

# February 15th, 2015

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Date: 15 February 2015

[0:00] If you would turn in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 5, we've been making our way through Ephesians, if you're not aware, as a church. We've been in it for some time now. And the end is in sight.

So if you would look to Ephesians chapter 5, we're going to be in three verses this morning, verses 15, 16, and 17. Let me begin by saying this.

I don't know if you know this. But there are 168 hours in a week. All of us have been given 168 hours in a week.

So the question that I have for you this morning, how do you decide to use your 168 hours? What informs your decisions of how to spend the 168 hours God gives you this week?

This past week, I came across some interesting facts from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. They gathered information from Americans who are employed between the ages of 25 through 54 with children.

[1:16] So a little cross-section of Americans. Americans and they processed the information and they came up with the following daily averages of time use. On average, Americans sleep 7.7 hours a day.

I'd like half of that. Anybody else? I'm kidding. On average, we work 8.7 hours a day.

On average, we spend 2.5 hours a day on leisure. Or as the Brits say, leisure. On average, we spend 1.1 hours a day on household tasks.

Again, this is a cross-section of all Americans. On average, we spend an hour a day eating and drinking. On average, we spend 1.3 hours a day caring for others.

And on average, we spend 1.7 hours a day on everything else, whatever that may be. Here's the point. Each one of us is given 24 hours a day. 168 hours a week.

[2:19] And how are you making use of the time that God has given you? Christian, does the way you spend your time look any different than those who are still walking in darkness?

If you would turn now to Ephesians chapter 5, I'm going to read this passage. Ephesians chapter 5, 15, 16, and 17. It's a command.

It's an exhortation. Look carefully, then, how you walk. Not as unwise, but as wise. Making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.

Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. God, in this passage, is calling each of us to take stock of how we're using our time.

Why? Because being a follower of Jesus changes the way we spend our time. Why is that?

Because God, by His grace, has radically changed us.

[3:22] And He has brought us into a knowledge of His eternal plan for all. So we no longer live for ourselves.

We are seeking to do the will, the eternal will, of our Lord. And believe it or not, it shows up in our weekly schedules. This morning, God is calling us to a wise use of our 168 hours that He will give us, Lord willing, this week.

He wants us to leverage our time for His eternal will. We must walk in light of eternity.

When you prioritize your life according to God's will, you will make the best use of your time. You will walk wisely.

This morning, I want you to see three points that come from this passage that will help prioritize your life. The first point is this. Examine your life. The second point is you've got limited time.

[4:34] The third point is this. God's eternal will prioritizes our daily lives. So, let's look at this first command here to examine our lives in verse 15.

Look carefully then how you walk. Look carefully then how you walk. Examine your life. What God is commanding us to do here is to pay careful attention to our lives.

Remember that word walk? Examine your life. It's Paul's favorite word to describe how you live your life. We're all on a journey. We're all traveling. We're all going somewhere. And God is commanding us to take focus, to focus in on how we are walking, how we are living, how we are spending our days.

The sense of that word careful can also be rendered accurately. And so, this isn't just a general paying attention to your life.

This is carefully paying attention to your life. This is paying attention to the specifics. The sense of this little word, look carefully to how you walk, is taking a careful, detailed etch your life.

[5:54] And not just one careful look, but the verb is actually, means kind of an ongoing looking to. So, ongoingly, keep looking carefully at your life.

God is calling us to regularly examine our life. Who likes that word examine? Seriously.

It's not a warm, cuddly word, is it? Think about it. A medical checkup? Also known as an examination?

Who likes having their body measured, poked, and prodded? Seriously. A job review? Also known as an examination. I mean, who can't just wait to walk into your boss's office for the annual review? Seeing the good you've done and the not so good that you have done. It's a holding to account. I mean, think about a tax audit. I mean, it is tax season, isn't it?

[7:02] It's a tax examination. You don't want to get audited, do you? You don't want to be brought through that. It's a holding to account. It's kind of like this.

You know when you look at your check register, your checking account online, and you're kind of going through all your purchases, and you're going through carefully, you're like, yeah, yeah, that was a good purchase. No, that wasn't a good purchase. Yeah, that was a good purchase. No, that wasn't a good purchase.

