



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

In God We Trust

Are You Wasting Time? – Ephesians 5:15-17
Tim Badal | March 11, 2018



Over the last couple months, we've been looking at what it means to trust God. We've seen in Scripture that God is completely trustworthy and faithful, so we can depend on Him. While we might also put our hope in things of this world—government, jobs, other people or money—those things can falter and will eventually fail us. But God never falters or fails, so He is the One in Whom we should put our complete trust.

Last week we talked about an area in which we have great difficulty trusting God—our money. Then today we'll be talking about another area where we need to exercise stewardship—our time. When we set up this series and chose this Sunday to address the matter of time, our team had no idea it was going to be daylight savings Sunday. But what a perfect time for us to talk about time when we just lost some sleep time last night. This may be one of the most practical and pastoral messages I've given in a long time.

We're going to be referencing a particular Scripture passage at several points in this sermon, but we won't be staying there as closely as we usually do. We'll be speaking more broadly about time and how God looks at time. I'm praying that this message will be helpful to people of all ages, as we ask the question, "God, what would You have us do with the time You've given us?"

Let's look at Ephesians 5:15–17. This is what the Apostle Paul tells the church at Ephesus:

¹⁵ Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Today we celebrate an anniversary—not one of 10 or 12 years, but of 100 years. We should have brought balloons and made this a bigger deal. Did you know today is the 100th anniversary of something incredible? I didn't think so. One hundred years ago, in 1918, the United States Congress passed the Calder Act. Woodrow Wilson signed this Act into law, and you celebrated it without realizing it. That was the law that stated that on a Sunday in March, at 2:00 a.m. we would be required to "spring" our clocks ahead one hour. Now, a few of you broke that law and we have police waiting outside for you.

The Calder Act is the result of the idea that sunshine was being wasted, that daylight needed to be saved. As all government plans do, this one went off without a hitch—right? That particular year, Daylight Savings Day fell on Easter Sunday. It was a disaster. Tens of thousands of church-goers that first Daylight Savings Sunday missed the high holiday of the Christian world, Resurrection Sunday. That next day, in newspapers all over the country, editorials declared that American society, as they knew it, had fallen apart because people were late to church. Back then it was understood that if people were late to church, society itself was falling apart! How times have changed. Some of the reasons that were given in these opinion pieces are interesting:

- First, they said an hour change would alter almanacs altogether. We could no longer depend on them.
- Second, Americans would no longer be able to enjoy the freshest air that is to be found in the early mornings because of the time change.
- Third, grass would die because of an over-exposure to the sun.

There was such a large public push-back that daylight savings only lasted one year. After 1918, they realized it wasn't working, so the government did the next best thing. They gave each county the right to decide whether or not they wanted to observe daylight savings time. Think of a country where each city operated on a different time system. For example, between Steubenville, Ohio, and Moundsville, West Virginia—about a 35-mile journey—you would have gone through seven time changes.

Who would have known that time could be so complicated? The government finally got it right, and in 1966—because of all the broken appointments and other upheavals—they decided to pass the Uniform Time Act. That split the entire world into 24 time zones. However, as I was researching, I found that Florida is making a massive effort as a state to move from Eastern Time to Nova Scotia time, which will make our travel to Florida a two-hour difference instead of one. They're hoping to have this enacted by next year.

Why is time such a big issue? How does the loss of one hour create such upheaval? My wife Amanda hates this day. Losing one hour decimates her. What is it about time that can tie us into knots? I have a couple practical thoughts to share with you today.

First, time is comprehensive. Whether you're young or old, rich or poor, whether you live in a first-world country or a third-world country—no matter what you're experiencing on any given day—time is always moving. Each of us is given 365 days in a year, 12 months in a year and 24 hours in a day. We cannot get around it.

Second, time is subtle. Can you hear the clicks of the hands of time moving? They're moving and we'll never get that time back. Unlike money, which can be saved for the future, we can never stop spending time. We can't take part of today and pay it forward to a future time. It's here in this moment—and now it's gone. But it happens all the time, so we really don't even think about it.

We rarely think about the time we waste on needless things, because it seems as though—unlike money—it comes in an unlimited supply. In order to get more money, we have to take another job or do something over and above in order to acquire it. But all the riches in the world cannot buy more time. It's an "unbuyable" commodity.

