

Text: [James 4:13-16 \(CEB\)](#)
Date: October 27, 2024
Title: “Deprioritizing Production” – On Time Series, week 3
Theme: To live in God’s time, deprioritize production and reprioritize relationships.

1

A strange thing happened to me this summer during my renewal
leave

I wonder if its ever happened to you

The first week of our break, we were visiting family
That was fine, I felt pretty normal
It was nice to be off, good to be with people

Then we planned to be at home for about a week
So, here in NJ, not traveling, hanging at the house
And suddenly I started to feel kind of awful
Depressed, anxious, and honestly kind of worthless

Now, this seems weird – to have an extended time off and to feel
bad

Weird to you, but you don’t know my particular neuroses!

Actually, though, I am starting to think what I was feeling was not
all that uncommon

I believe it’s connected to the phenomenon where people retire
and a few days later have a heart attack

Have you ever heard of that?

See, we have a really hard time separating our sense of self from
our ability to be productive

To measure our value by the number of things checked off the to-
do list - Do any of you wrestle with this?

I sometimes feel a little bit of a twinge of this on my day off, too
Where I feel bad for just...being

Many of us have somehow come to believe that unless we are
doing something all the time, we're just taking up space
We've got to constantly hustle, we've got to constantly grind
Otherwise we're lazy
And it is killing us

2

James proves that this focus on productivity and profit – the
monetary value of time - isn't a new thing
Reading today's scripture, I get the sense that there were finance
bros back in biblical times, too

That let's-go-conquer-the-world attitude is certainly recognizable:
"Pay attention, you who say: 'Today or tomorrow we will go to
such-and-such a town. We will stay there a year, buying and
selling and making a profit.'"

In other words: "We'll own that place, dog!"
All bravado and braggadocio
To which James responds: "Aren't you forgetting something?
You aren't guaranteed a day, much less a year!"

It's easy, especially in our younger days, to get caught up in our
dreams and schemes for how we're going to make it big
And even as we get a little older, and intellectually begin to realize
that we don't need to rule the world to be happy
We still wrestle with those feelings of always wanting *more*
Because the world is really good at convincing us that all we need
is just *a little more* than what we have right now
And so we're forever hustling, forever grinding to take that next
step

3

Remember last week, I told you I essentially studied productivity for my undergraduate degree in industrial engineering?
I was all about it – I graduated number 1 in my class

One of the people whose work we studied was Frederick Taylor, who is known as “the father of scientific management”
He was a mechanical engineer and management consultant in the early 1900s who pioneered a lot of what would become the discipline of industrial engineering
He was the guy with the stopwatch and the clipboard out on the factory floor,
He broke down jobs into their basic motions, timed them, and standardized them
His goal was to get the most out of workers so that the company could maximize its profits
And in so doing, he essentially turned people into machines

People like Henry Ford loved him
Using Taylor’s principles, the time to produce a Model T went from 12 hours to 93 minutes

But, unsurprisingly, in many places he went, Taylor clashed with workers – and pretty regularly with management too
It turns out, people don’t like it all that much when you treat them like machines!

4

I know we’ve all heard it before:
That no one on their deathbed ever says, “I wish I’d spent more time at the office.”
It’s cliché, but it’s true

But why?

Why is James so critical of those who think only in terms of the
money value of time?

Because, first of all, that attitude fails to recognize the One who
has **given** you the time to begin with
It's a lack of humility that fails to acknowledge the Creator

Second, you're making an assumption that you know the *limits* of
your time

Which is something none of us really get to decide for ourselves
We do all we can to take good care
Ultimately, though, none of that is up to us

And when we assume that we've got all the time in the world, it
can cause us to make bad decisions
To push certain things off till tomorrow that should be done today

Because if *today* is for being *productive*
And being *successful*

Then what day is for being in relationship with the people we
love?

It's always tomorrow, right?
We'll make it up **tomorrow**
Except **tomorrow** never actually gets here

Trust me, if something happened to you today, your employer
would miss you for the value you brought to the company, to
the organization

But *ultimately*, they'd find someone to replace you
Not so with your family
Not so with the people you love
They're the ones who will miss you for you

Your true value can't be quantified by what you produce
God doesn't look at us and see dollars and cents

That's our **fear** though – that our only value to the world is what
we produce

That's the thing that makes us get uncomfortable when we try and
slow down to take a rest

5

I'm convinced that if we want to live on God's time
We've got to learn to **deprioritize productivity**
And **reprioritize relationship** – with God and with each other
Deprioritize productivity
Reprioritize relationship

It's hard to do, though
Because relationships REQUIRE time
They require the very thing we don't perceive we have

So to try and shift your mindset a little, here are a couple things I
want to challenge you to do this week

First, I want you to intentionally make time for relationships

Go for a walk with your spouse

Call your sister

Actually listen to that friend at work who wants to bend your ear
about something difficult happening in their life

Don't just mute yourself so you can keep typing that email

Remember relationships take time, so stop and listen – attention
is key here

The time doesn't count if you're not fully present

Second, make some intentional time for doing nothing

Maybe as part of your spiritual practice, take a nap

Go for a walk in the woods

Do a hobby that you are solidly **mediocre** at – so you don't get too achievement oriented

Watch a favorite movie – not a NEW movie – because that feels like accomplishing something

But one you've seen before, maybe even seen a lot

And then I want you to take note of how you feel

You know, Pastor Kathleen used to remind us that we are “human be-ings” and not “human doings”

If doing nothing makes you uncomfortable, I want you to talk with God about that

And ask God to remind you that you're loved just for who you are
And not what you can produce

This week – intentional time for two things:

Relationships

And Doing Nothing

Your value does not come from what you produce

It comes from who you are

Who God made you to be

We need to deprioritize production

And reprioritize relationships

If we want to live in God's time

Amen.

By Joe Monahan, Medford UMC, Medford NJ