

AP4CTE AP Seminar: Building a Dynamic Workforce

Research Strategies for Innovating and Problem-solving Across Career Paths

Module 2

The Christian Directory

Chapter V: Directions for Redeeming or well improving Time

Richard Baxter

TIME being man's opportunity for all those works for which he liveth, and which his Creator doth expect from him, and on which his endless life dependeth: the redeeming or well improving of it, must needs be of most high importance to him: and therefore it is well made by holy Paul, the great mark to distinguish the wise from fools. "See then that you walk circumspectly; not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time^m." I shall therefore give you special Directions for it, when I have first opened the nature of the duty to you, and told you what is meant by Time, and what by Redeeming it.

Time, in its most common acception, is taken generally for all that space of this present life, which is our opportunity for all the works of life, and the measure of them. Time is often taken more strictly, for some special opportunity which is fitted to a special work; which we call the season or the fittest time: in both these senses time must be redeemed.

As every work hath its season which must be takenⁿ, so have the greatest works assigned us for God and our souls, some special seasons besides our common time. 1. Some times God hath fitted by nature for his service. So the time of youth, and health, and strength is specially fit for holy work. 2. Some time is made specially fit by God's institution; as the Lord's day above all other days. 3. Some time is made fit by governors' appointment: as the hour of public meeting for God's worship; and lecture-days; and the hour for family worship, which every master of a family may appoint to his own household. 4. Some time is made fit by the temper of men's bodies: the morning hours are best to most, and to some rather the evening; and to all, the time when the body is freest from pain and disabling weakness. 5. Some time is made fit by the course of our necessary, natural, or civil business; as the day is fitter than the sleeping time of the night, and as that hour is the fittest wherein our other employments will least disturb us. 6. Some time is made fit by a special shower of mercy, public or private: as when we dwell in godly families, among the most exemplary, helpful company, under the most lively, excellent means, the most faithful pastors, the most profitable teachers, the best masters or parents, and with faithful friends. 7. Some time is made fit by particular acts of providence: as a funeral sermon at the death of any near us; as the presence of some able minister or private Christian, whose company we cannot ordinarily have: or a special leisure, as the Eunuch had to read the Scripture in his chariot^o. And some time is made specially fit, by the special workings of God's Spirit upon the heart; when he more than ordinarily illuminateth, teacheth, quickeneth, softeneth, humbleth, comforteth, exciteth, or confirmeth. As time in general, so especially these seasons must be particularly improved for their several works: we must take the wind and tide while we may have it, and be sure to strike while the iron is hot. 9. And some times is made fit by others' necessities, and the call of God: as it is the time to relieve the poor when they ask, or when they are most in want; or help our neighbor when it will do him most good: to visit the sick, the imprisoned, and afflicted, in the needful season^p. Thus are the godly like trees planted by the river side, which

^m Ephes.v.15, 16.

ⁿ Eccles.iii.1.

^o Acts viii.

^p Matt.xxv.

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bring forth fruit in their season^q. So to speak in season to the ignorant or ungodly for their conversion, or to be sorrowful for their consolation^r. 10. Our own necessity also maketh our seasons: so the time of age and sickness is made by necessity the season of our special repentance and preparation for death and judgment. 11. The present time is commonly made our season, through the uncertainty of a fitter, or of any more. “Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thy hand to do it. Say not unto thy neighbor, Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee^s.” “Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth^t.” “Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth^u.” “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good to all men; especially to them who are of the household of faith^x.” These are our special seasons.

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The Ends and Uses which time must be redeemed for are these. 1. In general, and ultimately, it must be all for God. Though not all employed directly upon God, in meditating of him, or praying to him; yet all must be laid out for him, immediately or mediately: that is, either in serving him, or in preparing for his service; in mowing, or in whetting; in travelling or in baiting to fit us for travel. And so our time of sleeping, and feeding, and needful recreation is laid out for God. 2. Time must be redeemed especially for works of public benefit: for the church and state: for the souls of many: especially by magistrates and ministers, who have special charge and opportunity; who “must spend and be spent”: for the peoples’ sakes, though rewarded with ingratitude and contempt^y. 3. For your own souls, and your everlasting life: for speedy conversion without delay, if you be yet unconverted: for the killing of every soul-endangering sin, without delay: for the exercise and increase of young and unconfirmed grace, and the growth of knowledge: for the making sure our calling and election: and for the storing up provisions of faith, and hope, and love, and comfort, against the hour of suffering and of death. 4. We must redeem time for the souls of every particular person that we have opportunity to do good to; especially for children and servants, and others whom God hath committed to our trust. 5. For the welfare of our own bodies, that they may be serviceable to our souls. 6. And, lastly, for the bodily welfare of others. And this is the order in which those works lie, for which and in which our time must be redeemed.