Because of this, we must consider how important time is to us as humans and especially to us as Christians. Just as God is with our money, He is the Giver of our time. That means He's also Lord of our time and we will be accountable to manage this time in a way that honors Him. The way we spend our time should reflect the priorities He has laid out for us.

Our time is a gift not to be taken for granted.

There's an old adage that says, "Some folks save time, others make time, most waste time, several kill time, and few are usually on time." For each one of us, time is a taker. It never gives. We can't stop it.

There are only a few instances in Scripture where God actually gave people extra time. I'm not talking about Him just being patient with someone, but an actual extension of time. One example is King Hezekiah, who had sinned against God and because of this, God told him to prepare for his death. But he pleaded with God to forgive him and extend his life, so God gave him 15 more years to live (2 Kings 20:6).

A more interesting situation was that of Joshua when the Israelites were fighting one of their enemies. They were winning the battle, but daylight was soon to be over. Joshua begged God to essentially stop time—and God did exactly that. We're told in Joshua 10:13, "*The sun stopped in the midst of heaven and did not hurry to set for about a whole day.*" This allowed Israel to overcome their foes.

There are days we wish God would do that for us, aren't there? There are times when we wish we could hit a "pause" button just to enjoy the blessings of God a little longer. But those buttons don't work for us. Time continually moves by and is gone. We need to consider how time is an incredible commodity—God's gift to us—and not take it for granted.

In fact, we're specifically told that each of us is only given a limited amount of time. Scripture clearly says God knows the day of our conception, beginning the season when we're secretly "knitted together" in our mother's womb (Psalm 139:13–16). It also tells us that the other bookend of our life is equally known by God. Hebrews 9:27 says, "*It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.*" On a specific day, our lives on earth will end. In between these two points, our lives consist of a specified length of time.

I learned this at a young age. When I was 14, my older brother, who was 16, died in a car accident. I realized then that tomorrow was not guaranteed for me either. Many times, younger people can think they're invincible, that time is on their side. But those of you who have gray hair will probably agree that time really isn't on our side. In fact, it seems to be moving faster and faster.

We see this reality recorded in several Scriptures. Moses said in Psalm 90 that our days are quickly passing, then we are gone. As an old man, Job says in chapter 14 that we were born yesterday and our lives on earth are but a shadow. James 4:14 says that our lives are like a mist that hangs around for a little while and then vanishes.

If you're a young person, you might be thinking, "Wait a minute. Time moves so slowly!" Let's think of it this way. Assume you're at an amusement park and you want to get on that epic ride everybody is talking about. But the line is long, and so is the wait. For you, if you're young, life seems to move at a snail's pace. Yes, it sometimes seems as though life is an endless maze of waiting lines. Then you get strapped into that ride called "life." You're a teen and you're beginning to make some decisions for yourself. But it's still a long, arduous journey to the top of the roller coaster. When does the fun start? At some point, maybe when you're 18 or 20 years old, suddenly the floor drops out from underneath you. Life becomes a series of twists and turns, ups and downs—and sometimes it even flips you over. That's called being a parent.

So instead of life just slugging along, it moves at a dizzying rate of speed. You can barely catch your breath. You might be having a great time, but you really don't know where you're going. That's where some of you are this morning—in the middle of a wild ride, just trying to keep your balance. Then, before you know it, the ride is done. The car comes to a screeching halt and it's time to get off. Some of you are in that last turn, the last loopdy-loop, before the ride comes to a stop. You see, young people, life moves a whole lot faster than you think. Now, on the other side of 40, life is flying by for me—faster than I want it to move.

I was recently talking with Kate Duff, one of our pastor's wives, about what it was like to be parents of teenagers. We noticed that summer vacations with the entire family are almost over. For my family, we might have three or four more, then our boys will begin to disperse—to college and young adult life. Time moves quickly.

Therefore, it's important that we don't take this issue of time for granted. One of the best ways I've seen this communicated was not by a theologian or a pastor, but by a rock group. Sometimes musicians understand things really well. The rock band, Nickelback, asked, "If life is such a gift, how are we to live it?" Their conclusion was: we are to live each day as if it's our last.