You're examining your checking account. You're paying careful attention to make sure you're spending your money wisely. So when Paul is telling us here to look carefully at our life, he's saying to examine the way that you are living your life.

Hold yourself to account, is what he's saying. This is a call to self-examination. This is a call to self-reflection. Which means you may see something you don't want to see.

Why is God commanding us to do this? Why does God want us to pay careful attention to the way we're living?

[8:02] Does he just want us to become self-absorbed? Nah, that's not it. God knows our tendency, even as Christians. Our tendency is to lose focus and drift, isn't it?

To lose focus and stray, to lose focus and wander. God loves us. And he wants us to stay focused on living for what matters most.

That's wisdom. And so when we examine our lives, we examine our lives through the lens of wisdom. So what God is saying to us here is son, daughter, look carefully how you live in your life. Be wise. Now, taking stock of your life is not just a Christian thing.

Socrates said this, the unexamined life is not worth living. Even non-Christians know that if you don't examine your life regularly, you'll lose focus on what's most important and live for things that are less important.

[9:12] I mean, there's a whole industry seeking to help people maximize their life according to what they think is most important.

Now, the big difference between Christians and non-Christians is what is most important. What matters most?

And that's why Paul is introducing the word wise here at the end of verse 15. Look carefully at how you live in your life. Not as unwise, but as wise.

God is saying, examine your life to make sure you're living wisely. You're walking wisely. So let me give you a quick crash course in the biblical concept of wisdom.

Our Bibles are packed full of it. Proverbs jumps out. As the book that talks about wisdom. I mean, Proverbs 1-7 says, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.

[10:14] And then 9-10 says, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Wisdom starts with God. A wise life is a life lived with God at the center of all things.

God governing all that we do. A wise life is a life lived dependent upon and unto God. Foolishness is a life that denies or disregards God in everyday decisions.

A life of folly is a life lived unto me. The me-centered life. I am at the center of all things. All things exist for me.

Now, if we are honest with ourselves, brothers and sisters, that's how we used to live. We used to live a life of folly.

We used to be living in darkness, living ignorant of God and denying His ways. That's how we used to live. And then, in an amazing display of God's grace, Christ shined into our lives.

[11:34] Awake, O sleeper! And we saw. We were awakened to a world far bigger than our own.

We were awakened to a life with God at the center of all things, not ourselves. When God saved us, He delivered us by the gospel from a me-centered life of folly to a God-centered life of wisdom.

You know, the God-centered life is the good life. It's the life of wisdom. So think of wisdom as a skill that's acquired over the course of one's life.

And it shapes one's life. And here's why. A wise life is formed one godly decision at a time.

It's living one decision at a time as though God is at the center of all things because He is. And over the course of a life, one acquires the skill of godly living.

[12:45] Living unto God in all areas. wisdom. That's wisdom. Wisdom is the fruit of a life fully devoted to God. Young people in the room, whether you're in middle school or whether you're in high school, whether you're in college, Ecclesiastes 12 says this, remember your Creator in the days of your youth.

Don't buy the lie that you can just put it on hold and come back to it later. Be wise now. Wisdom starts now.

Wisdom starts today. Live unto God today. what the Proverbs Solomon sways. Get it. Get wisdom. Get it at all costs.

Make it your love. Pursue her. Make her your own. Be wise. Live for God in all things. What God is urging us to do here in verse 15 is to look carefully and look often at our lives to make sure we're aimed at God.

Living lives unto the Lord. Walking wisely. God at the center of all things. Now here's what I want you to feel this morning.

[14:04] It's very clear. You are responsible to look carefully at your own life.

You must take stock of your life. You must examine your life. I can't do that for you. Pay attention to your marriage.

Is your marriage lived unto the Lord? Your parenting. Is it lived unto the Lord? Your finances. Is it unto God? Your entertainment choices. Is it unto the Lord?

Your personal pursuit of God. Reading His Word. Are you praying? Are they unto the Lord? Examine your life.

Look carefully at how you're walking. Which brings us to the second point. You've got limited time. You've got limited time.

