

Don't Waste Your Time

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[0:00] The following message was given at a Sunday service at Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

! Hospitality, as we've been a part of the Rooted Retreat over the last three days. Spent the last three days with parents and teens from this church. It was a delightful weekend as an outsider. I want to tell you that observing the zeal for the Lord and the joy and the camaraderie, frankly, the fighting spirit that exists among these young people.

The future is bright for Trinity Grace Church. It is a profound blessing from the Lord to have a next generation that is godly and eager to follow the lead of their parents and pastors.

By God's grace, that's what you have. There is quite a bit of good fruit here. Now, I also come with greetings from Sovereign Grace Church of Louisville.

[1:30] One of the joys of being a part of a Sovereign Grace Church is that you can go to many other cities in the United States and in other countries, and you will find brothers and sisters who love the Lord, who are devoting their lives to following Christ and serving one another and reaching out to the community in the very same ways that we want to do.

That's what I find when I'm among you. I love that. C.S. Lewis described the kind of camaraderie that marks Christian friendship. He said, friendship is born at that moment when one person says to another, what?

You too? I thought I was the only one. And I have that you too kind of moment every time I visit another Sovereign Grace Church. That's how I feel with you and among you today.

And at Sovereign Grace Church of Louisville, we pray for other Sovereign Grace churches every Sunday, just like we did this morning, praying for Mario. And I know that back in Louisville, our brothers and sisters there praying for us, praying for you this morning.

So please know that if you ever visit Louisville, you will find a church full of people who already love you and care for you and are eager to welcome you. And we'll be quick to say, what, you too?

[2:41] I could talk all morning about what a blessing it is to be here, but I'm supposed to preach too. I'm honored to be a part of this Don't Waste Your Life series. I understand that you have been preaching a little mini-series here on Don't Waste Your Life.

Taylor has preached Don't Waste Your Patriotism. Jeff, Don't Waste Your Singing. Walt, last week, Don't Waste Your Conflicts. Today we're going to talk about Don't Waste Your Time. Next week, have you told them what next week is?

I don't want to spoil anything. Oh, it's up there. Oh, well, Don't Waste Your Sports. There you go. No surprise. Okay. I've listened to several of these messages. They're outstanding, and I'm honored to be a part of it. So would you please open your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 5?

Ephesians chapter 5. While you're turning there, I'll tell you about a little section of a beloved book called The Phantom Tollbooth by Norton Juster. It's a book, I don't know, maybe it's intended for kids, but it's very funny, and adults love this book too.

It's about a boy named Milo who's bored. He thinks life is meaningless, just unhappy, discontent, unsettled. And he drives a toy car through a mysterious tollbooth and goes on all sorts of adventures.

[3:54] And early in the story, he meets a dog named Toc. Toc is a watchdog, quite literally.

He has the head, the legs, the tail of a dog, but his body is a watch. A ticking watchdog. He's like a clock. He's a walking clock. Toc is horrified by Milo's attitude towards time.

So I'm going to read you a little bit. It'll be kind of fun. Milo shows up, and he's just amazed that no one does anything in this land. He says, Milo says, tell me, he yawned, for he already felt a nap now himself.

Does everyone here do nothing? Everyone but the terrible watchdog, said two of them, shuddering in chorus. He's always sniffing around to see that nobody wastes time.

A most unpleasant character. The watchdog? Said Milo quizzically. The watchdog, shouted another, fainting from fright for racing down the road, barking furiously, and kicking up a great cloud of dust, was the very dog of whom they had been speaking.

[5:04] Run! Wake up! Run! Here he comes, the watchdog! Great shouts filled the air as the lethargians scattered in all directions and soon disappeared entirely.

Rawr! exclaimed the watchdog as he dashed up to the car, loudly puffing and panting. Milo's eyes opened wide, for there was in front of him a large dog with a perfectly normal head, four feet and a tail, and the body of a loudly ticking alarm clock.

What are you doing here? growled the watchdog. Just killing time, replied Milo apologetically. You see, killing time, roared the dog so furiously that his alarm went off.

It's bad enough wasting time without killing it. He goes on. But I love how this dog is consumed with time. Milo has a bunch of adventures with the watchdog.

