

Character Helps

To help encourage each other to practice good character monthly so that we, and all those whose lives we touch, may experience its valuable benefits.

January 2002

Thoughts ⇨ Actions ⇨ Habits ⇨ Character ⇨ Destiny

Punctuality

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

I WILL...

Be at the right place at the right time

Our time and our resources are precious gifts that are limited and valuable. We can invest them productively or idle them away. We can manage them or let others drain them away. Being at the right place at the right time is important to avoid wasting our own time, energy and resources and avoid missing opportunities - or robbing others of theirs. In addition to promoting wise use of our resources and those of others, our punctuality expresses love to others. Being at the right place at the right time: demonstrates they are valued, energizes them, helps them to proceed on to meet their responsibilities, and encourages them that they too can be punctual and grow in the practice and development of good character qualities. Purpose to be at the right place at the right time.

Prepare for unexpected delays

The habit of punctuality is a matter of will - of determining to be on time. In the best of situations unexpected delays will occur and things will happen out of your control. Plan your departure into your schedule. Build slack time into the schedule for unexpected delays. Be punctual in departing, so as not to use up the slack time built into the

schedule. Do "last minute" things ahead of departure time, and do not fall into the "one more thing" trap. And do not compromise your quality of punctuality by falling into the trap of feeling, "oh well, they are never on time so I have a few more minutes." A good rule of thumb is to plan to be early (and have things to do while you wait). You may be surprised at how relaxed and prepared you are for your scheduled event because you prepared to arrive early. You may be able to breathe without shortness of breath and smile because you are prepared and in the right place at the right time. Keep trying. Don't give up.

Do my work ahead of time

Organization is a quality that complements punctuality. Organizing and preparing work ahead of time can save valuable time. If you know a big task is coming up evaluate ahead of time what needs to be done. Do what you can ahead of time. One term given to this type of time organization is "backwards planning." See what needs to be done and the completion time by which it must be completed. With that end time in focus, start backwards in your planning, giving yourself plenty of time for the "unexpected delays." Backwards planning and doing work ahead of time will eliminate much of

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"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:"

Ecclesiastes 3:1

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Character Council
of Greater Cincinnati & Northern Kentucky

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the stress created by last minute rushes and contribute to the practice and habit of punctuality.

Plan a daily schedule and keep it

A personal daily schedule is a very important tool that will help us be punctual. And keeping the schedule will encourage us to keep on being successful at it - even when we don't feel like it. Planning and keeping a schedule allows us to make the most of every moment. Planning and keeping a schedule involve several character qualities. Discernment is valuable in creating a plan that effectively helps to achieve our goals. Efficiency and thoroughness are vital in maximizing use of the time allotted. Discipline sees to it we stick to the time allotted for each activity in the schedule.

So often we hear, "there just isn't enough time to do what I want to do!" In reality we each have the same number of hours in every day. The way we plan affects the productivity of the day. Sometimes we plan things that are very important to our schedule but possibly not as important to God. A wise woman once said,

"There is just the right amount of time for you to accomplish God's will." This is ultimately the key ...making our day count for the Lord and for eternity. As we schedule our day, consider others, but first of all, let's consider the Lord. Ask Him tomorrow morning, "Lord, how do you want me to spend my allotment of time today?"

Not fall into the trap of 'just one more'

"Just one more" can be a killer to all time management. And the "one more" often leads to one more. Managing our time involves being aware of how each minute is being spent. We cannot be as creative, thorough or productive if we are rushing through a project on which we started late or that was not in the schedule at all. Plan how much time you need for each task or project. Then discipline yourself to stop each task when its time to begin something else. And begin each task on time. Use the time allotted and if there's time left over, take time to relax and enjoy the benefits of punctuality before beginning another project.

