

ELEVATE: Our Priorities

Session #1: Time

Session Objective: We most often measure life by quantity or circumstances. Through a study of Paul's goals for life in the letter to the Philippians, this session challenges students to look beyond society's recipe for a fulfilling life or their own circumstances and invest their time and lives in eternal goals.

Minimum Prep: Read through the entire session outline. Prepare an environment where discussion can occur. Bring pencils/recipe cards for each leader/student.

Extended Prep: There are a few audio/visual aids that could be used to add punch to this session.

- Make arrangements to take your group on a 10 minute walk around a nearby cemetery. If logistics are a problem, make a 3-5 minute video of a cemetery – focus in on inscriptions on gravestones, etc.
- Have copies of a large newspaper's obituary section available for each student.
- Video Clip: **Dead Poet's Society**, start 14:00, stop 18:22. Played by Robin Williams, Mr. Keating gathers his class in the hallway of their prestigious boys' school to look at pictures of past alumni. As the boys look on, Keating leans in and challenges them to "Carpe Diem" or "Seize the Day".
- Study Stephen Covey's time diagram and share a summary with your small group leaders. (see Seven Habits of Highly Effective People or First Things First).

Session Outline

Leader Preamble: If I were to ask you to answer the question, "How long have you lived", how would you answer? (How many would state your chronological age – "I've lived 17 years", etc.).

For this session, we are going to think and talk about our time in this life. We are all given 24 hours each day, but many people live for only a small part of each day and some people celebrate birthdays into their 90's but don't live at all. To help us get thinking about our time in the life, we are going to take the next ____ minutes to (enter option here: silently walk through the cemetery, silently watch cemetery video, or quietly read obituaries, etc.). When we collect back together, come ready to discuss what you have observed.

Small Group Questions:**1. How did you feel walking in the cemetery?**

Scared, freaked out, weird, intrigued, fragile, etc.

2. As you looked at the tombstones or read the obituaries, what observations did you make?

Everyone will die someday, some people lived long lives/some lived very short lives, the obituaries are more about facts and figures than legacy and impact in the lives of others, family is important, etc..

3. The question at the beginning of the night was, “How long have you lived?” It was a trick question because it’s more about living a life a quality rather than just quantity (number of years). (Extended Prep Option: Show the Dead Poet’s clip here – to move to the questions, “We would probably all agree with the concept of “Carpe Diem” but what do we invest our time in to truly “seize the day”).

- a. What are some qualities, principles or experiences that our society tells us should be goals for our lives?

Money, things, looks, education, position at work, friends, etc.

- b. What are some qualities or principles or experiences that you want to be goals for your life? (Allow a few minutes for students to make a list and share 1-2 with your group).

For the next few minutes, we are going to focus on Paul’s letter to the Philippians in the New Testament. Paul is writing from prison – he’s locked up for talking about Jesus – to the followers of Christ at Philippi.

4. If you were a missionary, but were locked away in prison because you were faithful to doing what God told you to do, how would you likely be feeling about life?

Options: Frustrated, angry, depressed, sad, ‘what a waste’, etc.

5. Strangely enough despite being in jail, as you read through Philippians, you will notice that Paul was pumped and full of joy. He wasn’t consumed by his own difficult circumstances and he didn’t see his life as being on hold or being wasted. Instead, Paul based the value of his life on some foundational goals that were beyond him, and even beyond the here and now. Let’s look into what some of these goals were:

- a. Read Philippians 1:12-18

- In Paul's mind, what makes his imprisonment worthwhile? (v. 12 – *the gospel is advanced*, v. 13 – *the guards and everyone now know more about Christ*, v. 14 – *other Christians are more courageous and fearless*)
- No matter what happens, what is Paul's goal? (- v. 18 "*Christ is preached*").

b. Read Philippians 1:20-21

- No matter what happens, what is Paul's goal here? (v. 20 *Christ is exalted in his body*)
- What does it mean to have "Christ exalted in my body, whether by life or by death"? (*Christ is glorified through Paul's life or death*)
- How would v. 21 give Paul hope in the present and future? (*To live is to have intimacy with Christ now, to die is to have even more intimacy with Christ in heaven – living or dying is a no lose deal either way*).

c. Read Philippians 3:8-11.

- No matter what else happens, what is Paul's main goal here? (v. 8. – *Knowing Christ*)

d. Read Philippians 3:12-14.

- No matter what else happens, what is Paul's main goal here? (*Pressing on to complete God's call*)

6. From our study, Paul had four clear goals for his life:

- **Whatever happens, Christ is preached**
- **Whatever happens, Christ is exalted in my body**
- **Whatever happens, I want to know Christ Jesus my Lord**
- **Whatever happens, I press on to complete what God has called me to do**

a. When you look back to society's list of life goals in 3a., how is Paul's list similar or different?

b. When you look back to your list of life goals, how is Paul's list similar or different?

7. Has Paul's list inspired you to make any changes to your list of life goals? To add or delete anything?

8. Whether or not we achieve the goals of our life largely depends on how we spend our time. If you have some new focuses for the time of your life, how will you seek to use your time to grow in this/these areas? Are there any time wasters that are eating up your life and preventing you from growing in these areas?

(Paul used everyday opportunities and everyday circumstances to see Christ preached – he used his time in prison and he also made plans to see Christ preached through his speaking, etc.)

(Another helpful and practical illustration that could be shared with students comes from consultant and writer, Stephen Covey's 4 Quadrants of Time diagram).

Pray for one another as you seek to live life to the fullest!

Leader Note: Contact Rob McAlpine at compass@baptist.ca with any thoughts, questions or suggestions.

Comments and Feedback:

Leader Note: This is your place each week to record significant sharing or growth in the lives of your students for subsequent follow up. You can also use this space to provide feedback on the material. All suggestions are welcome.

Please see the following handout. You have permission to reproduce these handouts for your group.