And if you haven't read it, you should read it. It's a wonderful book. But this is an animal that cares a lot about time. It's bad enough to be wasting time, but you're killing it?

[6:11] How can you be killing time? I suppose that it's understandable that a watchdog would not appreciate people like Milo wasting time. But the watchdog is not the only one.

Talk, the watchdog, is not the only one. And when we come to the pages of the Bible, we discover that Talk, the watchdog, is not the only one that is concerned with how we spend our time.

In fact, the Apostle Paul warns us that we, too, might fall into the folly of wasting or even killing time.

Maybe you are thinking to yourself, well, I'm in no danger of wasting time. Life is just so busy. Or some of you might be thinking, well, yeah, my life is pretty boring. All I do is try to kill time.

We're going to look at two verses from Ephesians chapter 5. They call us to pay attention. To pay attention and to live deliberately and to live differently with how we think about our time.

[7:19] We're going to read these two verses. Would you please stand up? Can we read this?

Please stand up for the reading of God's word. Ephesians 5, 15 and 16. It says, This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. Amen. You may be seated. Some strong words in these two verses. These two verses are deceptive because they're short, they're sweet, they pass by really fast.

We think, oh, I understand what's here. This seems pretty obvious. Look carefully. That means pay attention. Watch closely. Keep a sharp eye out. But there's more here than initially meets the eye.

Like many, many verses. Maybe like every verse in the Bible. These are verses that reward careful attention. And the main idea behind these two verses is this.

Time is a valuable gift. Time is a valuable gift. But it can be lost. And it can be wasted. So watch how you walk. Walking is just a metaphor for living.

[8:37] Watch how you live. Watch how you use your time. Time is valuable. It's precious. It's a valuable commodity. But it can be lost. It can be wasted. So watch how you walk. Before we go any further, we need to understand where we are in the book of Ephesians.

This is not just a random, isolated command. And this is not just good advice from the Apostle Paul. He's not just, here's a few things I've learned about time management over the years. That's not it at all.

Everything in this chapter, everything in chapter 5 of Ephesians, as well as 4 and 6, all of it, all of it comes under the heading of chapter 4, verse 1. If you have to turn your page to look at it, do it.

But chapter 4, verse 1, Paul says, I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called. There's that little word again, walk.

But do you see that other little word, therefore? This verse begins, therefore, and everything that comes after depends on this. Chapter 4, verse 1 is a pivot.

[9:38] Chapter 4, verse 1 is a pivot. Chapters 1 through 3 of the book are rich in theology, describing the incredible riches of God and His plan to save individual Christians through Christ and unite those Christians together in the church, whether Jew or Gentile.

The entire three chapters, the beginning of Ephesians, there's only one command. And then you get to chapter 4. I don't remember the exact number. But it's like 37 commands in chapters 4, 5, and 6.

These next three chapters, chapters 4, 5, and 6, they describe how we are to live as a result of what God has done. And this means that the good news of Jesus Christ is meant to have a transforming effect in our lives.

A sentence I just said, that sounds like a very church kind of thing to say. The gospel is meant to have a transforming effect in our lives. I can say that more simply. Jesus wants to get stuff done in us.

He wants to get stuff done in our hearts and in our minds in the way that we live. Jesus died so that we could live differently. He died so that we could live differently and so that we would live differently.

[10 : 50] He died to make it possible and he died to empower it by his spirit. He died so that we might have different marriages. So that our parenting might be different. So that we would think differently about race and ethnicity and living together in a community.

So that we would use our words differently. He died so that we would spend our money differently and so that we would use our time differently. And those are just some of the topics that are addressed in chapters 4 through 6.

And so Paul says, look carefully then how you walk. Look carefully how you walk. And when it comes to time, as we turn back to chapter 5 verses 15 and 16, when it comes to our time, there's two lessons we can learn here.

The first is this, be wise. Be wise. It's a command so nice, Paul says it twice. Walk not as unwise, but as wise.

You shouldn't have to say it twice. You could have said either one of those, right? Don't be unwise. Okay, I get it. But be wise. Well, you already said, okay, you're just saying the opposite. He's saying the same thing. It's so important to him. He doubles it up.

