

Slide
1

**The one thing God
has dispensed to all
stewards equally is
TIME.**

Ephesians 5:15-21

Time plays a very important role in Scripture. When we explore “time” in the passage we read for Scripture, although the hours, minutes and seconds are important, God is more concerned with “windows of opportunity” time permits us to exploit. It does not really matter how you spend the seconds, minutes, hours and days, if you fail to recognize and seize the seasons, the moments, and the windows of opportunity God puts in your path every day. When we think about time management, this is what God wants us to think of. We are going to look at how to redeem our time today. But more specifically, we will look at what moments, what opportunities count for eternity and therefore are worth investing our time in.

As a means of establishing the importance of time, I would like you to consider certain verses.

Slide
2

Ecclesiastes 3

- ¹ There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens:
- ² a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot,
- ³ a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build,

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

- ¹ There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens:
- ² a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot,
- ³ a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build,

Slide
3

Ecclesiastes 3

- ⁴ a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance,
- ⁵ a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,

- ⁴ a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance,
- ⁵ a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,

Slide
4

Ecclesiastes 3

- ⁶ a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away,
- ⁷ a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak,
- ⁸ a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.

- ⁶ a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away,
- ⁷ a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak,
- ⁸ a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.

The reference to “time” in these verses is not to hours and minutes, but to right moments and divinely appointed opportunities. What are we supposed to do with the hours and minutes so that we can make the most of the opportunities given to us?

Slide
5

Psalm 90

12 Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

Psalm 90:12 is a helpful prayer to start:

¹² Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

Wisdom is exceedingly crucial when it comes to using our time. And time is crucial in gaining wisdom. The psalmist is asking the Lord to teach him to number his days. He wants to know how to understand to use the minutes and hours and days that the Lord has dispersed to him. The outcome he wants is a heart of wisdom.

The apostle Paul takes up a similar theme in our Scripture reading today. Our Scripture reading started with these words:

Slide
6

Ephesians 5:15-16

15 Be very careful, then, how you live, not as unwise, but wise.

16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

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Two kinds of time are included in these verses. The word “live” in verse 15 is also translated “walk.” “Walk” is a broad reference to behaviour, but, it is also a reference to how we live and, more narrowly, how we spend our time – the seconds, minutes and hours of our days. Minutes and hours, days and years is one way of looking at time.

Why is it important how we spend our time?

1. The purpose of minutes and hours: (5:15-16)

15 Be very careful, then, how you live, ... 16 making the most of every opportunity . . .

The phrase “making the most of every opportunity” is sometimes translated “redeeming the time”. In verse 16 the word translated “time” is not a reference to minutes and hours, but to “windows of opportunities” or “the right time.”

We could paraphrase these verses in this way.

“Be careful, then, how you spend your minutes and hours, being wise rather than unwise. 16 As you spend your minutes and hours devote them to discovering the right time to take hold of the divine opportunities.”

Slide
7

Why is it important how we spend our time?

¹⁵ “Be careful, then, how you spend your minutes and hours, being wise rather than unwise. ¹⁶ As you spend your minutes and hours devote them to discovering the right time to take hold of the divine opportunities.”

Why is it important how we spend our time?

2. As good stewards of the grace of God, our “walk” (the minutes and hours we spend) should be invested in discovering the “right time” to exploit the “divine opportunity” God embeds in our daily experiences.

Ephesians 5:15-18

15 Be very careful, then, how you live, not as unwise, but wise.

16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.

18 Do not get drunk on wine . . . Instead, be filled with the Spirit,

What possibilities do divine opportunities invite us to? (15-18)

Divine opportunities open up to us 3 possibilities. They open up to us the possibilities of . . .

- A. being made wise (15)
- B. understanding what the Lord's will is (17)
- C. experiencing being under the control/influence of God's Spirit (18-21)

These are 3 amazing possibilities. Divine wisdom, the Lord's will and the influence of God's spirit are potentially waiting for us embedded in our daily experiences. We are to be very careful in the way we spend our minutes and hours – our time, looking for these. But Paul's words, *be very careful*, serve as a warning. It is as though the good steward who wants to be faithful to God could easily miss these divinely appointed opportunities. How could they be missed? Are there any clues? Indeed there is a clue. Look at the second part of verse 16. Why could they be missed? Because the days are evil.

Why is it important how we spend our time?

3. There are powers intent on robbing us of the divine opportunities we are supposed to spend our time discovering. Paul simply says we are robbed of these opportunities because the days are evil.

How does an evil day and age affect our opportunities to be wise, understanding and Spirit-controlled?

Notice the contrasts that Paul makes. Because the days are evil, time is becoming a slave to the world. There is a tug of war going on with our time. Paul is saying that our behaviour is being pulled in two different directions by the way we spend our time.

In verse 15, our time is being pulled towards or invested in things making us to be unwise instead of wise. We spend our time absorbed by comedy and the absurd, by sensuality and immorality that desensitizes us to wisdom – that makes wisdom "boring."

In verse 17, our time/our opportunities are being pulled toward being ignorant of the Lord's will instead of understanding it. We are attracted to time-wasting opportunities – activities that distract us from paying attention to and understanding the will of the Lord.