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Direct. XV. ‘Remember still that sin and satan will lose no time: and therefore it concerneth you to lose none.’ “The devil your adversary goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour^d.” “Be sober” therefore and “vigilant to resist him^e.” If he be busy, and you be idle, if he be at work in spreading his nets, and laying his snares for you, and you be at play and do not mind him, it is easy to foretell you what will be the issue. If your enemies be fighting, while you sit still or sleep, it is easy to prognosticate who will have the victory. The

^q Psalm.i.3.

^r Isa.l.4.

^s Prov.iii.27.

^t Eccles.xi.2.

^u Prov.xxvii.1.

^x Galvi.10.

^y 2 Cor.xxi.14, 15.

^d 1 Pet.v.8.

^e Ver.7.9

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weeds of corruption are continually growing: sin, like a constant spring, is still running: the world is still enticing: and the flesh is still inclining to its prohibited delights. None of these enemies will make a truce or a cessation with you, to sit still as long as you sit still. So far are they from forbearing you, while you are idle, or gratifying the flesh, that even this is the fruit and evidence of their industry and success. Lose no time then, and admit of no interruptions of your work, till you can persuade your enemies to do the like.

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Tit. 2. Directions Contemplative for Redeeming Opportunity.

Opportunity or season is the flower of time. All time is precious; but the season is most precious. The present time is the season to work of present necessity: and for others, they have all their particular seasons, which must not be let slip^k.

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Direct.II. ‘Remember that the neglecting of the season is the frustrating and destroying of the work.’ When the season is past, the work cannot be done. If you sow not in the time of sowing, it will be in vain at another time. If you reap not, and gather not in harvest, it will be too late in winter to hope for fruit. If you stay till the tide is gone, or take not the wind that fits your turn, it may be in vain to attempt your voyage. All works cannot be done at all times: Christ himself saith, “I must work while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work^m.” Say not then, ‘The next day may serve the turn:’ the next day is for another work: and you must do both.

Direct.III. ‘Consider that if the work should not be impossible, yet it will be difficult out of season; when in its season it might be done with ease.’ How easily may you swim with the tide? and sail with the wind? and form the iron if you hammer it while it is hot? How easily may many a disease be cured, if taken in time, which is afterwards incurable? How easily may you bend a tender twig, and pluck up a plant, which will neither be plucked up nor bended when it is grown up to be a tree? When you complain of difficulties in religion, bethink you whether your loss of the fittest season, and acquainting yourselves no sooner with God, be not the cause?

Direct.IV. ‘Consider that your work out of season is not so good or acceptable, if you could do it.’ “Every thing is beautiful in its seasonⁿ.” To speak a “word in season to the weary,” is the skill of the faithful messengers of peace^o. When out of season good may be turned into evil. Who will thank you for giving physic, or food, or clothing to the dead? Or pitying the poor when it is too late? In time all this may be accepted.

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Tit. 4. The Thieves or Time-wasters to be watchfully avoided.

Thief I. One of the greatest time-wasting sins is idleness, or sloth. The slothful see their time pass away, and their work undone, and can hear of the necessity of redeeming it, and yet they have not hearts to stir. When they are convinced that duty must be done, they are still delaying, and putting it off from day to day, and saying still, I will do it to-morrow, or hereafter.

^k See the many aggravations of sinful delay in my “Directions for Sound Conversion.”

^m John ix.4.

ⁿ Eccles.iii.11.