Can I tell you, that's biblical theology regarding time? I don't think they're followers of Jesus Christ, but Nickelback has that right. They say this:

My best friend gave me the best advice
He said each day's a gift and not a given right
Leave no stone unturned, leave your fears behind
And try to take the path less traveled by
That first step you take is the longest stride

If today was your last day and tomorrow was too late
Could you say goodbye to yesterday?
Would you live each moment like your last
Leave old pictures in the past?
Donate every dime you had, if today was your last day?
What if, what if, if today was your last day?

Against the grain should be a way of life
What's worth the prize is always worth the fight
Every second counts 'cause there's no second try
So live like you're never living twice
Don't take the free ride in your own life

If today was your last day and tomorrow was too late
Could you say goodbye to yesterday?
Would you live each moment like your last?
Leave old pictures in the past?
Donate every dime you had?

And would you call old friends you never see?
Reminisce old memories?
Would you forgive your enemies?
And would you find that one you're dreaming of?
Swear up and down to God above
That you'd finally fall in love if today was your last day?

Whether they meant to or not, they were communicating a biblical theology of time. As Christians, if we only have a limited amount of time, then we should be prepared to meet our Maker on any given day. For that matter, we have no idea when the Lord Himself might be coming back. Today could be that day. Jesus tells us that no man knows what each day might bring.

So we must ask, "When God comes to take me, through death or through deliverance in the Second Coming, will He find faith in me? Will I be doing faithful things, or will He find me wasting the gift of time He has given me?" Therefore, if time is a gift, what should we be doing with it?

Our time is to be given away.

Time isn't just for us. Just as our money isn't just for us, time is given to us so that we might be generous with our time on behalf of others. There are four areas to which we need to dedicate our time.

Our time is to be given to our Lord.

Just as we're called to give the firstfruits of our resources to the Lord—the best of what we have—He surely wants the best of the time He's given us as well. We acknowledge that He is the Giver of all good things by giving back a portion to Him. This is our expression of gratitude.

Sadly, although we may say with our mouths that Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead, our time doesn't reflect that commitment. When it comes to spending time with God, we suffer from spiritual ADD. When it comes to hearing God's Word preached, or reading His Word, or praying—dedicating ourselves to spending time in fellowship with God—many of us will say it's too much to do.

For example, I sometimes hear, "Tim, if you'd just make your sermons shorter, everything would be better." Comments like this make me evaluate what I'm doing. But then I see those same people—people who are my friends—watching a football game for three hours with rapt attention. One guy years ago used to hammer me about the length of my sermons, saying he wasn't able to sit and focus for that amount of time. Then he mentioned to me one time that he sat in a boat fishing for a whole weekend. Talk about sitting and being bored out of your mind. Where did his ADD go? I know he's not flopping around in that boat.

The issue is not our Attention Deficit Disorder. It is that we put a higher priority on things other than God. In essence we're saying to Him, "My time is too valuable to give to You." We discussed that same attitude last week regarding our money: "I have to keep my money for important things, so I can't give it to You."

Years ago I began a practice that I'm continuing to this day, which is to start my morning with a simple prayer. Now, I'm not a morning person—and this Sunday is an especially hard day to preach. But here's my prayer: "Lord, I have no idea what today is going to bring, but I know this to be true: my life is in Your hands. Wherever You are, I want to be there with You." Then I make two requests. First, "Lord, show me the opportunities You have for me. I don't know who I'm going to run into today but help me see the opportunities You bring." We should never be too busy to take the opportunities God gives us to serve Him. My second is, "Lord, show me the obstacles I will be encountering and prepare me to honor You instead of bellyaching when they come. I want to honor You, not sin. Help me see them as part of Your plan to mature me." I then pray this: "Lord, I'm open-handed with my time. If You want to change my schedule and what I have planned, that's fine. I want to be part of what You're doing."

Giving God your time is more than just praying. We must make conscious decisions when the opportunities arise or when the obstacles come to do what God is calling us to do. We must give our Lord the first priority in our time.

Our time is to be given to loved ones.

If you're married, your number-one time priority is your spouse. Moms and dads, we often unconsciously put our children as higher priorities than our spouse. But Scripture makes it clear that the foundation of the family is a husband and wife who are honoring God together and loving one another as Christ has loved the church.

It takes time for any relationship to grow. Husbands, you need to reserve time and energy for your wife. It might even be taking part in things you really don't see as that important or a good use of time. Women generally like conversation way more than men do. We need to be aware that these conversations aren't always a waste of time.

