

“Maximizing Time” Ephesians 5:15-21

Introduction: Pg. ____

What if there was a way we could track how we invest the invaluable commodity of time? If time is the greatest currency in our culture, and if (more importantly) time is a treasured gift from God, wouldn't it be amazing and incredibly helpful if we could measure the value of our time investments?

I'm thinking something like a daily stock chart.

PIC of a Stock Graph

Can you imagine what it would be like for the bell to ring at the end of the day, signaling the market is closed on our time investments, and we could actually see how we did? What if we all had a personalized TICKER Symbol? Mine would be TGT. (The “G” stands for Gospel Gangsta) Would that be awesome?! I'm not sure I would want it to be published for all to see.

The more wisely we invest our time, the more we give ourselves to that which is **[NEW PIC] essential**, the higher the stock goes.

Conversely, when we spend our time unwisely and give our best to that which is **trivial**, the more our stock plummets.

If how you spend time ranges from trivial to the essential which way would your stock trend? Up or Down?

As you look back on your week, your month, your life, would your chart reveal a *bullish* market or a *bearish* market?

FCF: Our lives are filled with countless opportunities to either waste time or wisely invest our time. As we all know, we are tempted, and tempted *daily*, to spend our time on the trivial to the neglect of that which is essential. We all have far too many days where our time investment would reveal a downward trend.

This happens, typically through the a subtle slip into mindless wastes of time. 10 minutes there. 5 minutes there. 1 hour there. Ouch. I want to help us discern God's investment strategy for how we can...

The Point: Trim the trivial to maximize what matters.

Ephesians 5 will help us get there. One of the greatest missionaries of the early church was a man named Paul. He went to a city named Ephesus, started a church, and cared for them so much that he wrote this letter back to encourage them. Chapters 1-3 are primarily theological (Who God is. What God has done in Christ. Who they are because of what God has done for them in Christ) and Chapters 4-6 are primarily practical. They are a call to live a life that reflects the worth of Jesus.

As we cover the last section of chapter 5, I want to provide you with two encouragements on how you can *trim the trivial to maximize what matters*.

I. Maximize time by making the most of every opportunity. (15-16)

Look at 5:15 *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.*

- We immediately see one of Paul's favorite words to describe the Christian life: "Walk." Walk refers to how we do what we do on a daily basis.
- This is not the first time we see the word walk in Ephesians 5. **Walk in love (5:1-2) & Walk as children of light (5:8)**
- Got it? WALK in Love. Walk in Light. Walk in Wisdom. And there is a connection there: if we live wisely, we will be living in love and light.

So Paul says "Look carefully (or "Be very careful") not as unwise but as wise, (How?) MAKING THE BEST USE OF THE TIME..."

- This is where we get our idea about Maximizing Time.
- P. T. O'Brien says it means to "take full advantage of every occasion"
- Don't miss opportunities. Seize every moment with the ultimate goal of pleasing God. Let me give you three thoughts on this.

A. Maximize time by realizing its scarcity.

- Time is short. It is illusive. In the scheme of eternity, whether we live to be 23 or 93, our days are but a breath.
- The clock is ticking and has a limited number of ticks.
- **James 4:14 "What is your life?** How's that for a sobering question! Here comes the sobering answer: **"For you are a mist..."** You are a mist **that appears for a little time and then vanishes.** The Greek is even stronger. It says, "You are a mist, *which being seen for a little while even then is disappearing.*"
- Jonathan Edwards wrote a meditation on Ephesians 5:16 and said this: **"There is nothing more precious, and yet nothing of which men are more prodigal (recklessly wasteful). . . . If men were as lavish of their money as they are of their time, if it were as common a thing for them to throw away their money, as it is for them to throw away their time, we should think them beside themselves, and not in the possession of their right minds. Yet time is a thousand times more precious than money; and when it is gone, cannot be purchased for money, cannot be redeemed by silver or gold."**
- You will not see anyone in Medford Square throwing 10, 20, and 50s on the ground (here's a debit card too since we're having fun). Why do we do this with our time?
- Once time is past, it is gone forever. A million dollars will not buy you one moment.

T: Which provides good reason to...

B. Maximize time by eliminating time wasters.

- Why? "Because the days are evil..." (16) We live in a broken world, and we can think about this from two angles
 - Brokenness Inside: We do not manage or maximize our time well. We often just "go through the motions," because we are lazy or unwise or selfish or presumptuous (I can stop, right?) But there is also...
 - Brokenness Outside: Today, Medford will dedicate the Krystle Campbell Peace Garden at 2pm in honor of one of the four people who lost their lives in the Marathon Bombing three years ago. When we consider that event and the tragic bombing in Manhattan last week, it should make us want to live with a sense of urgency.
 - Life is way too short; Let's give ourselves to what matters most.

As we move through Ephesians 5, I want to give you **7 Tips to Trim the Trivial & Maximize what Matters**

TIP: List time wasters. Take a couple of days and just write them down. How much time do you waste in any given week on...

- Social Media?
- News Sources?
- Pokemon Go. Video Games?
- Netflix, TV, Movies?
- Sports, Music, Entertainment?
- Do any of those resonate? How many hours do you spend on things that will blow away like dust when weighed in the scales of eternity?

C. Maximize time by living in the present.

- We can get so caught up in where we've been, what happened last week, what she said last month, the opportunity that we blew last year, that we totally miss *today*.
- On the flip side, we can get so caught up in where we're going (graduation. marriage. transitioning to a new job)... *Whoa. Whoa. Whoa. What about today?*
- Enjoy today! Take advantage of today! Sure, reflect, plan, but we make the most of the opportunity right in front of you.
- **Elizabeth Elliot** was a missionary to Ecuador. One of her the pearls of wisdom she left behind is the simple statement: **"Do the next thing to the glory of God."**
- Take care of the next thing and do it with all you've got.