^o Isa.I.4

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To-morrow is still the sluggard's working day⁶; and to-day is his idle day. He spendeth his time in fruitless wishes: he lieth in bed, or sitteth idly, and wisheth, Would this were laboring: he feasteth his flesh, and wisheth that this were fasting: he followeth his sports and pleasures, and wisheth that this were prayer, and a mortified life: he lets his heart run after lust, or pride, or covetousness, and wisheth that this were heavenly-mindedness, and a laying up of treasure above. Thus the "soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat^k." "The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour^m." Every little opposition or difficulty will put him by a duty. "The sluggard will not plough by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothingⁿ." "The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets^o." "As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed. The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth." And at last his sloth depraves his reason, and bribeth it to plead the cause of his negligence. "The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit, than seven men that can render a reason^p." Time will slide on, and duty will be undone, and your souls undone, if impious slothfulness be predominant. "The way of the slothful man is as a hedge of thorns; but the way of the righteous is made plain^q." You seem still to go through so many difficulties, that you will never make a successful journey of it. Yea, when he is in duty, the slothful is still losing time. He prayeth as if he prayed not, and laboreth as if he labored not; as if the fruit of holiness passed away has hastily as worldly pleasures. He is as slow as a snail; and rids so little ground, and doth so little work, and so poorly resisteth opposition, that he makes little of it, and all is but next to sitting still and doing nothing. It is a sad thing that men should not only lose their time in sinful pleasures; but they must lose it also in reading, and hearing, and praying, by doing all in a heartless drowsiness! Thus "he also that is slothful in his work, is brother to him that is a great waster^r." If he "begin in the Spirit," and for a spirt seem to be in earnest, he flags, and tireth, and "endeth in the flesh." "The slothful roasteth not that which he took in hunting; but the substance of a diligent man is previous^s." If he see and confess a vice, he hath not a heart to rise against it, and resolutely resist it, and use the means by which it must be overcome...

^k Prov.xiii.4.

^m Prov.xxi.25.

ⁿ Prov.xx.4.

^o Prov.xxii.13.

^p Prov.xxvi.14-16.

^q Prov.xv.19.

^r Prov.xviii.9.

^s Prov.xii.27.

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Chapter X, Part I: Directions about our Labour and Callings

Richard Baxter

Tit. 1. Directions for the Right Choice of our Calling and ordinary Labour.

I HAVE already spoken of Christian works, and the duty of our callings, Chap. iii. Grand Direct. 10.; and am now only to subjoin these few Directions, for the right choosing of your callings: for of the using of them I must speak more anon.

Direct. I. ‘Understand how necessary a life of labour is, and the reasons of the necessity.’

Quest. I. ‘Is labour necessary to all? Or to whom if not at all?’ *Ans.* It is necessary (as a duty) to all that are able to perform it: but to the unable it is not necessary: as to infants, and sick persons, or distracted persons that cannot do it, or to prisoner, or any that are restrained or hindered unavoidably by others, or to people that are disabled by age, or by any things that maketh it naturally impossible.

Ques. II. ‘What labour is it that is necessary?’ *Ans.* Some labour that shall employ the faculties of the soul and body, and be profitable, as far as may be, to others and ourselves. But the same kind of labour is not necessary for all.

In some, labours, the mind is more employed than the body: as in the labours of a magistrate, a minister, a physician, a lawyer &c.: though some in these may have much bodily labour also.

The labour of some is almost only the mind: as 1. Of students in divinity, philosophy, law, physic, &c., who are but preparing themselves for a calling. 2. Of some ministers, or other godly persons, who by the iniquity of the place or times where they live, may for a season be disabled from appearing among men, and laboring for any except by the mind: being imprisoned, or driven into solitude, or otherwise mad incapable. 3. Of men that have some extraordinary necessity for a season, to converse with God and themselves alone: as, men that are near death, and have need to lay by all other labours to prepare themselves. Though, usually, even they that are near death should labour the good of others to the last; and in so doing they profit and prepare themselves.

The labour of some others is more of the body than the mind: as, most tradesmen and day-labourers.

And the labour of some is equally of the body and mind: as, some painful ministers, and physicians scribes, and artificers of more ingenious professions, as watchmakers, printers, builders, &c.: some of these are fittest for one man, and some for another.^a

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Quest. V. ‘Why is labour thus necessary to all that are able?’ *Ans.* . God hath strictly commanded it to all: and his command is reason enough to us. ‘For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies.

^a See 1 Cor. ix. 6. 2 Cor.vi.1. 1.Cor.xvi.10. 2Tim.ii.15.

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Now them that are such, we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their own bread^d.” “We beseech you brethren—that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and work with your hands as we commanded you, that ye may walk honesty (or decently) towards them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing^e.” “In the sweat of they face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground^f.” And in the fourth Commandment; “Six days shalt thou labour.” So Ephes.iv.28. Prov.xxxi.31.33.

2. Naturally, action is the end of all our powers; and the power were vain, but in respect to the act. To be able to understand, to read, to write, to go, &c. were little worth, if it were not that we may do the things that we are enabled to.