I often find myself impatient with the details Amanda wants to share with me. I just want to get to the nitty gritty of the story. "Just the facts, dear." I don't need to know the wind speed or what the clouds were doing that day. I don't need to know what so-and-so was wearing. But it's wrong for me not to listen. I need to give her time to relate to me in the way she naturally does.

And women, you might be able to better relate to your husbands if you don't insist on looking deeply into their eyes across a candle-lit table. Men build relationships when they share experiences. Men like activity, doing things together. So it helps to realize that time can be spent differently and still be valuable for the building of relationships.

So spouses need to make giving each other time a high priority. When I see on Facebook that some of you are getting away for a weekend, I rejoice. That is good and right, and you should consider that a valid use of both your time and your money. Time away can be very important in helping your relationship grow. But our spouses are not our only loved ones.

Kids are part of that scenario as well. They are basically third in that list of priorities, after God and our spouse. Our society tells us that we're supposed to have our family involved in lots of activities, calling it "family time." We fill our calendars with all sorts of activities and there are seasons when that's okay. Real family time isn't you chauffeuring your kids from one practice or activity to another. Real time doesn't have the radio blasting or everybody focused on their cell phones in the car. When you arrive at the sports activity, it's not you going to the bleachers and your kids going another direction. You can't really count that as family time, even though in a sense you're giving your time to your kids. Family time doesn't just mean being in the same area code together. Rather, God wants you to raise your children "in the fear and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

My father was an immigrant from Iraq, so he didn't grow up with baseball or basketball. But I loved playing sports. It bothered me when he wouldn't spend time doing these things with me. In fact, I really resented him for that. I had to learn everything from other coaches or dads. My poor dad didn't know how to teach me any of that. Now, looking back, I can see that he did things for me that were much more important than throwing a curve ball. What my dad showed me by demonstration and declaration was what it means to have a vibrant walk with our Lord. He taught me that God came first. While that didn't equate to goals on the soccer field or first chair in the band, it laid an even better foundation for my life.

My father would hand me the Bible when we were in the car together and say, "Turn to such-and-such a passage. What is it saying to you? What does it mean for us?" No doubt one of the reasons I'm preaching today is because from a young age, just as Timothy in the Bible was taught, I learned the Scriptures that made me wise unto salvation (2 Timothy 3:15).

One of the uses of our time, Christian parents, is to raise our kids in the fear and admonition of the Lord. Who cares if your kid can throw a fast ball at 90 miles an hour? At the end of the day, that won't save his soul. Who cares that your daughter can sing with the greatest of the world's sopranos? That's not going to help her on the day of judgment. Those things aren't bad. But God has called us as parents to far more than this. So invest time in your kids—and with other loved ones as well. We need to dedicate part of our time to being with friends and other family members.

Another important responsibility is to our parents. My parents are close to 70 years old. I need to realize that the Mom and Dad I once thought would always be around will not be here much longer. If they're blessed, we might have 15 more years. I have a limited amount of time. It gets sobering the more and more we attend our friends' funerals. We should not get despondent over the passing of time. Rather, we need to make the most of time—however old we are. Let's say I have 15–20 years left with my parents. What am I doing with that time? How am I making sure my kids are connected with the older generation so they can be blessed by them? Grandparents, how can you use your time to shape a future generation? I'm grateful because almost every time we gather as a family, my parents give a lot of attention to our children, loving them and calling them to follow Jesus, calling them to walk away from temptations.

I don't want to miss these opportunities, because the day will come when that will no longer be possible. Let's make the most of the time we've been given.

Our time is to be given to labor.

This next item will cause you to groan and moan, but our time is also to be given to labor. God has called us to work. Some might think work is part of the Fall, but in reality Adam's work assignments were given before the Fall, during a season of perfection. Work came before sin entered the scene.

Our labor is given to us as a means for providing for ourselves and our families; it allows us to be a vital part of our communities and it also brings us a level of fulfillment. Some of us have difficulty finding fulfillment in what we're doing, but God intended those three things to be lived out through our work.

As Christ followers, we are commanded to give our best efforts to our work. We need to be the best employees or the best employers possible. In order for that to happen, we must order our lives in such a way that when we arrive at work tomorrow, we

will be “bright eyed and bushy tailed” and ready to do our best. We aren’t going to be doing this for that jerk boss. Colossians 3:22 reminds us that we’re not only serving earthly masters, we’re actually serving the Lord Christ, our heavenly Master.