[15:10] So what Paul would say is so make the most of it. wisdom. In verse 15, Paul's writing about wisdom and then in verse 16 he gets, oh, so practical because wisdom shows up in the use of your time.

Making the best use of the time because the days are evil. Can I just share with you five things that we all have in common regarding time? All of us in this room.

We all have this in common. You ready? We're all Americans, I believe. First thing we have in common is this. Did you know that the average American lifespan is now 79 years?

It's a little bit better news for women, ladies. You'll live 81 years on average. Brothers, you've got 76 years on average. So typically, Americans live long lives.

The average lifespan of someone living internationally around the world is 61 years old. So as Americans, on average, we live longer. But, we read our Bibles, what Moses writes in Psalm 90 is

this, the years of our life are 70 by reason of strength, 80.

[16:28] So it's really nothing new. On average, all of us have 70 to 80 years of life to live. So that's the first thing we have in common.

The second thing we have in common is this. Though all of us have 70 to 80 years on average to live, none of us know how many days we actually have.

None of us can be sure of the day that we will die. but there is a day on which you and I will die.

In Psalm 139, 16, David is crying out to God and recognizing that God has set the number of His days. The day of your death is known by your God.

You know how you have a birthday? You have a death day. And as Americans, we don't like to think about our deaths, do we?

[17:38] But unless Jesus returns in our lifetime, each of us will surely die. The day of our death is set. God knows it.

All of us are going to die. And yet we don't know when. We all have that in common. The third thing that we have in common. We tend to think of our lives as expanding.

But in reality, what God says, from His perspective, we are one day closer to our death. Or unless Jesus returns.

So we're either one day closer to our death or we're one day closer to Jesus' return. But what God says is the window of your life on earth is closing.

How does that sit with you? Dude, will you stop bumming me out? I came to be with God's people to get encouraged, brother.

[18:48] You're bringing me down, man. You pull up, Salvati? Come on. Did you know that both David, King David and Moses, each wrote a psalm in which they asked God to make them know the measure of their days?

Psalm 39, 4 through 6. Read it. But I'd like to direct you to Psalm 90, verse 12. The real question is, why did they ask God to remind them of the measure of their days?

And 90, 12 says this, so teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. Knowing that your days are numbered and that your death is drawing closer should focus you to live for what matters most.

God. His plan. I don't want to bum you out this morning. I want to wake you up this morning.

There's this guy. He preached a very famous sermon. Sinners in the hands of an angry God.

Anybody name that guy? Jay Edwards. Jonathan Edwards. And before he was 20 years old, he wrote these things called the resolutions.

[20:21] And so before he was 20 years old, he wrote 70 resolutions. And what they were were things that he would review every week. And they were designed to help him live a life of godliness.

They're all kind of springing out of God's word. So can I just read you a few of them? Resolution number five. Remember, this kid's like, he's like 19 years old.

Resolved, never to lose one moment of my time but to improve it in the most profitable way I possibly can. Resolution number nine. To think much on all occasions of my dying in the common circumstances which attend death.

Ladies, how about Jonathan Edwards calling you up to go on a date? Hey, let's go to Starbucks.

What do you want to talk about? Let's talk about dying. Alright.

Resolution 17. Resolve, that I will live so as I shall wish I had when I come to die. Resolution 43.

[21:28] Resolve, never hence forward till I die to act as if I were any way my own but entirely in altogether God's.

Man. Resolution 50. Resolved. That I will act so as I think I shall judge would have been best when I come into the future world.

You see how he's living his life? He's not afraid of his death. His death was compelling him to live a life for what matters most.

The things of God. The fourth thing that we have in common. So the first is on average we'll live 70, 80 years.

The second is we're not really sure about that. The third is the window of our lives is closing. The fourth is each of us has between now and our death we all live within the constraints of a 24 hour day.

[22:37] All of us. All of us. Each of us works with the same amount of allotted time. Each of us in this room and then the 7 billion other people on the face of the earth all live within a 24 hour period.

Do you know what that means? Everybody's deciding what to do with their time. All of us live within 24 hour days.

The fifth thing. The fifth thing we all have in common. Each of us will stand before Christ to give an account for the way we lived our lives.

how we made the most of our time. Listen to this. Writing to Christians in Romans chapter 14 verse 10 Paul writes for we Christians for we will stand before the judgment seat of God.