3. It is for action that God maintaineth us and our abilities: work is the moral as well as the natural end of power. It is the act by the power that is commanded us.

4. It is action that God is most served and honoured by: not so much by our being able to do good, but by our doing it. Who will keep a servant that is able to work, and will not? Will his mere ability answer your expectation?

5. The public welfare, or the good of many, is to be valued above our own. Every man therefore is bound to do all the good he can to others, especially for the church and commonwealth. And this is not done by idleness, but by labour! As the bees labour to replenish their hive, so man being a sociable creature, must labour for the good of the society which he belongs to, in which his own is contained as a part.

6. Labour is necessary for the preservation of the faculties of the mind. (1.) The labour of the mind is necessary hereto, because unexercised abilities will decay; as iron not used will consume with rust. Idleness makes men fools and dullards, and spoileth that little ability which they have. (2.) And the exercise of the body is ordinarily necessary, because of the mind’s dependence on the body, and acting according to its temperature and disposition: it is exceedingly helped or hindered by the body.

7. Labour is needful to our health and life: the body itself will quickly fall into mortal diseases without it: (except in some very few persons of extraordinary soundness^g.) Next to abstinence, labour is the chief preserver of health. It stirreth up the natural heat and spirits, which perform the chief offices for the life of man: it is the proper bellows for this vital fire: it helpeth all the concoctions of nature: it attenuateth that which is too gross: it purifieth that which beginneth to corrupt: it openeth obstructions: it keepeth the mass of blood and other nutritious humours in their proper temperament, fit for motion, circulation, and nutrition; it helpeth them all in the discharge of their natural offices: it helpeth the parts to attract each one its proper nutriment, and promoteth every fermentation and assimilation by which nature maintaineth the transitory, still-consuming oil and mass: it excelleth art in the preparation, alteration, and expulsion of all the excrementitious matter, which being retained would be the matter of manifold diseases; and powerfully fighteth against all the enemies of health...

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^d 2 Thess.iii.10-12.

^e Ver. 6.14. 1 Thess. Iv.11.

^f Gen.iii.19.

^g Socrates was mightily addicted to the exercise of his body, as necessary⁷ to the health of body and mind. Laert. Plutarch out of Plato saith, that soul and body should be equally exercised together, and driven on as two horses in a coach, and not either of them overgo the other. Prec. Of Health.

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Direct. VI. ‘The first and principal thing to be intended in the choice of a trade or calling for yourselves or children, is the service of God, and the public good: and therefore (‘caeteris paribus’) that calling which most conduceth to the public good is to be preferred.’ The callings most useful to the public good are the magistrates, the pastors, and teachers of the church, schoolmasters, physicians, lawyers, &c., husbandmen (ploughmen, graziers, and shepherds): and next to them are mariners, clothiers, booksellers, tailors, and such other that are employed about things most necessary to mankind: and some callings are employed about matters of so little use, (as tobacco-sellers, lace-sellers, feather-makers, periwig-makers, and many more such,) that he that may choose better, should be loath to take up with one of these, though possibly in itself it may be lawful. It is a great satisfaction to an honest mind, to spend his life in doing the greatest good he can; and a prison and constant calamity to be tied to spend one’s life in doing little good at all to others, though he should grow rich by it himself.

...

Direct. VIII. ‘If it be possible choose a calling which so exerciseth the body, as not to overwhelm you with cares and labour, and deprive you of all leisure for the holy and noble employments of the mind: and which so exerciseth your mind, as to allow you some exercise for the body also.’ 1. That calling which so taketh up body and mind, as neither to allow you commixed thoughts of greater things, nor convenient intermissions for them, is a constant snare and prison to the soul: which is the case of many who plunge themselves into more and greater business than they can otherwise dispatch: and yet are contented to be thus continually alienated in their minds from God and heaven, to get more of the world. Many poor labourers (as clothiers, tailors, and other such) can work with their hands, and meditate or discourse of heavenly things without any hindrance of their work: when many men of richer callings have scarce room for a thought or word of God, or heaven all day. 2. On the contrary, if the body have not also its labour as well as the mind, it will ruin your health; and body and mind will both grow useless.

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Tit. 2. Directions against Idleness and Sloth.