[11 : 56] Don't be unwise. Do be wise. Now, what does it mean to walk in wisdom? What is he talking about? Walk in wisdom. Again, another kind of churchy phrase that we've got to think about a little bit.

What does it mean to walk in wisdom? The word wisdom has different meanings in different parts of the New Testament. In some places, it can refer to the wisdom of the gospel, God's eternal plan of salvation in Jesus Christ.

You see that, for instance, in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 and 2. But here, when Paul refers to both unwise and wise, I think he wants us to think of the kind of wisdom that's found in the Old Testament, particularly in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes and Job.

Wisdom is a learned skill. It's something that has to be learned. It's something that needs to be studied and practiced. There's lots of learned skills in this world.

You have to learn woodworking or surfing or how to make a meringue. You can't just do it the first time you want. Wisdom requires a clear view of an end goal. It requires guidance from others.

[13 : 04] It requires repeated practice to develop the right habits. Wisdom is the fruit of a life lived under the direction and guidance of God's Word.

And wisdom is also a way of being in the world. When we think of this word wisdom, it doesn't just mean do wise stuff. It also means be wise.

It's a way of living, a way of existing. It means to become a certain kind of person. Christians should be recognizable by the things we do and don't do, by the things we say and don't say, but we're also recognizable by the way we spend our time and the ways we don't spend our time.

Wisdom is seen in our attitudes, our actions, our desires. And if you dig a little deeper, those observable traits, they come from somewhere. They come from being a kind of person.

And so walking in wisdom, Christian wisdom, it's got several parts to it. When the Apostle Paul here says, be wise, just two little words. There's a lot going on under the hood of this little command.

[14 : 14] What does it mean to be wise? Well, wisdom in the Bible always starts with the fear of the Lord. It always starts. Throughout the Old Testament, wisdom is connected over and over again with the fear of the Lord.

You see that, for instance, in Proverbs 9, verse 10. It says, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. And I bring this up because if Paul gives us this command, if it's important to the Apostle Paul that we walk wisely, that we be wise people, then we need to make this connection between wisdom and the fear of the Lord.

Because without the fear of the Lord, there is ultimately no wisdom to be found. The fear of the Lord is one of those phrases that we need to dig into. We need to understand as Christians.

I came across a one-sentence definition recently that I like. A Bible scholar named Andrew Judd, he said, the fear of the Lord is knowing who God is and who we are and treating Him accordingly.

[15 : 22] If we really know who God is and we really know who we are, we won't be able to help but to treat Him accordingly. To come to Him as a great Savior, a gracious God, as loving and merciful and kind, having shown us His steadfast love, we will come with joy and gratitude.

We will treat Him accordingly. And the fear of the Lord is what happens when we work to remember and live with the awareness that there is a God and I'm not Him.

There is a God and He sees all that we do and He cares whether we obey Him or not. That's the fear of the Lord that leads to wisdom. Wisdom also teaches us to cultivate character.

Wisdom teaches us to cultivate character. The book of Proverbs is all about wisdom. And in the book of Proverbs, there is this unbreakable connection between character, conduct, and consequences.

I learned this from my pastor, my father-in-law in Louisville, C.J. Mahaney. He teaches this character, conduct, and consequences. The kind of person I am is my character, which leads me to speak and act and think in certain ways.

[16 : 35] That's my conduct. And my conduct then results in consequences. We would like it very much if there were no connections between these things. Wouldn't we like it if there weren't consequences from our conduct?

Wouldn't that be great if we could just say what we think? Oh, I'm just being real. Oh, I'm just tired. It's just, it's not the real me. No, there's consequences. Oh, I didn't. If we could just disconnect the consequences from the conduct, that'd be great.

That's not the way the world works. It's not the world that God made. And our conduct flows out of our character. It comes out of who we are. Another connection that we would like to be able to disconnect.

I would love it if I could say honestly and truly, I didn't mean that thing that I just said. I was just tired. I was distracted. I was distracted. That's not the real me.

No, that is the real me. And I know it's the real me. I know there's a connection between my character and my conduct because Jesus said so. Jesus said, out of the abundance of the heart, out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks.

[17 : 38] Your words reveal the real you. Out of the heart, the fingers type. Out of the heart, the thumbs text.