Verse 12 So then each of us will give an account of himself to God. Again writing to Christians in 2 Corinthians 5 9 and 10 we read this.

[23:48] So whether we are at home or away we make it our aim to please him for we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one may receive what is due for what he's done in the body.

Brothers and sisters the promise of this final judgment should not make us fear for our salvation.

That's not why these passages are here.

Our salvation has been secured by Christ by his death. In fact our Savior will also be our judge. But what should be sobering us up is that we will have to give an account.

We will stand before him for how we lived our lives. And we must take that to heart. we must live in light of that day.

It's what we all have in common. Seventy to eighty years we really don't know the number of them.

The windows closing each of us has to deal living within twenty four hours each of us will have to stand before Christ.

[25:03] So what? What difference does this make? each of us must decide how we will spend the time God has given to us.

What God through Paul is exhorting us to hear is make the best use of the time however long you got. Make the most of it.

Now when you hear the little phrase make the best use of the time don't immediately think in terms of efficiency. Don't think Stephen Covey seven habits of highly effective people. Don't think David Allen getting things done it's a matter of how much you can pack into your life.

That's very American. Think in terms of the aim of our life. The goal of our time.

Did you notice the contrast in verse 16 make the best use of the time because the days are evil.

You know what we're surrounded by people living in darkness who are using time foolishly for evil purposes.

[26:11] We don't want that. We want them to come to Christ and live their lives or something else but that's the way it is. We are to make the best use of the time for the glory of Christ.

Don't think how much can I get done in a 24 hour period. Think how can I use this day for the glory of Christ. That's starting to move in the right direction of making the best use of the time.

That's wise living. It's up to you to decide how you're going to spend your time. Don't waste your time.

Live for the glory of Christ. Now the question you may be asking yourself is, hey, can you give me a little more help than that? How do I aim my life? Is there something that can help me decide what is the best use of the time God gives me?

And the answer is yes. Look at verse 17. God's will prioritizes our time. Verse 17 says this.

[27:16] Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. God's eternal will prioritizes our daily lives. Here's the connection between 16 and 17.

Walking wisely means making the best use of the time. Verse 16. Verse 17, Paul tells us how to make the best use of the time.

By understanding what is the will of the Lord. He's saying don't be a fool and ignore God's will. You need to understand what the will of the Lord is in order to make the best use of the time.

Now that word understand is a very interesting word. It means more than just knowing the facts. An intellectual grasp on things. The word carries with it this sense of bringing things together.

The idea is an understanding that knows how to practically live out the will of the Lord. How to put it into practice. How to live in light of the will of the Lord.

[28:29] So don't you want to know what the will of the Lord is? Well it may not be what you think. God's word reveals God's will for God's people.

John, stop. God's word reveals God's will for God's people. But what's interesting about Ephesians is how Paul talks about God's will. He talks about it.

Not in Ephesians 5. In Ephesians 1. In Ephesians 1, Paul references the will of God three times. In verse 1, in verse 9, in verse 11.

And what he's writing about is different aspects of God's plan of salvation for the fullness of time. In other words, God's plan for eternity.

God's eternal plan to save sinners and to eventually make all wrongs right and reverse the curse all through Jesus.

[29:40] So here's what Paul is writing in verse 17. Don't be a fool and think that this life is all that there is. live your 70-80 years in light of God's glorious eternal plan to unite all things in Jesus Christ.

That's what he's saying. Christ lit you up to be holy. Now live holy wise lives in light of His eternal purposes.

that is the will of the Lord. In other words, God's plan for eternity informs how we daily live our lives. We walk with an eye to eternity. We live our lives in light of this greater reality, God's eternal plan.

This is an eternal perspective. life. We don't get that much. God's word gives it in abundance. God's plan for eternity informs our decisions.

[30:56] So I want to take a shot and try to help you out in how this makes a difference in our lives. Maybe some of you in the room are asking the question, should I get married?

Well, here's how an eye to God's eternal plan makes a difference with that question. First, you've got to realize, marriage isn't the end all.