T: Related to this, here's a tip for you...

TIP: Redeem the Time

- Use down time or dead time in a constructive way.
- Getting ready in the morning (Shower, Brushing your teeth), listen some good music for your soul.
- On your morning commute, check a podcast.
- When you go for a walk, pray.
- When your waiting for the T, get a few minutes of the Bible into your heart. AND THEN tell me if you regret it.
- **Jonathan Edwards** penned some hard-core resolutions to live his life by. Here's one: **"Resolved: Never to lose one moment of time, but to improve it in the most profitable way I possibly can."**

T: Maximize time by making the most of every opportunity. #2.

II. Maximize time by living under the control of the Spirit. (5:17-21)

Verses 17-21 answer how we can live wisely and maximize the time God gives..

17 *Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*

A. Understand the will of the Lord (5:17).

- This is similar to what Paul says in vv. 8-10: **"Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), 10 and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord."**
- DISCERNMENT is probably the greatest gift to help us manage and maximize our time.
- Why? Because our consumeristic society makes our day an age of choice.
- I think this is why a statement from **Seth Godin** really grabbed me, when he said: [To be productive] **"You do not need more time. You just need to decide."**

- What we need to actually apply that is “*understanding*” & “*discernment*” from God, which helps us differentiate between what is good from not good, and what is good from what is best.

TIP: Always ask: “What’s Best Next?”

- Do the most important things first, during what should be the best part of your day.
- AND...

TIP: Schedule time for what matters most.

- We often take for granted those we love the most.
- If you consider yourself a follower of Jesus, why wouldn’t, why shouldn’t he make your calendar.
- If you’re married or a parent, why not put specific, quality time with your spouse or your kids? (Date Nights... Spouse Sync)
- It is NOT unspiritual to do this.

T: How do you trim the trivial to maximize what matters?

B. Be filled with the Spirit (5:18).

18 *And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit,*

The Spirit brings Self-control...

- The imagery gives us a clue, rather than drinking wine to the point of intoxication where it literally takes you over, we are to be intoxicated or taken over by the Spirit.
- The Greek translated out woodenly would say: “Be being filled with the Spirit.” It indicates ongoing activity, but it is an activity of reception.
- WE have the Spirit, but we need the Spirit to constantly to fill us with the strength and grace we need to live each day.
- We cannot fill ourselves, but receive more of the Spirit’s strengthening activity as we seek God, receive his Word, worship together, do life together, and spend time turning our thoughts and affections toward him.

TIP: Focus & Stop “multi-tasking.”

- Do you know what “multi-tasking” is in quotes? That’s right. Because it is a myth. Focus.
- When we “multi-task” (which I use to brag about you know, oh man, I’m so smart, I’m so talented, I’m so driven, I am an unbelievable multi-tasker! Ok, so I wasn’t really saying that, but my life was) when we multi-task, we are really “rapidly switching between activities, degrading our clarity and depleting our mental energy.” (So says, Ron Friedman in a Harvard Business Review article).

TIP: Practice Digital Detox.

- Limit your screen time.
- Kill the notifications = Probably 5% helpful and 95% distraction.
 - To paraphrase John Piper: “One of the great uses of social media will be to prove [in the very end] that [our lack of prayer] was not from a lack of time.”
 - If anyone tells me they do not have time to get in the Word or to pray, it makes me either laugh or sad on the inside (or both!) because it is simply not true. I laugh when I’m proud and unlike Jesus; I’m sad when I’m humble and loving - *like* Jesus.
 - Never say: “I do not have time.: That’s just a lie you happen to believe.
 - We have time for what we *want*. Trim the trivial.
- So pray, God make me want you. Change my desires.

The Spirit controls, and the Spirit also energizes.

- All of Ephesians is trying to point to God's *grace* as the source for everything we need.
 - Ephesians 1:19-23! (The same power that raised Jesus from the dead - at work in us!)
 - Ephesians 2:8-10! (Saved by Grace. Now God has prepared good works for us.)
 - Ephesians 6:10! (Be strong in the strength of his might.)
 - Ephesians 5:18! (Be filled with the Spirit)
- So it is the Spirit who strengthens us and gives us everything we need, but the Spirit also leads us to make wise decision with how we maintain our physical energy levels, which is another tip for us.

TIP: Maintain energy levels (eat, sleep, exercise).

- Eat, sleep, exercise, will help us all maximize. Let's say that together. Corny? Perhaps... but...
- Eat right and you will have more energy.
- Get enough sleep. Last week after we wrapped up: "The best good work you could do is go home and take a nap." Holla.
- Exercise. Reason I'm motivated to exercise... (Jon) ENERGY.

C. Rely on the Spirit-filled community around you (5:19-21)

19 addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, **20** giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, **21** submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

- These verses show us the importance of leaning on one another. We need to encourage one another.
- This is why Sundays & Groups are such a priority. Every time we fail to maximize these opportunities, we miss some spiritual strength.

TRANS: So if I could make one final plea with you, it would be this:

Conclusion:

Don't put off what is most important...

- Some of you have never really put God first, never fully embraced the story of Jesus, but you know you need it. Why not TODAY? Maximize your time.
- Some of you are not sure about that, but you know you should consider it further. Don't wait. Come to my Explore Group tomorrow night. Maximize your time!
- Some of you know you've been allowing too many trivial matters to creep into your life. Perhaps you need to take these truths and a couple of these tips and say and ask God to help you give him your best time.

When I was in college, I was introduced to a poem by a missionary named C.T. Studd and man is this a study poem: **Only one life. It will soon will past. Only what is done for Christ. Will last.**

Let's trim the trivial to maximize what matters, all for his name and his fame. Let's pray. (The Wonderful Cross)