Out of the heart, the Instagrammer posts or whatever it is called. I don't know. You get the idea. Character, conduct, consequences.

They are unfailingly related. But that works to our benefit and our advantage as well. Because as we walk in the fear of the Lord, as we learn the fear of the Lord and we become the kind of people who have that kind of character, that's going to work its way out in our conduct.

We're going to begin to speak like Christians. We're going to begin to think like Christians, talk like Christians, encourage like Christians, give like Christians, and use our time like Christians. And that will have good consequences down the road.

Here's just a few of them. I just grabbed a couple, a couple of verses that describe the benefits that wisdom and the fear of the Lord bring about. Proverbs 3, 335, the wise will inherit honor, but fools get disgrace.

[18 : 50] Well, if character, conduct, and consequences are related, we could just reverse engineer this, work your way backwards. Would you rather have honor or disgrace? No, no, no. Just think about it. Honor, disgrace. I'll take honor.

You would take honor too. How do you get there? How do you get those consequences? Work your way back to conduct and character. The wise lay up knowledge, but the mouth of a fool brings ruin near.

I want knowledge. Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm. I'd rather have wisdom than harm. Well, if the consequences come from the conduct, which comes from the character, then let's be the kind of people who fear the Lord and let that drive all of our thinking and feeling and doing and speaking and how we use our time.

And so that's going to lead us to ask, how do we walk with our time, not as unwise, but as wise? How do we do that when it comes to our time? How do we become the kind of people? How do we have the character then to have the conduct? How we use our time that leads to good, wise, fear of the Lord kind of consequences? Well, in this room, there's probably as many different ways to answer that question as there are people. [20:08] The Lord has a very specific answer to that question in mind for you and for me, for every one of us. And one of the great tasks that we have before us is to ask, how does God want me to apply this?

What does it mean for me in my network of relationships, in my family, at my job, in my classroom, on my team? What does it mean for me to live this out? What does it mean to stop and consider who has God called me to be? What has God called me to do? And what am I doing now to move that direction? How does God want me to be an ambassador for Christ out there in the world among people who don't know Jesus yet? How does he want me to use my time and my wisdom, my words? There's a kind of mindlessness. We can be prone to this. We can get caught up in the day-to-day realities of life and not really stop to think and evaluate, how am I using my time? What would it mean for my time to be used wisely and not unwisely? It's very easy to overlook that question because there's a lot going on. [21:17] There's carpools and there's vacations and there's laundry and there's meals and you got to work, you got to project due. It's easy to not stop and ask.

But let's think about some ways. How does God want you to use your time? How does God want you to use your time with entertainment? Be a great place to start. Just think over the last week. Movies, shows, streaming video, scrolling the internet and social media, watching reels and shorts and little videos of cats or whatever it is. How does the Lord want you to use that time? It might be some of that. But is that the right number? How many hours did that add up to? Is that the right number? Is that what the Lord wants you to do at that time? Now, there's a phenomenon, I think, with this that I think of as the fast lane effect. I call this the fast lane effect.

[22:15] When we start to evaluate these things, have you noticed that when we evaluate these sort of gray matters, how we use our time, what kind of entertainment we watch, how we spend our money, that sort of thing, the fast lane effect works like this.

If you're driving down the highway in the fast lane, there's three kind of people in the world. We're morons, maniacs, and me. You know what I mean by that, right? If I'm driving in the fast lane, I trust everyone knows this. If you're not going to drive fast, just move over. Okay, just get out of the way. If you're driving in the fast lane, you come flying up on somebody, you're like, dude, it's 70 miles an hour, 55. Why are you 55 in this lane? Get out of the way, man. Move. He's a moron. You know, of course, we're not thinking that to ourselves because we're Christians, but someone might. I've heard that that could happen, right? Or you're cruising along in the fast lane, you're just minding your own business, and you see some dude flying up behind you. He's right on your tailgate, flashing the lights. Move. You're like, what a maniac. You're looking in the mirror. [23:15] This guy's a moron. That guy's a maniac. And there's me. I get it just right. Oh, this is the speed you should drive on the highway. I got my cruise control set. Get in line, folks. Right?

