All the World is Our Campus...

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"Recapturing True Values"
REDEEM the time is the theme for this issue of Illumination—and what better theme is there for a newsletter to Living University students and donors? In Ephesians 5:15–16 the Apostle Paul admonished the Ephesian church brethren, and ultimately all of us, to: “See then that you walk circumspectly [diligently or perfectly], not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” The Blue Letter Bible defines the word “redeem” as: “to make wise and sacred use of every opportunity for doing good, so that zeal and well doing are as it were the purchase money by which we make the time our own.”

As we are all aware, God gives us a finite amount of time on this earth. He gives us 24 hours each day for just over 70 years, about a third of which we spend sleeping. For the remainder of that time God allows us to choose what we will do and how we will spend it. In the grand scheme of things, life is “but a vapor” (Psalm 39:5) and passes very quickly, so we must choose to use our God-given time wisely and effectively as we work to overcome and develop His perfect righteous character. However, we live in a Laodicean era where the “days are evil,” and in Satan’s society that is designed to monopolize and consume as much of our precious time as possible. We see the results of God’s people squandering time in the parables of Matthew 25. Jesus Christ described the “foolish virgins” (vv. 1–13) failing to use their time wisely to spiritually grow and overcome, and as a result they were prevented entry into the wedding. In the next section of the chapter (vv. 14–30) we learn about a “wicked and lazy” servant who, like the foolish virgins, was also guilty of squandering his time and failing to spiritually grow. The sad result was the same! He too was cast out and did not receive the reward of his fellow servants who did work hard to grow and overcome. In fact, his intended reward was even given to another.

From these powerful parables, we are reminded that God has very high expectations for us all. As Christ said to the “wicked and lazy servant,” “I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed” (v. 26). God has given us a unique and blessed calling, and with it has given us the expectation to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). It is up to each of us to determine which actions we will take in order to grow mentally, emo-
tionally, intellectually and spiritually. God expects us to grow and has prepared an incredible reward for us if we will do so. But, we must push and drive ourselves to grow, even when Satan tries to deceive us into thinking, “it is too much work.” Redeeming the time reminds us that we must “take back” and “defend” the time that Satan is trying to steal from us. And we must put it to wise and profitable use if we intend to be the “profitable servants” and “wise virgins” that God called us to be.

Many tools and avenues exist to help us “grow in grace and knowledge” as God instructs. We have the Bible, we have Church publications often containing “sermons in print,” we have recorded sermons in our congregational libraries and online. And thankfully, about eight years ago, God directed Dr. Meredith and other Church leaders to create Living University—a 21st century Christian education institution and a continuation of His ancient “schools of the prophets” (2 Kings 2:3, 5). LU is an important vehicle for the Church to retain and pass on detailed Bible teachings and understanding that could be lost without a means of preserving it. LU is a tool God’s people today can use to grow even more deeply in godly and Biblical understanding. Many of you have taken advantage of this powerful spiritual tool, and no doubt God is pleased with your efforts to “grow your talents”!

Ultimately, spiritual and all other growth requires effort and action. The foolish virgins and the unprofitable servant failed to receive their God-intended reward because they failed to take action. They took the “easy and broad” path instead of the “difficult and narrow” way, and instead of receiving the reward of eternal life, they received the reward of destruction (Matthew 7:13–14). God inspired Paul to use the word “redeem” for a reason. Redeem is an action verb that directs the reader to do something. God’s calling is not for the lazy. His calling is for those who will respond, act, grow, learn and do! Living University is a tool that God’s people can use to take these actions. It is also a tool designed to encourage His vigilant ones in their growth. Neither LU nor the spiritual growth process is easy. Both are very challenging! But, they are also both very rewarding. As the cliché notes, “nothing worth having is easy.” Growth takes hard work; redeeming the time takes hard work and a focused effort; but, the rewards in this life and especially in God’s kingdom are immeasurable!

To all of you who have taken and are taking Living University classes I say, “Well done and keep up the great work. You are laying up treasure in heaven and redeeming the time well!” To our donors, thank you on behalf of the University and our student body for helping to make possible this important avenue for redeeming the time! To all of you, I challenge you to encourage others to use LU as a tool to help them more effectively redeem the time.

