

## Invest Your Time Ephesians 5:15-17

Time is your most valuable resource; when it's gone, it's gone! So learn to invest your time wisely in ways that glorify God.

### **This morning: final sermon on investing**

- already talked about life, talents, wealth
- this morning: most valuable resource, our time

### **Ben Franklin: "Time is money"**

- Actually, no! Time is much more valuable than money
- Can get more money – get a job
- Can't get more time – once it's gone, it's gone, forever
- You can live without money, skills, education... not without time
- Once your time is gone, you're done!

### **Ben Franklin, "Do not squander time, for that is the stuff life is made of." YES!**

### **Unfortunately, most Americans don't take his advice. We squander lots of time**

- **Chart:** how employed adults with children spend their time on an average day
  - o No surprise: most working & sleeping
  - o Surprise: much more in leisure & sports (2.5) than kids (1.2)
  - o **Religious activities & community service...** didn't even make list!
    - Average American spends only 7min 48sec a day on it
  - o We do, however, spend a lot of time with the **TV**
    - 1 ½ hours on average weekday; 2 hrs 40 mins when add in the weekends
    - Over average American lifespan, adds up to 9 years!
  - o I'm not saying TV is bad – will watch it myself tonight
  - o But it's probably not good that on average:
    - 2X what we spend with our kids
    - 20X what we spend in religious activities & community service

### **We squander a LOT of time**

- You may be thinking, "That's not me! I use my time way better than that!"
- Are you sure? Might need to chart it out to see exactly where your time goes
- As I've reflected on my own life: convicted to see how much time I waste!
  - o Less than American average... but not by that much!

### **Time is precious... yet we waste so much of it**

**Because we go through life unaware of where our time is spent.**

- feel busy, stressed – so much to do
- yet rarely slow down to ask, "Am I doing the best things, or just wasting time?"
- Sometimes I feel like I'm going through life in a fog – running from one activity to the next, never stopping to reflect on how I use my time

### **SO, this morning, we're going to pause and reflect on our use of time**

**We're going to use God's Word to help us think about how we're using our time.**

**Are we using it as God intends?**

## Are we investing it as He desires?

To answer that, let's begin with the basics. What does the Bible teach us about time?

### 3 Biblical truths about time:

#### 1) We don't get much!

- 1962 – French explorer named Michel Siffre
  - o lived in a cave 375 ft underground for 2 full months cut off from the world
  - o came out convinced only 25 days had passed
  - o **time passed much faster than he realized!!**
- **That happens to all of us**
  - o Feel like life is moving slowly – so much time left
  - o Until we turn around, realize with shock how much time has flown by
    - I proposed to Julie just about 10 years...
      - feels like yesterday
      - remember vividly the pain... intestinal cramps... taste of pepto
    - And don't even get me started about college!
      - A&M feels like it's still pretty recent...
      - until I start talking with some of you Freshman... class of 2016!
        - o I'm class of '98 – whole other century... millennia!!
    - I feel like my life is moving slowly until I turn around and realize
      - already almost half gone just by statistical measure
- **We think we have so much time in front of us – all the time in the world...**
- **So God gives us passages like James 4:14 to remind us that we don't...**

*Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.*

  - o **James tells us 2 things about the brevity of our lives:**
    - **1) Life could end at any moment**
      - Don't know what tomorrow will bring – could be the end
      - One of the things we pastors remind ourselves of... **lead this church as if we're going to get hit by a bus tomorrow.**
        - o Cause it could happen! Lots of buses – big!
        - o Hits my car – it will win and I will die!
      - Need to live as if this day could be my last – because it may be!
    - And even if our lives don't end suddenly... get our full 78 yrs...
    - **2) Even a long life is short!**
      - A vapor – gone in an instant
      - 78 years is nothing compared to eternity.
      - **Ps 39:4-5**

*“Lord, make me to know my end and what is the extent of my days; let me know how transient I am. Behold, You have made my days as handbreadths, and my lifetime as nothing in Your sight; surely every man at his best is a mere breath.”*

        - o **handbreadth** = 4-fingers; very small measure of length
        - o **“mere breath”** – go outside on a cold morning – exhale
          - that is you!!
- **This life is incredibly short – compared to the next life, it's nothing**
  - o ill: Ziggy my dog – **saw his whole life lived out – saw myself in him**
    - what happened to him is already happening to me!
- **If you're young, you feel like you have forever. But you don't. Our time is short.**

## 2) What time we have belongs to God

- Ps 31:15 "My times are in Your hand..."
  - o NOT "my time on Sunday is in your hand"!
  - o So many Christians live as if God gets Sunday morning and we get the rest
  - o No! God owns all my days... every Sunday, every Monday...
  - o 24 hours a day
    - owns this hour just like He'll own the hours we spend tonight watching Super Bowl or Downton Abbey!
  - o He determines how many days I get, and all of them are His
- You may be noticing a common theme in all of these sermons on investing
  - o Our lives, our talents, our wealth, our time – none of them belong to us.
    - **We are stewards, not owners**
    - Your time is on loan to you from God