That's how we think of it on the highway. Well, that's how we think of it about all kinds of things. That's how we think about entertainment. I can't believe they watched that show. Or somebody behind us. They are so strict. Golly, man. Talk about wound a little tight. Man, loosen up, people. There's me. I get it just right. And we can think about that way with our time. As we start to evaluate our time, if we compare with other people, if all we do is ask, well, what do other people do? Oh, maniacs, morons, there's me. No, we need to say, what does God's word say? Well, how does God want us to use our time? And this requires wisdom. Because every one of us has to answer to the Lord. Not in comparison to somebody else in the fast line of time usage.

[24:16] We all have to pray and seek wisdom and read our Bibles. We have to do this every day. We need it every day. And so we need our Bibles every day.

We need our Bibles every day to know, how long should I spend on this thing? How much time should I give to reading my Bible? How much time should I give to talking with my kids?

How much time should I give to this crossword or to scrolling Facebook? Or how much time should I give to reading? Something that would improve my outlook on life.

How much time? I don't know. I can't answer that question. What would it mean for you to be wise, not unwise there? We need God's word.

We need to be in God's word. We need to be reading God's word to get this wisdom. We need God's word every day. Brothers and sisters, the only way that we will ever be able to walk wisely and not unwisely is by reading God's word.

[25:13] We need it every single day. I hope you read it every day. I hope you pray every day. And if not, then you've got a wonderful opportunity and adventure awaiting you as you begin a new habit.

There's a theologian named D.A. Carson, and he talks about the importance of this. He says, The challenge has become increasingly severe in recent years, owing to several factors. All of us must confront the regular sins of laziness or lack of discipline, sins of the flesh and of the pride of life. But there are additional pressures. The sheer pace of life affords us many excuses for sacrificing the important on the altar of the urgent. It's an important difference between what's important versus what is urgent.

The constant sensory input, think your phone, the constant sensory input from all sides is gently addictive.

We become used to being entertained and diverted, and it is difficult to carve out the space and silence necessary for serious and thoughtful reading of Scripture. More seriously yet, the rising biblical illiteracy in Western culture means that the Bible is increasingly a closed book, even to many Christians.

[26:22] Now, I thank God that it's not a closed book to you. Thank you for being people who love God's Word. But as the culture drifts away from its former rootedness in a Judeo-Christian understanding of God, history, truth, right and wrong, purpose, judgment, forgiveness, and community, so the Bible seems stranger and stranger.

For precisely the same reason, it becomes all the more urgent to read it and reread it so that at least confessing Christians preserve the heritage and outlook of a mind shaped and informed by Holy Scripture.

And you might be thinking, wait, I thought there was a sermon on time. I thought maybe there'd be some like productivity, time management tips or something. It's just talking about reading the Bible. Yeah. Yeah. Because Paul says, walk not as unwise, but as wise. And how will we ever know what is wise if we are not asking God through His Word?

We need this every day. Brothers and sisters, if you're not in a habit of daily reading God's Word, look, every Christian has seasons that that's difficult to establish or maintain.

[27:28] There's a Christian group called the Navigators. And years ago, they developed a very simple approach to get started. They called it the 5-5-5 plan. And if you're struggling to read the Bible every day, 5-5-5, give me five minutes a day, five days a week for the next five weeks.

You can read your Bible for five minutes a day. It's like one chapter. Start in the Gospel of John. Start in Romans. Start in any book you like. Five minutes a day. Over five days a week. You know, we're realistic. You're going to miss a day.

It's fine. Over the next five weeks, that's about how long it takes to forge a habit. You get to the end of that time, do another five. Add five minutes. Five more minutes. Ten minutes a day, five days a week for the next five weeks.

And you'll be amazed at the good fruit that comes from being in God's Word on a regular basis. Now, I hear from your pastors that you love God's Word and you meet and you study God's Word together.

You have small groups. You have Bible studies. Praise God. That is a joy for a pastor to know that his people are in God's Word. Well done. That pleases the Lord.

[28:29] So, stay in God's Word and look to God's Word for wisdom. So, first, be wise. Be wise. Now, second, simple command.

I'm going to summarize what Paul says in the rest of this. By time. B-U-I. By time. You might think, that's a strange phrase to use here. So, be wise and by time.