So even when no one is looking, we know God is seeing what we do. He’s seeing how faithful to Him we are in our workplaces. The greatest outreach tool we have as adults is through our willing and effective work in our workplaces. Nobody will listen to your gospel presentation if you’re the guy who never gets the job done, if you can’t be counted on, if you’re the woman who does unethical things instead of doing the hard work. We need to dedicate proper time to our labors.

Our time is to be given to leisure.

Finally, before you guys get rid of me, we need time for leisure, amen? We’re reminded that in Genesis God labored for six days. He created the cosmos, hanging it right where He wanted it. He formed the galaxies, then moved to the details of creating plants and animals on our planet, culminating with the creation of humanity itself. But on the seventh day, God rested.

This is something we have a theology for, but it can become warped. We tend to think that God took a vacation on the seventh day. We imagine God thinking, “I built this place called Orlando and I’m going to go visit it.” God doesn’t vacation. Or maybe we think God just took a long nap—except Scripture tells us He doesn’t get tired like we do. He has no need for naps. He doesn’t yawn or grow tired from physical work. He’s omnipotent and He has an eternal supply of power.

So what does it mean for God to take a day off? Why does He take time to rest if He wasn’t tired? God took that seventh day to reflect on and glory in what He had done in the previous six days. He rejoiced in His creation. He rejoiced in the relationships He now had. He had a relationship with the earth itself. First, he had a relationship with the trees and the rocks, then with the animals, but most of all, He rejoices in the relationship He was able to have with humanity—with you and me.

Now, let me say up front that napping is not a bad thing. Do I hear an amen? Just not now—it’s sinful to nap in church. Vacations aren’t a bad thing. We’re coming up on Spring Break and the Badals will be heading out on vacation. I don’t want you to think I’m saying vacations are wrong. But I want you to learn to funnel your leisure through the Scriptures. Why did God create rest? I want you to know that your vacation, or your day off, has a purpose. Its purpose is to make you really, really good at doing those top three priorities with your times. Your time off should make you a better follower of Christ, a better lover of your loved ones, and a better laborer for your employer.

Your rest should cause you to look back and say, “Thank You, God for what You’ve given me. Now I look forward to the days ahead, because I’m now refreshed. So how can I better serve You tomorrow? How can I better serve my loved ones and friends? How can I be a better laborer in the tasks to which You’ve called me?”

Here’s the problem. When we vacation and take days off, we often need vacations from our vacations and days off after our days off. We’re not really resting. Then we wonder why our walk with the Lord is weak. We wonder why we’re not in fellowship with our family. We wonder why we go back to work on Monday hating the world. We need five gallons of Starbucks coffee to even put a smile on our faces. The reason this happens is because we’ve neglected to properly and spiritually rest. So yes, enjoy your vacation. But God didn’t create you just to be Leisure Larry. God created you for a purpose, as we described in our first three points. So if you’re going to be at your best in those areas, you need some real time to “take off.” How are you giving away your time?

Our time is something to be guided by God.

So as we wonder how to accomplish the most with our time, we must realize it needs to be guided by God. The Bible gives us both practical and spiritual examples for understanding what God wants us to do with the time He gives us.

Some years ago I had the opportunity to be part of a group of 12 pastors from around the country. A group called “Leadership Network” had identified us through some things we were doing in our ministries and had labeled us “Next Generation Pastors.” At the time we were all under the age of 40, and this group invited us to establish relationships with some of the best-known pastors in our country over a period of three years. One of the pastors who was to mentor me during that time was Bruce Miller, who pastors a megachurch in the Dallas-Ft. Worth area. When I first met him, he had just finished a book called *Your Life in Rhythm*. In my first interaction with him, I was in a group of four who were to spend a day with him talking about this subject. His teaching on this revolutionized not only my ministry, but also my life. Bruce Miller is a man of unbelievable character, a faithful man, whose book you should definitely buy. I don’t often recommend books, but I will his. It contains so much great truth and it’s not just for pastors. Since I know you don’t have much time to click on Amazon’s site, let me whet your appetite a little.