P u n c t u a l i t y i n N a t u r e

A calendar hangs on the wall of a town hall in southern California. The anticipation of the city is focused on March 19th. Every year, varying by no more than a few hours, the cliff swallows return. Migrating thousands of miles each spring, the swallow's return is usually predictable to within twenty-four to forty-eight hours. Even if a more suitable nesting place becomes available, as long as its present nest is not disturbed, the swallow returns year after year with punctuality. Some swallows travel as far south as Argentina for the winter. These small birds make their return scheduled flight every spring, eating insects along the way. Swallows traveling from South America to Florida will not fly over the Gulf of Mexico. This would be the fastest way, but for fear of being without insects to eat, they travel instead

through Central America and Texas. This adds 2,000 miles to their trip. This would qualify as an "extra mile" effort. To protect the schedule the swallow skims water at twenty miles an hour for a drink of water rather than stopping and being detained. Let us be as the swallow, dependable and punctual.



P u n c t u a l i t y

Punctuality in History

Samuel Budgett (1794-1851) was a man of high principal and philanthropy who was known throughout Great Britain for his successful conduct of an immense mercantile business. He believed that in whatever calling a person finds himself he should do his best, whether nail-straightening or bag mending or other; and Budgett trained his employees to succeed and advance. He could boast of the most efficient and faithful employees in Great Britain.

Budgett strongly disliked idleness, believing it never made one rich physically or morally. He championed personal industry, and believed punctuality was key. He trained the 600 men and boys in his huge warehouse by his example and methods. Even those living several miles away managed regularly throughout the year to

reach the store by 6 a.m. By the gate hung a blackboard with a hook on it for each employee. On the hook hung a little copper plate. When the employee left he took his plate, exposing his number on the board. As he entered the gate, he placed the plate on his hook, covering his number. The moment the 6 a.m. bell stopped ringing the board was removed, and all whose numbers were not covered were immediately put down as tardy. At the end of the year all that had not been tardy received a reward. In this way Budgett trained to promptness large numbers of employees who served him many years. He believed promptness was the secret of success, because following in the train of promptness was industry, economy of time, dispatch and a whole group of other character qualities.

Punctuality in Daily Life

At Home

Begin your practice of punctuality at home. Arise on time, get dressed and eat breakfast on time, and get to your first appointment on time (the schoolbus, the workplace, the kitchen chores, or other)! The beginning of a day is like the ripple a stone makes when skimmed across a pond. How we spend the moment before will affect the moments that follow. And then during the day, whether at home or away, purpose to be on time with events on your schedule. At the end of the day, be home and ready for supper at the appointed time, and on time for any evening commitments. Being punctual contributes to your making the most of your time and resources, as well as others'. It also brings peace and order in your life, as well as the joy of pleasing the Lord and growing in Christlike character. But punctuality also benefits family members in important ways. When an appointment includes them (as for example having supper together), being on time expresses to them your respect for them and their time, and can impart energy and peace. Your punctuality can also be an important example for them, showing its practical benefits and demonstrating they too can do develop the practice of punctuality and experience its benefits. And practicing

punctuality has value not only in this life but in the life to come - for the Lord, others and you (1Timothy 4:7-8). So "*look carefully how you walk...making the most of the time...*" (Ephesians 5:15-16).

At Work

Have you noticed if you get up late the entire day seems to be run behind. Manufacturers try to make alarm clocks pleasant to the ear, but truly no one wants to hear an early alarm. But arising on time is key to getting to work on time and to keeping all your time commitments throughout the day. It is key because the beginning of each task throughout your day on time is dependent on finishing the previous task on time. It is also key to your morale; getting started on time can set the mood for the day. It all starts with getting up on time. A few steps may help as you are establishing a routine. Decide the night before what time you need to get up. Set the alarm for fifteen minutes before you actually want to get up. Prepare clothes and lunches for the next day or at least know what your plans are. Put important items near the door so you'll remember to pick them up as you leave. When the alarm goes off in the morning DO NOT hit the snooze button. Sit on the side

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of the bed, pray, thank the Lord for another day. Wake up before you move forward. Eat a healthy breakfast. Start out the door 15 minutes early.