Yeah, it is a strange way to say it. Here's what I mean. Time can be a problem for us. We all feel the press of it. We all feel the press of it. That thing that Milo said to the dog, talk.

I'm just killing time. I used to work in a furniture store. I put myself through seminary selling furniture. And I was amazed. I had so much to do. I was working a job full-time trying to provide for my family and going to seminary full-time.

I had Greek to study. I had papers to write. I was like, man, I am busy. And people would wander in. Hey, can I help you find a recliner or a mattress or something? No, I'm just killing time.

[29:29] Just killing time. Like, okay. I mean, maybe furniture is interesting to you. I would think to myself, you don't have anything better to do than wander around a furniture store. That's great. You're free to do that. Some people are really interested in furniture.

That's okay, I guess. But I remember thinking, wow, time. Just killing time. And some of you are thinking, yeah, maybe I don't have that much to do.

Some of you are on into your career or on into a season with kids. And you're frustrated by how much time has to be devoted to your work.

Maybe you think about travel or the hobbies that you would like to spend time with if you just had more time. Maybe you're in college. And, man, when semester's on, you just feel like you're drowned and trying to manage the responsibility of all these assignments and papers and tests. Maybe some of you are young people, students that I was just with at Rooted. And you're thinking, oh, I'm so busy. And then you heard me say something like, oh, you got more free time right now than you'll ever have in your life.

[30:33] And you're like, no way, man. And, well, you will. Trust me. That's true. You'll believe me eventually. But time is relentless. Time is always moving. And it's unlike any other commodity on the planet.

You can't store it up. You can't hoard it. Right? We talk about saving time. Do we really? Where did you save it? Where is this bank account of time that we have?

What an interesting thing to say. There's a pastor named David Mathis. And he talks about the problem like this. He says, you are always on the clock. There's no avoiding it. Every human in every place on the planet, whatever the culture is, subject to the incessant passing of time.

The sands are always falling. No matter how much we neglect it, suppress it, or stress about it, there is nothing we can do to stem the onslaught. Ignore the rush to your own peril.

Or walk the path of wisdom in stewarding your short and few days as gifts from God.

[31:36] The first thing to say about being intentional with our time is that Scripture commends it. It commends it and it commands it. We get that here. We are stewards. And so, that brings us to this idea of buying time.

Your translation of the Bible probably reads like mine does. It might say something like, making the best use of the time. And that's good. That's a good translation. As long as you understand the urgency of it.

Like, making the best use of the time is not just a sort of optional thing. Again, this word here, making the best use of, in the original language, it's a word that comes from the marketplace. It's a word that comes from the idea of, like, snatching up a deal.

Imagine Black Friday, rushing the doors at Walmart to get a 70-inch TV for \$100. That kind of, there's a good deal in front, I'm grabbing it. That's making the best use of the time.

Seizing it. Buying it up. I'll never get this opportunity again. Again, this is the only time that we're ever going to experience, I don't even know what date it is.

[32:39] July 26, 2026. Once it's gone, it's gone forever. Buy it up. That's what it means to make the best use of it. When something is plentiful, we don't consider it valuable.

But when something is scarce, we cherish it. We protect it. We guard it. And that's how the Apostle Paul is calling us to view time. He's calling us to evaluate our time, to think about our time, and to walk in wisdom using our time for Him.

Because time is stewardship. Time is stewardship. Think of that. Time is something that we've been given. God has handed us time. He's given us this life.

He's given us these days, these weeks, these months, these years. And when it's gone, it's gone. We have this one shot at it. We, my family, will often take a walk after dinner.

We walk down the street, and at the bottom of the hill near our house, there is a cemetery. Almost every time, I say the same thing to my kids. We walk into the cemetery. Guys, we're all going to be dead soon. People think, wow, morbid dead.

[33:43] Okay. I want my kids to understand they don't just have endless time out in front of them. I want them to heed these verses and understand this is a stewardship.

We've been entrusted with something, and one day we'll give a report. We'll stand before God. He'll say, what did you do with that time that I gave you? We'll say, here's what I did. And this time has a purpose.

Time is a stewardship, but it also has a purpose. God has things He wants us to do with our time. I mentioned C.J. Mahaney a minute ago.