The days are evil and time is short! The Master will soon return to set up His Kingdom on Earth. He has called us to be His firstfruits and spiritual virgins. He has given us talents to not only protect, but to further grow and develop. Continue to redeem the time, continue to grow your talents, and continue to take action to keep your spiritual lamps full! Christ earnestly desires to welcome all of us into His Kingdom, but He can do so only if we keep growing. In the remainder of this issue of Illumination you will read articles written by our Living University students who, like many of you, are using LU to help them redeem the time!

“See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.
—Ephesians 5:15-16
Illumination

Living University is Hard!

“Nothing in the world is worth having or worth doing unless it means effort, pain, difficulty... I have never in my life envied a human being who led an easy life. I have envied a great many people who led difficult lives and led them well.”

—Theodore Roosevelt

Is being a student at Living University hard? Is it difficult and challenging? Is it time-consuming?

Well...yes. Yes it is; but is that really a bad thing? I was talking with someone the other day about being a student here at Living University, and they told me that the “word on the street” is that LU is “really hard!” As a second-time college student, having graduated in 2010 from West Virginia University with a Bachelor degree in Petroleum and Natural Gas Engineering, I will attest to the claim that LU is just as rigorous, challenging and time-consuming as any accredited Division 1-A institution. However, I can also say that my experience here has been by far more rewarding, profitable and well worth the time spent.

Living University classes can be demanding. With each credit hour, the hours spent on reading, studying, homework and research multiply. The essay assignments are challenging, forcing us to think critically and carefully examine the material. It will take self-discipline, balance, perseverance, drive and sacrifice to maintain a full class schedule. It will require commitment, focus, prayer and hard work. At times it will be hard, it will be difficult—and it may even push you beyond your expectations.

Good! That is exactly what I need. Those are the character traits that I want to have and need to build. This is exactly how I need to be spending my time—being challenged, being pushed to work hard, developing skills and growing in godly character. We know that God wants us to make the most of the time we are given. He tells us to “walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians
5:15–16). Redeeming the time we have been given is important. To get back the time that we have and use it to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness is what our Heavenly Father wants us to do. Living University provides the opportunity to do just that! The university is a resource, a tool and a blessing that can be used to make the most of the time we are given. Being blessed with the opportunity to study at LU has placed me in an environment that encourages, motivates, and directs me to spend my time on what is most important.

I am now in my second year as a full-time on-campus student and I am very thankful for the time that has been spent here. Has it been hard? Yes. Challenging? At times. Would I have rather spent my time doing something else? No! I would not trade my time here for something else because it has truly been more profitable, rewarding and fulfilling than I had ever expected. It has helped me to grow, to learn and to gain experience, guidance, opportunity and success. It has given me strength, direction, discipline and focus. More importantly, it has given me time well spent. The rewards of being challenged and pushed for betterment have far exceeded the momentary struggles and discomforts. I cannot express enough how beneficial it has been for me to spend my time here as a student. It truly is an invaluable resource and tool that can be used to redeem the time! If anyone is unsure of taking a course, or joining the on-campus program, because they have heard that it is “hard,” I would strongly encourage them to take the step of faith, enroll and take advantage of the opportunity and the time they have been given.

So…the word on the street is that Living University is hard, huh? Well…Good! I hope to see you here.
These past few months, I have found myself forcefully confronted with the fact that time is fleeting and must be appreciated and used to the fullest. My Living University experience as an on-campus student began last fall, and I have appreciated the experience to intimately study the Bible while being involved in doing God's Work and serving the Church. Events this summer, however, have made me realize that I did not then—and I fear do not even now—properly grasp the blessing and honor I have been granted in this unique and amazing opportunity.

Having just completed a bachelor's degree elsewhere, I began attending Living University, committed to only staying for a year. I would complete a few classes and have the LU work-study experience, then continue with my education and career. Sometime during the course of last year, a very dear friend expressed an interest in attending LU this very fall. Knowing first-hand the positive experience of being an on-campus LU student, I set about determining the possibility. She was incredibly passionate about the prospect, and I began, through her, to perceive a small glimmer of the real blessing of being in this role. While the particulars and feasibility of her enrollment remained vague, it was this passion she showed for the institution that ultimately convinced me that I wanted to stay on another year. I wanted to learn to feel for my experience the way she did about one that remained for her just a hope-filled dream.