In verse 18, we are being pulled toward being impaired and uncontrolled instead of being under the control of the good Spirit of God. We are more attracted to exercising the freewill of man than we are to experiencing the good and perfect will of God.

We are to buy back time by using the windows of opportunities that we have, to bring our time in line with wisdom, with the Lord's will and under the control of the Holy Spirit.

Paul also revealed how the evil influences of our day affects how we miss opportunities. Let's go back to chapter 4 for a more thorough understanding of how our opportunities can be missed. We know that we have been saved from our sin, but, if we are not careful, we can default to passing our time living like the ungodly, expressing the habits of the old life we have left behind. Paul warns believers of that in Ephesians 4:17.

Slide
9

Ephesians 4:17

17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.

¹⁷ So I tell you this, **and insist on it in the Lord**, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.

Paul points out that believers will miss their divine opportunities and all that they invite us to enjoy if we are sidetracked or unduly influenced by the "evil days" we walk in. We cannot avoid the minutes and hours we spend in the world (living among the ungodly), but we can be aware of the dangers. There are distractions which pose a danger to making the most of divine opportunities.

Those distractions, that keep us from making the most of the opportunities that God gives us, and, trap us in living like the ungodly, are listed in Ephesians 4:25-31. You will notice the contrasts between what God's will is and what the freewill of mankind pursues. We need to be aware that the free will that we have as human beings can be a very disruptive and a dangerous distraction to pursuing God's will and our spiritual well-being.

Slide
10

Ephesians 4:25

25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

4:25 – We are distracted from seizing divine opportunities when we tell lies instead of speak the truth.

^{4:25} Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

Slide
11

Ephesians 4:26-27

**26 “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry,
27 and do not give the devil a foothold.**

4:26-27 – We will miss the chance at gaining godly wisdom when we resort to unresolved anger – anger that festers and lingers – instead of putting it to bed and making peace.
4:26 “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold.

Slide
12

Ephesians 4:28

28 Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

4:28 – We lose getting the most out of our time when we resort to stealing (acquiring, hoarding, accumulating) instead of working and sharing.
4:28 Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

Slide
13

Ephesians 4:29-31

**29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.
30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.
31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.**

4:29-31 – We are distracted from getting the most out of God-given opportunities when we spend our time cursing enemies and nurturing hostilities instead of extending compassion and seeking forgiveness.
4:29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.
30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.
31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

These are barriers to discerning divine appointments and being sensitive to just the right moments that God reveals as opportunities. These habits, these vices, are so draining and so distracting. They are time wasters. They kill any opportunity that we will have to seize the time God gives us to gain wisdom and godly living.

In order to make the most of the divine opportunities, what do we, as good stewards of God’s grace, need to do?

The apostle Paul says that we are to “walk” (spend our minutes and hours) making the most of divine opportunities. What do we need to spend our time at to discover divine opportunities?

The wider context of chapters 4 & 5 tells us how to “make use of every opportunity” to bring our time into synch with God. This is not the only place in this letter to the Ephesian Christians that the believer’s “walk” is mentioned. Five different times in Ephesians 4-5, Paul urges his readers to take heed of the way they live (the way they walk or the way they spend time in

terms of minutes and hours). As he did in 4:15, he talks about our walk in 4:1.

What windows of opportunity do we need to seize in order to take hold of living godly and gain wisdom?

Slide
14

We will discover divine opportunities when . . .

A. We seize the opportunity to know what we are called to. (4:1-16)

¹ As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life (spend your minutes and hours walking) worthy of the calling you have received.

We will discover divine opportunities when . . .

A. We seize the opportunity to know what we are called to. (4:1-16)

¹ As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life (spend your minutes and hours walking) worthy of the calling you have received.

As we know what we are called to – one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father over all - we are able live worthy of our calling. I won't fill in the details of that calling right now, but, it requires that we live in harmony with other believers – doing whatever it takes to maintain the unity and using our God-given gifts to assist our brothers and sisters in Christ to do the same. We should jump at the opportunity to live in community with other Christians because maturity in Christ takes place (see Eph 4:10-16), and, when that happens we will live worthy of our calling.

Slide
15

We will discover divine opportunities when . . .

B. We seize the opportunity to walk in love. (5:1-3)

¹ Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children
² and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Paul addresses our walk again in chapter 5:1. We will discover divine opportunities when . . .

B. We seize the opportunity to walk in love. (5:1-2)

So the next command to “walk” that comes from Paul is at the heart of gaining wisdom. Instead of imitating the Gentiles, he urges believers to imitate God. Keep your eyes on Jesus.

Ephesians 5:1-2

¹ Follow (imitate) God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children

² and walk (ie. spend your minutes and hours) in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

In verses 1-2, the steward is to imitate God. Stewards imitate God by the kind of love they show. Their love is Christlike. What that means is, it is selfless (setting aside self interest); and it is God-oriented (that is, love that is expressed, above all else, for the benefit of the Father). It is a love that mankind benefits

from, but it is a love that is not motivated by the needs of mankind, rather by love for the Father.