At Church

"Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17). How can iron sharpen iron? What does this mean for us? As we practice punctuality (and every character quality), encouragement we receive can have a significant effect on our progress, and indeed, on our commitment to keep going. When we are on the right track, praise and recognition can greatly reinforce good character. So observe your friends and family, not for the purpose of finding error, but to find good character to praise. Avoid flattery or vain expressions. Rather, look for good qualities in others you can sincerely praise. For example, encourage when others arrive on time, rather than focusing on the few that are late. A small gift of praise given at an appropriate time can do wonders! So set a goal to praise others for good character.

Punctuality in the Heart

Punctuality is being on time; prompt. It means, for example, to keep appointments, to be physically present at the right place at the right time, to communicate by telephone with the right place at the right time, and to submit or deliver expected items at the right place at the right time (e.g. from prompt payment of invoices and taxes, to delivery of completed items expected in a production schedule, to completion of other tasks expected by people). Punctuality is being on time in meeting commitments, engagements and responsibilities.

The Importance of Punctuality

Punctuality is important, first, as a matter of good stewardship. Time is a very precious resource of which, in reality, we have very little. *"What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes"* (James 4:14). We can invest it productively or idle it away. We can manage its use or let others steal it away. But the one thing we can't do is store it up - we either use it or lose it. And the Lord says use it and make the most of it:

"Look carefully then how you walk! Live purposefully and worthily and accurately, not as

Start today with at least one praise each day.

In the Community

Imagine a community in which citizens are punctual - in which citizens do the right thing at the right time! And then commit to contributing to such a community! Begin by asking the Lord to create humble and willing hearts in citizens, and to energize you to practice and model punctuality. Plan a daily personal schedule to help you organize your affairs effectively. Include time to get properly prepared for each appointment. Allow time to lovingly listen to and build up others in the community, without becoming tardy. Provide adequate slack time to start and end each task on time. Purpose to be at the right place at the right time - prompt for each appointment, stopped at each red traffic light, timely in submitting payments for all bills. Be early for meetings with others to help make sure all arrangements are ready and to offer directions to others. Be a model. Be an initiator. And let a needy community see and experience the blessings punctuality can bring.

the unwise and witless do, but as wise (sensible, intelligent) people, making the very most of the time...." (Ephesians 5:15-16, Amplified Bible)

But not only time is precious; all of our resources are valuable and limited. And the Lord says we are to be good stewards of all our resources. According to the Bible, the Lord is the rightful owner of everything, including me and all of my resources - my time, abilities, material goods, relationships, influence - my life. (Colossians 1:15-16). He entrusts all of these to me to manage for Him for His purposes - to act as His steward. He expects me to manage them well (Matthew 25:15-29; Luke 12:41-48), and will hold me accountable. In heaven He will judge my earthly stewardship as a Christian (2 Corinthians 5:10); the reward or loss will contribute to a more or less enriched experience for me in heaven [although we are not told in what way]. (1 Corinthians 3:10-13).

In managing our time and other resources, punctuality is important so that through tardiness we do not waste our own time, energy and resources, or miss opportunities - or rob others of theirs. Our punctuality is important to both

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the effectiveness and efficiency of our stewardship as well as to that of others. (As an example, imagine the losses created by a commercial airline pilot whose tardiness causes a delay in departure of the plane: extra effort of control towers, ground crews, counter personnel and others in rescheduling departure and arrival times; losses to many resulting from missed connections and appointments of passengers; concern and wasted time of people awaiting arriving passengers, etc., etc.) Our personal planning and carrying out of a personal schedule can be central. For this reason, let us post each appointment and commitment to our schedule.

And let us recognize that items are not isolated events but a series of events whose start and completion times affect other events; so let us allow adequate time for each event and for buffers between events for the unexpected. Then, let us commit to being punctual for both the start and completion of each event.

Second, our punctuality is important to loving others. In being punctual we encourage them, contribute to their peace, enable them to meet their goals and responsibilities, honor them by demonstrating they are valued individuals, demonstrate to them the character quality of punctuality, show them what the power of God can do in a life, and encourage them that they too can be punctual and can practice and grow in good character. By contrast, being tardy discourages, disrupts, insults, robs them and God, and gives occasion to itemize our shortcomings, mock God, and create damage by expressing their negativity and hurt.