Here I must shew you what idleness and sloth is, and what are the signs of it: and then give you directions how to conquer it. Sloth signifieth chiefly the indisposition of the mind and body; and idleness signifieth the actual neglect or omission of our duties. Sloth is an averseness to about, through a carnal love of ease, or indulgence to the flesh. This averseness to labour is sinful, when it is voluntary backwardness to that labour which is our duty. Sloth sheweth itself, 1. In keeping us from our duty, and causing us to delay it, or omit it: and 2. In making us to do it slowly and by the halves: and both these effects are called idleness, which is the omission or negligent performance of our duties through a flesh-pleasing backwardness to labour.

By this you may see, 1. That it is not sloth or sinful idleness to omit a labour which we are unable to perform: as for the sick, and aged, and weak to be averse to labour through the power of an irresistible disease or weakness: or when nature is already wearied by as much labour as it can bear. 2. Or when reason alloweth and requireth us to forbear our usual labour for our health, or for some other sufficient cause. 3. Or when we are unwillingly restrained and hindered by others: as by imprisonment, or denial of opportunity: as if the magistrate forcibly hinder a preacher, or physician, or lawyer from that which otherwise he would do. 4. Or if a mistake or sinful error only keep a man from his labour, it is a sin, but not this sin of sloth: so

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also if any sensual vice or pleasure besides this love of ease take him off. 5. If it be a backwardness only to such labour as is no duty to us, it is but a natural and not a vicious sloth. But voluntary aversness to the labour of our duty through indulgence of fleshly ease, is the sinful sloth or laziness which we speak of.

Sloth and idleness thus described is a sin in all: but a far greater sin in some than in others¹. And you may thus know what sloth it is that is the most sinful. 1. The more sloth is subjected in the mind itself, and the less it is subjected in the body, the greater is the sin. For the mind is the nobler part, and immediate seat of sin... 3. He is most sinfully slothful who is most voluntarily slothful. As he that endeavoureth least against it, and he that most loveth it, and would not leave it: and he that is least troubled at it, and least repenteth and lamenteth it, and contriveth to accommodate his sloth...

Sloth is a thing that is easily discerned: the signs of it are, 1. When the very thought of labour is troublesome and unpleasing, and ease seems sweet. 2. When duty is omitted hereby and left undone. 3. When the easy part of duty is culled out, and the harder part is cast aside. 4. When the judgment will not believe, that a laborious duty is a duty at all. 5. When that which you do, is done with an ill will, and with a constant weariness of mind, and there is no alacrity or pleasure in your work. 6. When you do no more in much time, than you might do in less, if you had a willing, ready mind. 7. When the backward mind is shifting it off with excuses, or finding something else to do, or at least delaying it. 8. When you choose a condition of greater ease and smaller labour, before a laborious condition of life which in other respects is better for you. AQs when a servant had rather live in an ungodly family where there is more ease (and fulness) to be had, than in a place of greatest advantage for the soul, where there is more labour (and want). 9. When little impediments discourage or stop you. "The slothful saith, there is a lion in the wayⁿ." "His way is an hedge of thorns^o." "He will not plough by reason of cold^p." 10. When you make a great matter of a little business. It cannot be done with such preparation, and so much ado, that shews a slothful mind in the doer. Even the "putting his hand to his mouth," and "pulling it out of his bosom," is a business with the sluggard: that is, he maketh a great matter of a little one^q. 11. Lastly, the fruits of slothfulness use to detect it, in soul, and body, and estate: for it corrupteth, impoverisheth, and ruineth all. The weeds of his field or garden, the vices of his soul, the sins of his life, the duties omitted, or sleepily performed, the disorders of his family or charge, and usually, or oft, his poverty, do detect him^r...

Richard Baxter was a self-taught ordained priest in the Church of England in the 17th century. He disliked the frivolity and extravagance of courtly life, believing rather in a limited monarchical government. The Christian Directory itself is over a million words worth of direction for applying Scripture to daily life. Published in 1673, the document differs in important themes of atonement and self-conversation from the Calvinism of his time.

¹ It was on of Solon's laws: 'Is qui spectator otium, omnibus accusare volentibus obnoxius esto. Diog.Laert.lib.i.sect.55. p. 34. Num solum aquas haurio inquit Cleanthes? Cur non et fodio et rigo et omnin facio philosophiae causa?' when they asked him why he would draw water. Ibid.lib.vii.sect.169. p. 473.

ⁿ Prov.xxii.13.

^o Prov.xv.19.

^p Prov.xx.4.

^q Prov.xxvi.15. xix.24.

^r Prov.xxiv.30. xxi.24. 27. How little have some men (yes, ministers themselves), to show of all the good they might have done through all their lives? The work they have done calls them idle.