He says balance was never God's plan for you in life. Balance is very hard to achieve. Think of a see-saw. Once you find balance, you spend more time trying to stay there than you do anything else. He recommends that we stop seeing balance as the end of the game. Because the world is going crazy around us, we can feel as though we never achieve balance and conclude that somehow we've failed. Rather than looking for balance, he recommends that we look for rhythm. He gives the example of a dancer. If the dancer doesn't have rhythm, the dance is awkward and out of place. He says we need to be in rhythm with the comings and goings of life. Life will throw curve balls. Life will put a downbeat where we aren't expecting it. But there's a rhythm that we can learn if we try.

He points out that in the Bible there are two words for time. The first word is *chronos*, which is the root for our word chronology. In Ecclesiastes 3, Solomon says, "There is a time for everything under the sun." In the Greek version of the Old Testament, he says, "There is a *chronos* for everything under the sun." *Chronos* is time as we know it—24 hours in a day, 365 days in a year. To the Greeks and to the biblical writers, *chronos* was the quantity of time as it passed. We have only so much time in a day. *Chronos* tells me I am behind schedule right now.

How do we live in the rhythm of *chronos*?

First, we must pace ourselves. We can only do so much in a day. But we don't think that way. We would do well to look at the life of Jesus. Though He was God, He put on flesh and made His dwelling among us. God is outside of time, but Jesus was confined to time while He was on earth. He ate, drank and lived just like every other human. He had to sleep, just as we do. That means even Jesus had to pace Himself. He lived for 33 years on this earth, three years of which were in public ministry. During that time He never went outside a 50-mile circle. Could He have transported Himself to where other people lived? He could have. But He confined Himself to the region of Judea.

Scripture tells us when He entered a city, people would be in an uproar. They had heard not only about His life-changing wisdom, but also about His power to heal and exorcise demons. He could fix their problems. But something that revolutionized my ministry was when I realized Jesus never healed everyone in a given community. In other words, He left places with some people still hurting or still tormented by demons. He took care of some of the needs, but not all of them. Even when people would beg Him to stay longer, He still moved on.

Jesus also saw great depths of poverty. As God He could have solved that problem as well. Instead He told His disciples, "You will always have poor people. I'm not going to fix every problem." In this way, He was modeling and teaching what it means to pace one's self. The second Person of the Trinity took time to eat, sleep, relate with people, serve people—and He took time to get away from everyone to be alone with His Father.

Second, we need to build rituals. Bruce reminds us in his book how the Old Testament is filled with rituals that were built into the lives of God's people Israel. Some of these rituals involved celebrations and feasts. Others were times of remembrance, or even repentance and mourning. There were times for planting and times for harvest. The reason for rituals is they keep time from getting away from us. We use rituals today to order our lives. There are rituals built into our holiday celebrations. You have broken the eleventh commandment if you are not at Easter dinner with Mom, right? If someone has tickets to a ball game or someone has a piano recital, these don't supersede our ritual of being together on Christmas Eve. Rituals are more than just holidays.

One of our family's rituals—although it's not concrete for everybody—is that as long as our sons are still living at home, they will be in church on Sunday. My kids have sometimes gotten angry because they'd rather spend the night with a friend, but no one wants them to be picked up at 7:30 the next morning so they can be in church. But Sunday morning church is important to us as a family.

I don't know how often my boys have been invited to join a sports travel league. As they look over the information sheet, they realize the team will be playing on Sundays. That means they can't be part of that. Sunday morning church trumps everything else. We all need to build this kind of ritual into our lives. Some of us need to have a ritual that says no cell phones on our vacations. Everyone will have to figure out how to live without us for that time.

Third, we need to oscillate between rest and work. We're not machines. We have to take time to rest. It will look differently for each of us. God doesn't exactly specify how we are to rest. But He does say we need to rest. That's *chronos*—how we get through time.

How do we live in the rhythm of *kairos*?

The second Greek word for time is *kairos*. This refers to the quality of time. In other words, just because we have time doesn't mean we're making the best use of it. In Ephesians 5:16 when Paul says, "Make the best use of your time," he uses the word *kairos*. In order to do that, we need to release our expectations.

Some of us will go away on spring break in the near future and we're going to have a list of things we want to accomplish on our vacations—and some of us will run our families ragged going here and there and doing everything on our list. We should release those expectations, asking God instead to guide us each day, taking what comes our way. That allows us to enjoy quality time. By doing this, relationships become more important than accomplishments.