Punctuality -being on time, being prompt - is related to a number of other character qualities. For example:

Decisiveness - promptness, resolution, wisdom in making and implementing decisions

Responsibility - fulfilling the promises or commitments for which we are accountable

Initiative - self-initiated activity using time/resources for loving God and good works

Benevolence - selfless desire for well-being of another without motive of personal reward

Honor - looking upon and dealing with each person as a valued individual

Self-Control - controlling the self to do what is right

All are concerned with our being good stewards of all God has entrusted to us and with loving others. All are character qualities of Jesus Christ. And all are matters of the heart and therefore very important to the Christian.*

Punctuality and The Heart

Punctuality is, at its core, a matter of the heart. It is a matter of acknowledging that my time and my resources are all precious gifts of God that He entrusts to me to use responsibly and gratefully in pleasing Him and building His Kingdom. And it a matter of acknowledging that in managing my time and resources I am to be loving of others and considerate of their responsibilities to be good stewards of the time and resources entrusted to them. Loving and honoring God and people are matters of my heart.

As we conclude*, let us each ask the Lord to search our heart. Am I grateful for the time and resources He gives to me? Am I being punctual and a good steward of them? Am I being loving toward others? Are my thoughts, actions, and aspirations pleasing to Him? Am I committed to making Him #1 in my life? Or is my heart possibly grieving Him, quenching His Spirit in my life (Ephesians 4:30, 1 Thessalonians 5:19), blocking our intimate personal relationship, and inhibiting His love and power in my life?

Will you join me:

[Protestant] Ask the Lord to search me for anything displeasing to Him, confess and forsake everything displeasing He reveals; and ask Him to help me faithfully practice the habit of punctuality, beginning in my heart.

[Roman Catholic] Ask the Lord to help me in making a thorough and daily examination of conscience; reveal anything displeasing to Him; take these burdens to Him in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, seeking His presence and His grace to help me faithfully practice the habit of punctuality. His grace will be especially helpful to my heart in being punctual for Him and His will.

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*For further discussion of the heart and its importance, confession, and being filled with the Holy Spirit, see "In the heart" in [Character Helps - Enthusiasm](#) (March 2001).

Punctuality

What Benefits Does a Christian Create When Practicing the Monthly Character Quality?

Benefits To God:

Brings God **honor** by demonstrating to Him our love, trust, and obedience in trying to develop the character qualities of Jesus Christ as He directed us to do.

Brings God **pleasure** as Father in seeing us grow up into the likeness of His Son Jesus (Who was perfect humanity and His design for us) so that we can become and do all He created us to be and do, both in this life and the life to come.

Brings God **love** as we come into a more intimate, personal relationship with Jesus.

Benefits To Others:

Brings **benefits** to others as they personally experience directly the effects of the Christian's practice of good character, e.g. the energy of a smile, wholeheartedness in helping, keeping of promises, respect, truthfulness, etc.

Informs others by demonstrating what the character qualities and benefits look like in real life.

Encourages others by seeing a real person who believes in the importance of practicing good character, and by seeing that a real person can in fact develop and practice good character

Benefits To the Christian:

Brings **joy** in pleasing God, the highest priority of the Christian's life.

Promotes **intimacy** in the Christian's personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Contributes to the Christian's receiving love, strength, wisdom, other blessings from the Lord.

Helps the Christian **grow** in character qualities of Jesus Christ .

Develops **value** for the Christian both for this life and the life to come.

Enhances the Christian's self-acceptance, self-confidence and self-satisfaction.

Increases the Christian's productivity and accomplishments.

Improves the **relationships** of the Christian with other people.

Helps the Christian reach his or her full potential.

Brings **joy** to the Christian in pleasing and receiving affirmation of other people who are important to him or her, e.g. spouse, family, pastor, friends, co-wonders, group members, etc.

Brings **joy** to the Christian in helping to benefit spouse, family, and others.

Brings **joy** to the Christian in helping to build a better community, workplace, and world.

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