200,000 or more. This will allow you more freedom to choose a job that you love, not one that will pay you enough money to survive and pay off your debt. You've also given your parents a great gift, in that you have covered the lion's share of what could be one of their greatest expenses in life, if they had planned to pay for your schooling. You could make more in a few months of aggressively pursuing scholarships and relationships with schools than you could make in a few years of work!

4. Live what you've learned

By the time you get out on your own at college, in a trade school, in the military, in the workforce, wherever you go... you have been exposed to countless hours of Bible based decision making about life in your home, in Bible class, during worship and elsewhere. When you get out on your own, it is time to make sure you put all that instruction into action. The entire focus of this message is using your time wisely, and if you don't put all of the things you have learned into action then you have just wasted a significant chunk of time that you will never get back. And even worse than that, if you live foolishly, disregarding all the things you have been taught, you will wind up like the prodigal son. He had to learn the hard way all the mistakes that I am sure he had been taught to avoid. One of the best time, money, and most importantly soul-saving tips I have, is that you live the things you have learned when you get out on your own.

5. Live somewhere else

This may not be possible for everyone, but at some time during your college years, or before you get bogged down with the responsibilities of life... live abroad. Specifically, live in a part of the world where they are not as blessed with material wealth. When we are here at home we are constantly immersed in advertisements about the next iPhone, gaming system or tech gadget coming out. Our stores are filled with TVs that are bigger and better than the one we have at home. There is great value in removing yourself, at least for a little while, from the blur of hyper-consumerism.

My wife spent the better part of a summer in Africa as part of nursing school at Harding. I carried everything I needed to survive for 5 months in a backpack as I hiked up the Appalachian Trail. We both returned from these trips with a different perspective on possessions. Having an experience where you detach yourself from all the 'stuff' of our culture might be the best solution for helping you save time in your life.

As an adult, the majority of your money will be taken up with the expenses you choose to take on. Will you buy the latest smart phone with the unlimited data plan, or just a simple one with a cheap plan. Will you buy a fancy car with a large monthly payment and interest, or pay cash for a simple used car that is reliable. Will you buy the big house with an even bigger mortgage that you will be paying for the next 30 years, or will you buy a modest home that you can pay off in 8-10 years with a fraction of the interest expense. All of the things we choose to buy will add up. And you will have to work to pay the bills for all the things you buy. How much time you have to work, and the expectations your employer will have of you will be primarily dictated by the amount of things you choose purchase in life.

Jesus, speaking about the cost of discipleship in Luke 14 said this in 28-30, “For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, “This man began to build and was not able to finish.” Our country is filled with people who were living the American Dream but weren’t counting the cost. They bought homes that they should have known they couldn’t afford. They took risks that they should have known to avoid. Or they took on such a work load to pay for all of their toys that they lost their family along the way. You must be a generation of people who learn to count the cost. As a country, we are coming to a reckoning for our careless spending. During your lifetime hard decisions will have to be made and every American will have to bear the burden. If you position yourself with manageable expenses, you will be prepared for when that time comes.

In 5 points we have covered tips that get everyone from where they are today to the point of being an adult on your own. I believe that if you try to implement these concepts, you will avoid some of the key issues that impact our ability to manage time. I do have a few other quick shots for us to consider and would also like to allow some time for questions. Let’s take a look at these last few quick shots....

Don’t let perfect be the enemy of good – Voltaire (paraphrased)

We have talked at great length today about our most precious resource, time. Sometimes when we need to make decisions, take action, or move forward, we wait for the perfect time or for everything to be perfectly in place. In the real world, you waste a lot of time and perfect becomes the enemy of good. A perfect example is someone who has studied God’s word and recognizes they need to be baptized for the remission of sins. Instead of acting on that need, they wait, thinking they need to know more about the Bible. They want everything to be perfect. We will never stop learning about the Bible or life. Don’t let perfect become the enemy of good.

Write it down. – David Allen, “Getting Things Done”

David Allen wrote one of the greatest books on productivity and time management – “Getting Things Done.” Among other nuggets of knowledge in his book is this one – write everything down. Our minds can run wild trying to remember everything we are supposed to do, the things people have told us, deadlines that are coming up, etc. A pencil and paper can help ease the burden on your mind. Allen instructs us to write everything down that we want to remember. I find that this is a great help. As I have been writing this lesson, I’ve had a pad on my desk. I jot down information from phone calls that I need to follow up on, ideas for this lesson that I don’t want to forget, and thoughts about things that I need to do at home later on. By writing them down I find that I can let them go and clear my mind to fully focus on getting this task completed. Another great tool is the 2-minute rule. If something comes up and you can get it done in 2 minutes or less, get it done right then. Don’t delay.

Quotes to Consider

Benjamin Franklin has some great quotes about time and money. As an inventor, politician and writer, Franklin must have been one busy fellow. Perhaps you are the type of person who likes to keep

inspirational quotes on your mirror, on the start screen of your phone, or somewhere else handy. Here are a few of my favorites from Benjamin Franklin and a few great verses from the Bible.

“A penny saved is a penny earned.”

“Lost time is never found.”

“Never confuse motion with action.”

“Well done is better than well said.”

“You may delay, but time will not.”

Proverbs 21:5 – “The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty”

Matthew 6:19-21 – “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Matthew 16:24-27 – “The Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world but forfeits his souls? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.”

And one final thought from Andy Stanley – too many people love their job and do their family. Christians should love their families and do their jobs.