## 3) Our time is a test

- Just like our wealth, our time is a test from the Lord.
- I'll remind you again of **1 Cor 3:12-15**  
*Now if any man builds on the foundation [of the church] with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*
  - o Passage worth repeating because most important passage on stewardship in NT
  - o Use your time well – to build God's church...
    - by raising your kids to know Him, sharing gospel, discipling, serving...
    - ...reward!
  - o Use your time poorly – still saved, but no reward
- We are being tested – that's what this life is for believers
  - o a test to determine who among God's children is ready for promotion!
  - o Will you rule with Him in His coming kingdom?
  - o How you use your time in this life will answer that question.
- "God hath given to man a short time here upon earth, and yet upon this short time eternity depends."  
Jeremy Taylor
  - o Use it well, you rule with Christ for eternity. Use it poorly, and you don't.

**We are called to use our short time on earth well – to be good stewards of our time.**

### **But how do we do that? Turn to Eph 5**

- rest of our time discovering biblical principles of good time-management
- I want to get very practical

**How exactly do we use our time well? How do honor God with our time and invest it for His glory?**

### **I'm going to give you 5 STEPS to manage your time well**

- been foundational in my own life
- taught to me by men and women older & wiser than me – had learned from Scripture how to honor God with their time.

**The first STEP comes from Eph 5:15-17. It's the first and most important.**

## Read Eph 5:15-17

- OBSERVE
- Begins by challenging us to **“be careful how we walk.”**
  - o = look with great care at how you are living / spending your time on earth
- **Paul doesn’t want us to just float through life**
  - o what many people do – drift passively from one thing to the next
    - one responsibility... event... relationship... pleasure...
  - o never stop to ask, “Are these the right things / best things to be doing?”
  - o that’s a foolish way to live – drift through life like you’re in a fog
- **Paul wants the opposite for us. He wants us to be... WISE with our time**
  - o = **“make the most of” these “evil days we live in”**
  - o Make the most of the short time we have on this fallen planet.
- **And how do we do that? How do we use our time wisely?**
  - o **A: “by understanding the will of the Lord”**
  - o Secret to well-lived life = using your time in accordance with God’s will
  - o His will should guide our schedule
  - o **His priorities for our time should be our priorities for our time**
- **And that gives us STEP #1...**

## 1) Set godly priorities

- We’re all busy – more we want to do than we can do on any given day
- How do you choose what to and what not to do? By setting priorities.
- And if we’re wise then we will set our priorities to match God’s priorities.
- **So, what are God’s priorities for how you spend your time? There are 5...**
  - o **Read Mt 22:36-38 – Priority 1 = Love God**

*“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment.”*

    - to know and love God
    - God is a Person – can’t love a person unless you spend time with them
    - That means time in His Word, prayer, worship, meditation.
  - o **Read Mt 22:39-40 – Priority 2 = Love People**

*And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”*

    - Build relationships of love with all the people around you. Includes...
      - family – spouse, kids, parents, siblings, relatives
      - fellow believers – at church and in the community
      - neighbors, coworkers, friends
    - Can’t love a person unless you spend time with them.
      - Loving your spouse, kids – not about a feeling you have
      - Love is a sacrifice you make to spend time with them
  - o **Mt 28:19 – Priority 3 = Build God’s church**

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit”*

    - ...by making disciples of all nations
    - that’s the mission of this church
    - we are all called to participate in one way or another
      - lead a small group... teach Sunday School... volunteer with community partner... help in sound booth
    - We are each called to use our gifts to serve & build God’s church
  - o **1 Tim 5:8 – Priority 4 = Work**

*But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*

- Earning a living for our family is a priority.
- So students – studying hard is a priority – enables you to provide
  - school is not secondary!! neither is work!
- **1 Cor 6:19 – Priority 5 = Take care of yourself**

*Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?*

  - Your body is God's temple
    - Heady stuff if you think about it!!
    - God traded gold-plated, wonder-of-the-world Temple... for you!
  - What that means: your body is spectacularly important to God!
    - His home on earth
    - He wants you to take care of His home!!
  - You must take care of yourself... includes **4 things – no surprise**
    - Sleep, Eat Well, Exercise, Rest... SEWER!!
      - God wants us all to spend time in the sewer!!
    - **Sleep** – however many hours your body needs... ~8
    - **Eat well** – take time to find healthy food – don't live off junk
    - **Exercise – not just a health issue – a moral issue!**
    - **Rest**
      - In the Bible, connected to idea of Sabbath
      - Creation: God worked 6 days & then took one off
        - NOT because He was tired!
        - because He wanted to give us a pattern
      - Take regular time to rest & recharge
        - read, walk, sit on the porch, learn something new