Relationships aren't built on a clock. I don't say to my kids, "We've got ten minutes—let's relate to one another." I don't say, "Okay, it's family time. We're going to spend a half hour, then you can do whatever you want." Relationships are built when we release our expectations and allow ourselves to enjoy the moments.

Second, we need to seize opportunities. Some of us allow ourselves no opportunity for opportunities, because we've scheduled our lives so tightly. Then when an opportunity comes along, we can't fit it in. We've regimented every minute of our day, every day of our week. There's no play in the schedule.

Third, we should anticipate what's next. Some of us think we're living our best life now—but we're not. It may be a great time now, but there will be great times coming. I loved my time with my boys when they were young, but I'm really loving my time with them now. To be sure, there are different issues now that we're getting into the teen years. As someone in first service said, "Little kids create little problems; big kids create big problems." Another parent commented, "Little kids step on your toes. Big kids step on your heart." I'm starting to experience that. But there's still fun in being the parents of teens. Believe it!

And there will be good times in being empty-nesters. There will be good in being grandparents. There is good in every stage and we need to anticipate that. God didn't say, "Once you hit 30, it's all over." Rather, in some ways He allows the later years to be our best years, when we get to see the fruit of our labor and enjoy things in new ways. We need to anticipate and look forward to what's coming, even as we enjoy where we are currently.

Biblical steps to understanding time.

In light of what we've learned about *chronos* and *kairos*, let's look again at what the Bible says about time. Paul tells the Ephesian believers and us today, "Look carefully then how you walk." Here are some biblical steps to understanding time. Remember too, when Paul says, "Look carefully," it's not a suggestion but a command. God demands that we soberly look at the way we use our time, because one day we will be held accountable for it.

First, we need to repent of wasted opportunities. But after we repent, we need to release our guilt. How do we need to repent? We spend altogether way too much time with our technology. As your pastor. I struggle with this as well. We need to know that technology is going to kill us as a society and as a church, unless we get our minds around what God's good and pleasing will is regarding it.

Last night Amanda and I were out with some friends at a restaurant. I looked over to my left and at a table of six—who ranged from about 80 years old to eight years old—all of them were on their phones during the entire time they were there. This will destroy how we do life if we don't get a handle on it. Some of us need to repent of our Facebook time, of our Instagram time, of our Clash of Clans time, of our Netflix time, because on the day of judgment, God isn't going to give a rip how much time you were "on screen." What He's going to ask us is, "What were you doing for Me with your time—in serving and caring and ministering to one another?" We need to repent. Remember, when we do repent, God says He is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). What He gives us is a new day to do something different.

We should also remember that the days are evil (Ephesians 5:16). The reason we struggle with time is that the world tells us time belongs to us—so we should spend it on ourselves. The world says we are masters of our time. But God announces from His throne in heaven, "You do not have your time. You are using My time." What the world advertises is a counterfeit of what God wants to give us. We must trust that His ways are good and right, whereas man's ways are inherently evil and wrong.

We also need to be able to redeem our time for Christ. Paul says we should make the best use of our time. "Making the most of something" was a marketplace phrase that we might translate, "Getting the most bang for your buck." We need to start multi-tasking spiritually.

For example, when I'm watching my kids at the ball field, God also wants me to realize I'm sitting by Joe Unbeliever in the lawn chair next to me. I've been given a great opportunity—because of the invention of baseball—to have two hours in which I can make the most of my contact with Joe. As I build a relationship with him, I can share what God is doing in my life, even while we enjoy a game of baseball—or a dance recital—or while we're waiting for our kids at whatever activity they're in that day.

Each of us has eight hours a day to be salt and light in our workplace. Yes, we get to pay our bills with the money we earn, but as a follower of Christ, we can multi-task spiritually, sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with our coworkers. God wants us to make the most of our time.

Finally, we need to recognize God's plan for our lives. It is God's will that we use our time properly. It is God's will that we trust Him with our time. It is God's will that we live open-handed lives so He can use us in any way He wants at any moment He chooses. It's foolishness to think we can figure out our time without His help. God wants us to trust Him. God is calling out to us, "Trust Me with your time."

When we do that, we will walk as wise individuals, not as foolish, and God will give us the *kairos*—the quality of time—that each of us is longing for. It will be time filled with great opportunities to spend with Him, with those closest to us, and He'll even give us time to enjoy some rest along the way. Give your time to the Lord and stop wasting it on yourself.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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