My father-in-law, he's our pastor at Sovereign Grace Church of Louisville. He wrote a little book called Biblical Productivity. It's a little tiny booklet. It's really just a collection of blog posts, and you can find it on his website, cjmhaney.com.

And on there, in there, he says, you know, every one of us, we have been given roles by God. Christian, husband, father, pastor. You have whatever your roles are.

[34:41] Start filling in the blanks. They're coming to mind, I bet. And with those roles, God has given us goals. What are the goals? He didn't make up that roles and goals thing. He's packaging it for us. But God has given us specific roles that He wants us to fulfill in our lives.

And within each one of those roles, as a husband, I have a certain set of goals and responsibilities. As a father, I have a certain set of goals and responsibilities. As a pastor, how am I using my time to fulfill my responsibilities in each one of those roles?

Because this time, we can use it well or we can use it poorly. When Paul uses language like wisdom, wise or unwise, I'm sure you've noticed how the book of Proverbs, man, it is black and white.

It is a binary. There is no middle ground. It is life and it is death. It is wisdom and it is folly. It is good and it is evil. There is no middle ground.

And the way we use our time every minute of every day. It might be hard to think in these categories, but every minute of every day counts under one of those two columns. Am I using this for good or for evil?

[35:46] Am I using this for the Lord or for my own selfish gain? Is this helping me to grow to be like Jesus or helping others to grow to be like Jesus? Or is it drawing me away from Him?

Is everything, every minute of the day, is it fanning my devotion to Christ more and more into flame? Or is it weakening me and causing me to drift from Him? Now, you might be thinking, okay, that sounds extreme.

Every minute of every day? Well, look, I don't mean that that necessarily, you don't have to go down and be like preaching on a street corner as long as you are awake. That's not what that necessarily means.

You can enjoy rest and leisure for the glory of God. I like a good crossword puzzle as much as the next person. I like to watch an F1 race or a golf match.

What do you call it? I don't know. Tournament. There's a place for rest and leisure. But we have to be deliberate about that.

[36:46] Let's make a decision in how we use that time and say, Lord, I think it would please you right now for me to sit down and take a nap. Praise God. You can take a nap to the glory of God.

You can go fishing to the glory of God. If that's how He's leading you to use that time. And are there ways? Again, evaluation. We have to ask ourselves. We have to be honest before the Lord.

Are there ways that we're using our time unwisely? Is that binge watching shows? Is that sports taking over your life? Is that too much fishing?

Is it some hobby, some crafting thing? Is it just scrolling social media over and over? How much time do you spend pinning stuff, retweeting stuff, Snapchatting stuff, or just doom scrolling stuff? John Piper has a sentence. One sentence. One of the most convicting sentences I've ever read. He says, one of the uses of social media will be to prove on the last day that prayerlessness was not for a lack of time.

[37:52] Oh, that hits me in the gut. Oh, I think, yeah, I want to grow in prayer this year. I was busy. I didn't have enough time. Well, I had time to look at Facebook. Oh.

One of the uses of social media will be to prove on the last day that prayerlessness was not for lack of time. Be wise, not unwise. And so we're asking, what does it mean for me to use my time Christianly?

That's a great exercise. Just think about the last week. If somebody could follow you around with a clipboard and log your time for the week and then compare you to the non-Christians that live on your block, would it look different?

How much different? I mean, you're here. That's a good start. But beyond that, would there be convincing evidence that you're a Christian? Like, is this guy saying I can't watch Netflix anymore? No, of course not. Come on. A verse like this isn't about what we can or can't do. It's about what we can do. What we've been saved to do.

[38:57] What God has set us free to do. What God has sent His Spirit into our hearts and empowered us to do. To live for Him and to think deliberately and wisely about how we use every minute of the day.

To ask, how can I make the most of this? And at times, to just go slow and sit down and have a leisurely conversation with your spouse or your child or your neighbor. That's what God is calling you to do.

At times, to have a nap. At times, to give yourself to a hobby. At times, to go for a walk. Maybe that's what the Lord is calling you to do. But have you thought about it? Have you asked God for wisdom for how you're going to use that time?