As the weeks passed, we talked about Living University in Charlotte. I described the classes, the professors and how much I enjoy the on-campus discussions, lectures and assemblies. I mentioned the experience of passing evangelists and ministers in the hallways and of being able to ask and discuss complex questions with them. My job assisting in the executive suite, spending time with the other students, our student activities, and many other details were all things I shared with her, and she absorbed them with interest and enthusiasm. We imagined all of the wonderful things we would do together if she came, hoping that LU would be...
God's will for her as well. This, unfortunately, was not to be, as several things prevented her enrollment. I watched her deal with this disappointment, and the pain that accompanies a failed dream, with grace and optimism. She did not let the missed opportunity of going to LU get in the way of what was really important, and I determined to better appreciate my opportunity. I had what she had wanted, and to express insufficient gratitude seemed expressive of an attitude of entitlement that I would not wish to bear.

My friend, Morgan, died this summer, destroying with finality the possibility of her ever attending Living University. This fall, I returned to Charlotte, only a few weeks after the event, with a heavy heart. For a while, I felt the emptiness in the lack of her presence, and struggled to acknowledge the blessing of being here. These past few weeks, however, with God's help I have gradually regained the perspective of opportunity. He has helped me to rise above my grief and to increasingly see the lessons to be learned from Morgan's example. She exemplified Ecclesiastes 12:1, and used every day as an opportunity to grow closer to God. Morgan also strove to “redeem the time” (Ephesians 5:16). Though she did not know entirely what God had in mind for her, she determined to work towards the future while appreciating the present, and did indeed live as though everyday was her last.

I continue, more and more, to delight in confronting the ideas and information to which I am exposed, marvel at the commitment and intelligence of the faculty and ministry here at Headquarters, and rejoice in the opportunity to play a direct role in furthering the Work of God. I am thus working to follow Morgan's example and to grow while properly appreciating my Living University experience. We should all strive to live our lives with this blending of contentment and urgency, not knowing when our last day might be, yet knowing what is ahead. Appreciate the opportunities that you have been given, rejoicing in the challenge to grow, and pray that God's will be allowed to work in you.
Mr. Dan Hall-
Mr. Hall is a current LU student and Living Church of God Regional Pastor serving brethren in the Southeastern United States

Haven’t you found being glued to television, cable news and other sources of entertainment a waste of time? As I mused on this thought, I wondered how much time I was wasting, though trying to keep up with the news. If I watched an hour or two of programming a day, that would mean 7 to 14 hours of valuable time lost per week. There may be other distractions as well that would increase that time. At the end of the day, the entertainment and information wasn’t that profitable. The cable news programming offered snippets of news sandwiched between a stream of commercials. The realization hit me that I was paying money to watch commercials! Furthermore, cable news is actually “cable olds.” After all, the news media reports what has happened and teases the viewer to stay tuned for what’s next—more of the same “olds” and a relentless barrage of commercials.

Please, don’t misunderstand. It is good to keep abreast of the news and it is also enjoyable to watch a rare edifying program. However, much of what is viewed steals our time. Once time is lost, we can never get it back. We can only “redeem” future time. The Apostle Paul said, “See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:15–16). I certainly don’t want to walk as a fool. Therefore, I gave some thought on how to redeem future time.

Dr. Douglas Winnail has repeatedly encouraged the ministry and all our local leaders to audit or take a Bible class at Living University. I’ve been auditing off-and-on over the past few years. Recently, I decided to take Old Testament Survey online for credit. I put the “zapper” (the remote control) in the drawer. There would be no time for TV, browsing the Web and other worthless distractions.

True to God’s promise, His words impart knowledge, they correct, they exhort and inspire. In a word, they are profitable. For instance, the Major and Minor prophets show what happened to the children of Israel. They reveal God’s profound mercy, the first and second coming of Jesus Christ, and reveal His plan to save Israel and by extension, all humanity. The Prophets section also explains what is happening now to modern-day Israel and why, and what is going
to happen in the near future. They also underline the consequences of sin, repentance and God’s mercy. God’s instruction in those areas continues to have a profound effect upon me. In addition, I feel like I’m on the cutting edge of the real news that counts and not the “olds.” Secular news and TV programming fail to comprehend the existence of an all-powerful creator God who intervenes in world affairs, who establishes His credibility through fulfilled prophecy, who keeps His promises and declares the end from the beginning. News reporters and analysts don’t understand the past, or the unsolvable problems of the present. Regarding the future, they are clueless to what is about to occur.