There's something greater than marriage. The glory of Christ. Second, you need to marry someone who understands the will of the Lord.

Brother, sister in Christ, if you're thinking about being married, do you share the same aim in life? Living for Jesus.

For those who are married, how does an eternal perspective change your marriage? Are you at an impasse in your marriage?

[31:58] Are your heels dug in? Are there too many wounds that are too deep? Consider your marriage in light of eternity.

Wrongs done look a lot smaller and less significant in light of God's plan for the fullness of time. So when you look at your marriage in light of God's eternal will, step back, get perspective, forgive, forgive, forgive wrongs done.

don't hold a grudge, don't become bitter. Live for Christ. Moms and dads, what is the ultimate goal for each of your children?

children. I want my child to get straight A's. I want my child to be a D1 athlete. I want my child to be first chair cello.

Or maybe, hey, I really just want my child to potty, be potty trained. Really, that's it. That's it.

Seriously, my ultimate goal right now is that my child actually sleeps five consecutive hours so that I actually can sleep.

[33:21] Or maybe you're thinking, I just want my kid to be able to move out and live on their own. Let God's plan for eternity inform your parenting.

Parent with eternity in mind. You know what is going to happen? You know what it's going to do? He will help you pick your battles. It will help you persevere through trials because your child's greatest need is Christ.

Eternity informs how we see other people. I'm sure you all have neighbors, you all have workmates, family, many of whom are not Christians.

How do you think about them? Do you think about them in light of eternity? Do you think about them of where they will be spending eternity?

It's compelling. As we become more aware of eternity and where people will spend eternity, it's going to have an effect. It's going to incline us to raise a certain kind of conversation that can be uncomfortable.

[34:44] A conversation about spiritually significant things because we're concerned about where people will live for eternity. let eternity inform what you buy.

Eternity puts things in perspective real quick. Puts things in the proper place with the right perspective. It'll keep your stuff from owning you. It's going to rust. It's going to break. It's going to run its course of usefulness.

It helps us to be in this world but not of this world. So how do we make the best use of the time? We live in light of eternity. It's real. We live understanding what the will of the Lord is to unite all things in Christ. It's all about Christ.

We live for what matters most. God's will has always been for us to be holy and blameless before Him. So living for eternity and making the best use of our time, do you know what that is?

[35:51] That's holiness. That's living a life set apart from everybody else. It's making the best use of our time for the glory of Christ. Each of us has been given 168 hours this week.

Lord willing as far as we know. And what will set us apart is that we leverage each day for eternity is making the best use of the time.

I want to close with one of my favorite poems. It's written by a guy named C.T. Studd. He was a stud.

As you will soon find out, the name of this poem is Only One Life. Eight stanzas will be about two minutes.

Two little lines I heard one day traveling along life's busy way, bringing conviction to my heart and from my mind would not depart. Here they are.

[36:55] Only one life which will soon be passed. Only what's done for Christ will last. Only one life, yes, only one, soon will its fleeting hours be done. Then in that day my Lord to meet and stand before his judgment seat, only one life which will soon be passed.

Only what's done for Christ will last. Only one life, the still small voice gently pleads for a better choice, bidding me selfish aims to leave and to God's holy will to cleave.

Only one life which will soon be passed. Only what's done for Christ will last. Only one life, a few brief years, each with its burdens, hopes, and fears, each with its clays I must fulfill, living for self or in his will.

Only one life, which will soon be passed. Only what's done for Christ will last. When this bright world would tempt me sore, when Satan would a victory score, when self would seek to have its ways, then help me Lord with joy to say, only one life which will soon be passed.

Only what's done for Christ will last. Give me Father a purpose deep in joy or sorrow, thy word to keep faithful and true whate'er the strife pleasing thee in my daily life.

[38:13] Only one life will soon be passed, only what's done for Christ will last. Oh, let my love with fervor burn, and from the world now let me turn, living for thee and thee alone, bringing thee pleasure on thy throne.

Only one life will soon be passed, only what's done for Christ will last. Only one life, yes, only one. Now let me say, thy will be done.

And when at last I'll hear the call, I know I'll say, twas worth it all. Only one life, twas soon be passed, only what's done for Christ will last.

Let's pray together.