

Punctuality and Initiative

Intro

No Excuse Sunday:

To make it possible for everyone to attend church this Sunday, we are going to have a special "No Excuse Sunday":

Cots will be placed in the foyer for those who say, "Sunday is my only day to sleep in."

There will be a special section with lounge chairs for those who feel that our pews are too hard.

Eye drops will be available for those with tired eyes from watching TV late Saturday night.

We will have steel helmets for those who say, "The roof would cave in if I ever came to church."

Blankets will be furnished for those who think the church is too cold, and fans for those who say it is too hot.

Scorecards will be available for those who wish to list the hypocrites present.

Doctors and nurses will be in attendance for those who plan to be sick on Sunday.

We will provide hearing aids for those who can't hear the preacher and cotton wool for those who think he's too loud!

I. A Definition of Punctuality

"Showing esteem for others by doing the right thing at the right time."

"Demonstrating the worth of people and time by arriving for appointments before they begin."

Punctuality is very closely related to dependability and responsibility. It is also related to our love for other people and our love for the Lord; for the lack of it can show disrespect and cause frustration, confusion and interruption of fellowship with others.

II. The Importance of Punctuality

A. Time is sacred to God.

God begins the work of creation by establishing day and night. It wasn't until the fourth day that God made the sun, moon and stars to regulate day and night. Why do we have seven days in a week rather than eight or ten or twenty? Why do we even have weeks? Why not simply months and years? Because of creation!

B. God is punctual.

God is never late.

(Gal 4:4 NIV) But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law,

At just the right time God sent a miraculous star to guild the Magi to Bethlehem (Matt 2:1-10).

"At that time...- Deut 10:1, 8; Josh 5:2

(Deu 10:1 NIV) At that time the LORD said to me, "Chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones and come up to me on the mountain. Also make a wooden chest.

(Deu 10:8 NIV) At that time the LORD set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to minister and to pronounce blessings in his name, as they still do today.

(Josh 5:2 NIV) At that time the LORD said to Joshua, "Make flint knives and circumcise the Israelites again."

“My time (the right time)... - John 7:6, 8

(John 7:6 NIV) Therefore Jesus told them, "The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right.

(John 7:6 NKJV) Then Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready.

(John 7:8 NIV) You go to the Feast. I am not yet going up to this Feast, because for me the right time has not yet come."

(John 7:8 NKJV) "You go up to this feast. I am not yet going up to this feast, for My time has not yet fully come."

“Your time” – Luke 22:52-53

(Luke 22:52-53 NIV) Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, and the elders, who had come for him, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come with swords and clubs? {53} Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me. But this is your hour--when darkness reigns."

“Appointed Time” – Ps 75:2; 102:13; 1 Cor 4:5

(Psa 75:2 NIV) You say, "I choose the appointed time; it is I who judge uprightly.

(Psa 102:13 NIV) You will arise and have compassion on Zion, for it is time to show favor to her; the appointed time has come.

(1 Cor 4:5 NIV) Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.

C. God commands us to be good stewards.

1. Old Testament Worship - at the appointed time

Passover – Ex 13:3-5, 10; Num 9:2-3

(Exo 13:3-5 NIV) Then Moses said to the people, "Commemorate this day, the day you came out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery, because the LORD brought you out of it with a mighty hand. Eat nothing containing yeast. {4} Today, in the month of Abib, you are leaving. {5} When the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Hivites and Jebusites--the land he swore to your forefathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey--you are to observe this ceremony in this month:

(Exo 13:10 NIV) You must keep this ordinance at the appointed time year after year.

(Num 9:2-3 NIV) "Have the Israelites celebrate the Passover at the appointed time. {3} Celebrate it at the appointed time, at twilight on the fourteenth day of this month, in accordance with all its rules and regulations."

Pentecost (Weeks) – Ex 23:15-16; 34:22-24;

(Exo 23:15-16 NIV) "Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread; for seven days eat bread made without yeast, as I commanded you. Do this at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in that month you came out of Egypt. "No one is to appear before me empty-handed. {16} "Celebrate the Feast of Harvest with the firstfruits of the crops you sow in your field. "Celebrate the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in your crops from the field.

(Exo 34:22-24 NIV) "Celebrate the Feast of Weeks with the firstfruits of the wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the turn of the year. {23} Three times a year all your men are to appear before the Sovereign LORD, the God of Israel. {24} I will drive out nations before you and enlarge your territory, and no one will covet your land when you go up three times each year to appear before the LORD your God.

Tabernacles – 2 Chron 8:13;

(2 Chr 8:13 NIV) according to the daily requirement for offerings commanded by Moses for Sabbaths, New Moons and the three annual feasts--the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles.

Although these feasts were of different lengths they were to be a special moment set apart to share the joy of God with others. On the one hand, these three festivals mark great moments of salvation history. Passover rehearses the Exodus from Egypt (Exodus 1-15). The Feast of Weeks recalls the giving of the Torah from Mount Sinai (Exodus 19-20). The Feast of Tabernacles is associated with the ingathering of all the nations to worship the true and living God (Zechariah 14:16-19). On the other hand, these three festivals mark the turning points of the agricultural year and of the solar year. Passover occurs at the spring equinox and the Feast of Tabernacles at the fall. In both of these aspects, God teaches us that time matters to Him. He marks our days so that we remember his great works of creation and of salvation.

2. New Testament Worship – Heb 10:24-25; 1 Cor 16:2

(Heb 10:24-25 NIV) And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. {25} Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

(1 Cor 16:2 NIV) On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.

3. Stewardship of time – Eph 5:15-16; Col 4:5

(Eph 5:15-16 NIV) Be very careful, then, how you live--not as unwise but as wise, {16} making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

(Col 4:5 NIV) Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.

D. Tardiness breaks the 8th commandment – Ex 20:15 “You shall not steal.”

If you have a bill due on Wednesday and you don't pay it until Friday what are you? You are a thief for a day.

If you borrowed money from someone and you have not paid it back on time, you are a thief.

If you are late for an appointment you have robbed the other person or persons of their time.

If you are late for church you have robbed God and your fellow believers of time for worship and fellowship.

Always late for church

Some people think they are on time if they enter the parking lot at 9:30, but then they have to find a parking place, take their kids to their classes, and get to the worship center.

Some people don't even make it into the auditorium. The International Plaza monitors are there for people with severe health problems, families with a sick child, or some other emergency.

Don't get into the habit of the convenience of the International Plaza. You will not get as much out of the service in the Plaza. You do not make a contribution to the rest of the body when you are separated from them.

III. The Practice of Punctuality – Cure for the “lateness gene”

A. The confession

I will regard tardiness as sin.

I will repent of my tardiness.

B. The commitment

I will determine to be on time.

I will prepare for unexpected delays.

I will plan a daily schedule.

I will make the most of every opportunity.

I will take the initiative to be on time.

Conclusion

(Psa 90:10-12 NIV) The length of our days is seventy years-- or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away. {11} Who knows the power of your anger? For your wrath is as great as the fear that is due you. {12} Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father; There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not; As Thou hast been, Thou forever will be.

Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness! Morning by morning new mercies I see. All I have needed
Thy hand hath provided; Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

Summer and winter and springtime and harvest, Sun, moon and stars in their courses above
Join with all nature in manifold witness To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness! Morning by morning new mercies I see. All I have needed Thy hand hath provided; Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow, Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness! Morning by morning new mercies I see. All I have needed Thy hand hath provided; Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!