## 2) Balance your priorities

- **What do most people do with the list we just created? RANK IT**
  - Rank priorities #1, #2, #3...
  - Then try to follow the list as we go through life
  - **But life doesn't work that way!**
    - According to a ranked list, at any given moment, what's the best thing you could do with your time? Priority #1
      - Doing #2 or #3... OK, but not best
      - Heaven help you if you're doing #10!!
    - But that's not how God designed life to work
      - Do only #1 and your life will fall apart
      - Only "love God" 24/7 – lose job, family... die, quickly!
  - I had a professor at seminary...
    - brilliant, gifted
    - incredibly opportunity to advance our understanding of NT text
    - so studied it non-stop for hours, and hours, and hours...
    - contracted rare infection... almost died!!
  - You cannot live by a ranked list of priorities – not how God designed life
- **God designed life to be lived by a wheel, not a list.**
  - Here's your life.
  - **At the center of the hub is your relationship with God**
    - keeps your life centered – keep coming back to Him to stay anchored

- relate everything else to Him
  - **Everything else is on the rim.**
    - Family, Work, Church, Neighbors, Self...
- **Goal: keep the wheel spinning in balance**
  - Each priority gets its proper amount of time – each needs regular attention
- **Neglect any one for long, and life gets out of whack**
  - Neglect **family** for long – you’re family will eventually fall apart
    - Doesn’t matter how often you say you love them
    - If you don’t give them time, then your words are meaningless
  - BUT, you also can’t neglect your **job**...
    - Start showing up late & going home early to spend time w/ kids
    - Eventually lose your job!! Can’t provide!
  - Keep the wheel spinning – regular time @ work, church, neighbors...
  - And regular time **caring for yourself**
    - My biggest struggle – easiest one to cheat!
    - But that won’t work for long
      - Our bodies have a way of letting us know we’ve neglected them
      - I get sick!
    - We must take care of ourselves
    - **STUDENTS:** that means getting some sleep!
      - Sometimes, the most holy thing you can do... is get to bed early!
    - **PARENTS** of young kids – you’ve got to rest, too.
      - We feel guilty about being away from our kids
      - Don’t we need to be there? NOT ALL THE TIME!!
      - Sometimes what our kids need most: get a babysitter and get out of the house!  
NOT SELFISH
      - Take care of yourself – will make you a better parent!
    - Sleep, exercise, rest, eating well...
      - not just health issues – they are moral issues!
- Keep the wheel balanced.

### 3) Give 100% to whatever you are doing

- Whatever you’ve decided to do at this moment – give it your full attention.
- **When you’re with your Family – be all there**
  - Not just there in body – fully engaged
  - Has become harder with proliferation of smartphones!
    - Luke pleaded with me to put my phone away – convicting!
    - Don’t let a phone or tablet rob your family of your attention
- **Same goes for Work or school**
  - Give it your all. Work hard. Be a model employee or student.
  - **The Bible, particularly Proverbs, has a lot of condemnation for laziness**
    - **Prov 18:9**  
*Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?*
    - Laziness is immoral and destructive.
      - It harms you and it harms others.
      - Shames the reputation of Christ.
  - **That’s why Paul challenges us in Col 3:23...**  
*Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men*
    - Whether at school or a job, work hard as unto the Lord
    - God doesn’t want you to give 80 hours a week to your job...

- He wants you to give 40-50 hours of your hardest, most focused work.
- Don't be lazy; don't waste time on internet; work as unto the Lord
- When it's time to be at work or at school – work your tail off!
- **That goes for all of our priorities: God, family, neighbors, church, work, self**
  - o Make the most of that time – be fully engaged

#### 4) Be sensitive to opportunities that God may provide to love and serve others

- **Mt 14:13-14**
- *Now when Jesus heard about John [that he had been murdered], He withdrew from there in a boat to a secluded place by Himself; and when the people heard of this, they followed Him on foot from the cities. When He went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and felt compassion for them and healed their sick.*
- Jesus' very good friend and relative John the Baptist was murdered by Herod.
  - o If there was ever an appropriate time for Jesus to rest, this was it!
  - o Wisely, gets away to rest
  - o Crowds have other ideas
  - o What does He do?... He compassionately changed His plans.
- Live a balanced life, but be sensitive to opportunities God may provide
  - o to love & care for someone – share the gospel – change someone's eternity
  - o Be willing to drop your schedule and make a sacrifice
- Not an excuse to live a reactionary life
- But, having planned, be open to where God may lead

#### 5) Evaluate and adjust regularly

- **Can't keep the wheel in balance if you don't periodically stop to take stock**
  - o Reflect on how you used the previous week.
  - o Did it line up with your priorities? Was it well-balanced?
  - o You may need to actually record how you used your time
- **If you've neglected one of your priorities, make adjustments**
  - o Set appointments on your calendar to take care of that priority
  - o Not enough time with your spouse...
  - o Not enough time exercising...
- **As you evaluate, look carefully for time-wasters**
  - o **Items not on the priority list:** watching TV, playing video games, FB
  - o **Not bad in moderation, but bad in excess**
    - Can cheat you of your priorities
    - A few hours a day really adds up!! 9 years!
  - o If needed, reign them in – set boundaries
  - o Don't waste your life

#### Let me encourage you to take some time this week to apply these steps.

- Set godly priorities if you haven't already
- Make a plan for how you'll keep those priorities in balance
- Make adjustments where you need to
- And look out for and reduce those things that waste your time

Become a good steward of your time – the most precious resource you have

Let's pray for God's help to do that.

- But before we do... stay seated for 30 sec

**PRAY**