There's a Bible scholar named John Stott. He said this, So they seize each fleeting opportunity while it is still there.

For once it has passed, even the wisest people cannot recover it. Somebody once advertised as follows. Lost yesterday, somewhere between sunrise and sunset, two golden hours.

[40:14] Each set with 60 diamond minutes. No reward offered, for they are gone forever. By contrast, Jonathan Edwards, the philosopher-theologian who became God's instrument in the Great Awakening in America in 1734 and 35, he wrote in the 70th of his famous resolutions, just before his 20th birthday.

This man was remarkably godly for a 19-year-old. Resolved never to lose one moment of time, but to improve it in the most profitable way I possibly can. And he was a wise man for the first sign of wisdom, which Paul gives us here, is a disciplined use of time.

Did you notice that phrase? John Stott pointed it out. It's the last little phrase in this book, in this verse, because the days are evil. We need to be wise with our time, not unwise with our time. Wise how we walk, not unwise how we walk, because the days are evil. Man, that sounds ominous. Sounds like the beginning of a Lord of the Rings movie or something. But it's actually much more ominous than that.

The dangers we face in this life and in this world are real. The Apostle Paul is saying we live in dangerous days. These are treacherous times. We live in a day that is devoted.

[41:30] It's devoted itself against God and against godliness. The world that we live in will not help us to walk in wisdom, to watch how we walk.

It cannot do it. In fact, the world we live in is calculated to prevent us from walking wisely and using our time well. And this verse calls us to be part of a resistance movement.

This is a truly counter-cultural Christian impulse that is unwilling to go with the flow, unwilling to follow others in our choices about time or education or entertainment or social media.

We become the part of this resistance movement when we pursue wisdom, when we walk in the fear of the Lord and we're thoughtful about using our time to serve God and serve others.

I tell you what, I find these two verses to be very convicting because I think about how I spent my time this last week and I can think about many times where I did what I wanted to do instead of what I should do. I can think of ways I wasted time, ways I squandered time, ways I looked up and thought, it's been an hour?

[42:35] Some of that was just thoughtless and some of that was sinful. Some of that was lazy. Some of that was selfish.

And if you're like me and you think over the last week or the last year and you can think about ways that you've wasted time, I'm sure you can think about ways that we've sinned in that. But brothers and sisters, we have wonderful news. Jesus came.

Jesus, the eternal, timeless one, entered time and lived a succession of sinless days on our behalf and on a specific date with a time, on a calendar.

The time is recorded for us in our Bibles at a moment in time. He died for people who wasted time, for people who sinned with their time, for people who are selfish or arrogant or ignorant about their time.

People like me, people like you. And if the Lord is convicting you through these verses that there's ways you've wasted or squandered time, ways you've been selfish or lazy with time, come to Jesus. [43 : 38] Because he is a forgiving savior whose blood washes away all our sins. If we will confess he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, cleanse us from all unrighteousness and give us fresh resolve that we might look carefully how we walk, not as unwise, but as wise, making the best use of the time because the days are evil.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, oh Lord, our time is short and you are coming soon. And that soon might be 2,000 more years, but your word says it's soon and we want to be ready.

So Father, would you help us to walk wisely? Not as unwise, but as wise. Would you help us to make the best use of the time since the days are evil? Lord, we need wisdom to do this.

Lord, we feel our frailty and our weakness in this. We're thoughtless. We're lazy. We're selfish.

We're proud. We have desires. We want to spend our time on our interests, on our hobbies, on our passions.

And we forget or choose not to devote our time to you and to your service. So Father, we confess our many sins confident that you hear us, confident that you forgive us, confident that the blood of your son washes them away.

[45 : 03] Father, now we resolve to use our time wisely. Would you help us? Would you give us grace and help? Help us to be in your word. Help us to pray constantly. Help us to evangelize.

Help us to disciple. Oh Lord, help us to rest for your glory, for the sake of your name. Thank you for this time you have given us.

Now Lord, would you bless it, prosper it, help us to use it well, for your glory, for the sake of your name. We pray these things in the name of your son, Jesus Christ, whom we love with all our hearts.

Amen. You've been listening to a message that was given at a Sunday service at Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us online at trinitygraceathens.com.