**LIVING ON THE RAGGED EDGE**

***The True Meaning of Redeem The Time***

Tim Cook is the CEO of Apple. Last year his income was $14.8 million in salary and $281 million in stock value! Do you know what he did to achieve that success? By his own admission his day begins at 3:45 a.m. He is at the office before any other employee. He is the last one to leave. He goes to bed about 10:00 p.m. He assumed the same work ethic as his predecessor Steve Jobs. Would you say Tim Cook is a success?

We look at our lives and think that if we don’t fill up every minute of every day then something is wrong. We pride ourselves on being “productive” by having a TO DO list that requires a non-stop day to achieve. We want to be seen as “busy” and “important” because we are in demand. Our lives are a never-ending rush in our “pursuit of happiness.” We want to be thought a Success.

But pause long enough in your hurry-scurry, helter-skelter life to read Ephesians 5:15-16.

“*See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,* ***redeeming the time****, because the days are evil.*”

Then inhale and exhale and pause long enough to read Colossians 4:5

“*Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside,* ***redeeming the time***.”

Many think by those commands that I must flood my schedule with work, work, work. I must be “busy, busy, busy.” God says, “No, No, No!”

Redeeming the time means to buy up your days, hours, minutes and seconds as precious commodities. It means to use them wisely, not foolishly. The very fact it also says, “*the days are evil*” implies this is a spiritual issue, not a time-management issue. Satan is in the background wherever “*evil*” is lurking. He wants me to use my time unwisely and to play the fool. How can I do this?

Dr. Richard Swenson, M.D., wrote a book called “*Margin*” that would be a good read for many of us who feel overworked and overloaded with time commitments and stress levels going through the roof. The inside cover defines the book this way:

“*Margin* is the space that once existed between ourselves and our limits. Today we use margin just to get by. This book is for anyone who yearns for relief from the pressure of overload. Reevaluate your priorities, determine the value of rest and simplicity in your life, and see where your identity really comes from. The benefits can be good health, financial stability, fulfilling relationships, and availability for God’s purpose.”

Our understanding in modern America is how close can we get to reaching our limit (called in the book “*overload*”), without cracking. Charles Swindoll called it “*Living On* *The Ragged Edge*” in his book by that title. Can we push ourselves to the edge without coming undone? Can we work from sunup to sunset, even to midnight, day after day and somehow escape burnout? Our corporate world around us is demanding everyone climb the ladder of success, and that comes only with a workaholic schedule.

My worth. My value. My success. This is all determined by My work habits. I am judged by how many hours I can work each day or week. Tennessee Ernie Ford, one of my all-time favorite singers, sang a famous song called *Sixteen Tons* in which he spoke for the men who worked during the Depression: “*I owe my soul to the company store.*” That’s a perfect description of our times. Never-ending work is exactly how our modern world reduces us to *Overload*.

Overload is going past my limit in energy due to too much work and not enough sleep. There is no balance in overloaded schedules. Marriages are taxed to the limit. Children are nudged out. The Lord’s work must take a back seat. Church attendance is not given priority, after all we can always say, “I have to work today” (even though it is overtime and you have to make extra money to pay for the ***stuff*** you have extended your budget to buy).

Have I hit a nerve yet? Am I stepping on anyone’s toes? If so, get in line and take a number. In fact, get in line behind me, for I’m going first! I’m writing primarily to myself. *WE* (meaning me) are guilty, as charged. *WE* (meaning me) need to hear God’s teaching to “redeem the time” in these evil days to “*seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness*” (Matt. 6:33). While we are not under the Old Testament command to “Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy,” that is no excuse for us to crowd out our schedules, leaving no room for daily devotions and meditations with God’s word.

To “*pray without ceasing*” requires time (I Thess. 5:17).
To “*study to show yourself approved unto God*” requires time (2 Tim. 2:15).
To “*forsake not the assembling of yourselves together*” requires time (Heb. 10:25).
To “*be given to hospitality*” requires time (Rom. 12:13).
To “*bear one another’s burdens*” requires time (Gal. 6:1-2).
To “*bring them up in the training of the Lord*” requires time (Eph. 6:4).
To “*dwell with your wife with understanding*” requires time (I Pet. 3:7).

These are the stuff of which the abundant life is made of (John 10:10). A life of success is not defined by the world, but by God. Just ask the very man who wrote the book on true success – Solomon. He tried it the world’s way and said, *“Therefore I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me, for all is vanity and grasping for the wind”* (Eccl. 2:17). He then humbled himself to try it God’s way and said, “*Hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all*” (Eccl. 12:13).

For. This. Is. Man’s. All. And that’s how you spell S-U-C-C-E-S-S. – Rick