The way of love is the way of Jesus. It puts self second and the Father first.

Slide
16

We will discover divine opportunities when . . .

C. We seize the opportunity to “walk” as children of light. (5:8-14)

⁸ For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. **Live as children of light**

⁹ (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth)

¹⁰ and find out what pleases the Lord.

We will discover divine opportunities when . . .

C. We seize the opportunity to “walk” as children of light. We need to be cultivating the fruit God is inviting us to harvest. **(5:8-14)**

Ephesians 5:8-10

⁸ For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light
⁹ (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth)
¹⁰ and find out what pleases the Lord.

The believer is to walk in the light. The fruit of their walk in the light has 3 distinctives. It is good. It is righteous (beautiful??). It is truthful. These are the things that our time must be invested in. This is exceedingly important. Time spent developing good, righteous and truthful character are opposites of the darkness of the worldly ambitions and the fallen human nature. The challenge in verse 8 is to live according to your DNA. In Christ your DNA is light. After explaining how dark the world we live in is (5:11-14), Paul returns to the challenge of living in the light. Goodness, righteousness, and truthfulness were all elements that shine the light on the world’s darkness and exposes it for what it is.

I want you to notice something. We spend a lot of time talking about how Christianity manages and removes our sin due to Christ’s death. Let us never forget that, in addition to the management of sin, the resurrection emphasizes and requires that the Christian experiences the new and risen life of Christ. We become increasingly as He is. That invitation to become as He is, is in my opinion, the greatest opportunity that we can spend our minutes and hours living the Christian life to become. We, then, are to spend our minutes and hours pursuing God’s calling, pursuing the way of love and being transformed into the character of God.

Slide
17

How do I spend my time? How do I make the most of every opportunity?

1. I would ask God to help me to set my free will aside and to take up God's will as my guide to using my time. You will find the divine opportunities when you use your time pursuing God's calling, his love, his will, and his Spirit.

How do I spend my time? How do I make the most of every opportunity?

1. I would ask God to help me to set my free will aside and to take up God's will as my guide to using my time. We spend a great deal of our time pursuing our own free will. Having free will is good, but it is one of those gifts that requires management.

Slide
18

How do I spend my time? How do I make the most of every opportunity?

2. The best way to manage your time is not to rigidly schedule and obsess over minutes and seconds. The best way to manage your time is, while minutes and hours pass by, keep an eye out for the potential around you and then to pounce when the moment is right. (adapted from Loren Pinilis)

2. *The best way to manage your time is not to rigidly schedule and obsess over minutes and seconds. The best way to manage your time is, while minutes and hours pass you by, keep an eye out for the potential around you and then to pounce when the moment is right.* (Loren Pinilis, lifeofasteward.com)

Slide
19

How do I spend my time? How do I make the most of every opportunity?

- (x) When managed in accordance to God's will, time yields spiritual fruit – which means a harvest for us. It means speaking the truth, making peace, sharing, compassion and reconciliation. It means spending time where divine opportunities are most likely to be found: pursuing God's calling, his love, his will, and his Spirit.

When managed in accordance to God's will, time yields spiritual fruit – which means a harvest for us. It means speaking the truth, making peace, sharing, compassion and reconciliation. It means spending time where divine opportunities are most likely to be found: pursuing God's calling, his love, his will, and his Spirit.

God is not so concerned with the activities that consume our seconds, minutes and hours. In every activity that we spend our time at, He wants us to "make the most of the opportunities" embedded in those activities. Within the activities we need to imitate God, so that love, goodness, righteousness, truthfulness and wisdom make mundane and routine time of eternal value. Pounce upon the chance to transform the temporal into the eternal.

What do I mean by that? It is okay to watch a movie. But make the most of the opportunity it provides. Like, look for goodness, and righteousness and truthfulness in the movie and seek to be that kind of person. On the other hand, intentionally expose and challenge the lies, the malice, the callousness of human nature, the behaviour that grieves God and walk away from the movie asking God to help you reject those things in your life. Don't be captivated by a movie's lies or seduced by the fictional beauty of sin. That way time is not wasted watching a movie or watching the news.

Slide
20

How do I spend my time? How do I make the most of every opportunity?

3. So much of our time is spent exercising our free will as human beings. There are some very rich rewards for those who would rather give up their free will and choose to be led by the Lord's will.

3. So much of our time is spent exercising our free will as human beings. There are some very rich rewards for those who would rather give up their free will and choose to be led by the Lord's will. As we just finished singing in one of the choruses: *"for it's only in Your will that I am free* (All for Jesus by Robin Marks).

Slide
21

How do I spend my time? How do I make the most of every opportunity?

We must make the most of life's circumstances by understanding the Lord's will and living to please the Lord. Our time should be spent disciplining our lives so that they become vessels for His usefulness.

We must make the most of life's circumstances by understanding the Lord's will and living to please the Lord. Our time should be spent disciplining our behaviour so that they become vessels for God's usefulness.

When we give ourselves over to the influence of the Holy Spirit, we will see God's will flourish, free will (under the control of the fallen nature) diminish and our wills transformed.