Therefore, if one desires to use his or her time profitably—instead of walking like a fool the way the world does—try an online Living University Bible class and immerse yourself in God’s word. The discipline of taking a class for credit forced me to do the work and take the tests. The deeper one digs into God’s word the more profound the impact. The whole experience has made a noticeable improvement in my personal understanding and relationship with God, in my sermons and in counseling. Time is not only being redeemed, but the depth of knowledge and insights keep on giving after the class is over.

Finally, Groucho Marx, a famous comedian of the last century, once quipped, “I find television very educational. Every time someone switches it on, I go into another room and read a good book” (“Groucho on Groucho,” Readers Digest, October 2015, p. 21). Likewise, I hope you will find TV, cable programming and all the world’s distractions “educational”—by switching them off. Then, immerse yourself in The Book by taking an online Living University Bible class. Redeem the time before it is lost forever. ■
Since becoming a student at Living University, I have learned the importance of managing my time wisely. God admonishes us in the Bible to “redeem the time” (Ephesians 5:16). Redeem means to buy back or rescue from loss. Put in those terms, we need to rescue our time from loss. With large amounts of homework, lectures, jobs and whatever social life we can squeeze in, we cannot afford to lose sight of the most important aspect of our lives—our relationship with God!

How can we possibly fit all of that into our daily schedules? Some of us may be able to get through our homework quickly. Others may not. How do we manage? One principle that we can use comes from Scripture. In Matthew 23:23 Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for neglecting the weightier matters of the law. This points out a very important concept. We should focus on what is most important and begin with devoting our time to that. If we have a test coming up, we should make sure that we study for it before we go out and do something recreational with our classmates. If we notice that our homework is cutting into our prayer and study time, then we should adjust the use of our time accordingly. Some of this may take a bit of trial and error, but after a bit of practice we can begin to set patterns in our schedules and get a healthy routine in place that will help us use our time to the best of our abilities.

I used this principle when dealing with my writing assignments. As a brand new student, I struggled with the ability to write research papers and essays and still have enough time to devote to other homework activities. I had not written a paper.
for school in well over ten years. Needless to say, I was a bit rusty! Whenever I had a research paper or essay due, I knew I had to give myself a large amount of time to focus on the paper. I noticed an additional benefit when I put an emphasis on giving myself enough time to complete my papers. After writing several essays, I began to get comfortable with researching my topics and grew faster as time went on. In comparison, at the beginning of the semester, if I had an essay due, I knew that something else was going to have to “fall through the cracks.” By the end of the first semester, I had become efficient enough that I was able to devote less time to writing my essays, and I could fit them into my schedule and not have to neglect other activities. I even had time to fit in a few fun recreational activities as well. The lesson that I drew from this was that if I focused on the major projects, such as my writing assignments, not only did it help me finish the essays on time, but it helped me learn how to do them much more quickly. This was a huge aid to me when it came to balancing my time well.

As human beings we are not machines, and we do need to make time for a social life and other activities—like regular exercise. Our goal should not be to eliminate or neglect other parts of our lives but rather to find a balance that puts each activity into perspective in order to prioritize properly. If we practice this on a daily basis we will be following Christ’s direction to “redeem the time.”

“Our goal should not be to eliminate or neglect other parts of our lives but rather to find a balance that puts each activity into perspective in order to prioritize properly.”
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Spring 2016 Class Sample

- BUS 112  INTRO TO BUSINESS  MR. D. JERRY RUDDLESDEN
- COMM 150  ORAL COMMUNICATION  MR. STEPHEN ELLIOT
- THL 212  OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY II  MR. PETER NATHAN
- THL 215  THE LOST TRIBES OF ISRAEL  DR. DOUGLAS WINNAIL
- THL 345  CHRISTIAN MEN  DR. SCOTT WINNAIL

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