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***Making the Most of Our Time***  
***Ephesians 5:15-20***

*<sup>15</sup> Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the most of the time, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup> So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. <sup>18</sup> Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, <sup>19</sup> as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, <sup>20</sup> giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

How do YOU ***make the most of your time?***

If you ***Google “making the most of your time”*** you can find almost countless articles about time management, planning, and productivity.

That kind of search on the web really reveals ***how busy so many people are*** these days—overworked, and overscheduled.

The same is true of even our kids and teens, and college students.

***Anyone can fall into the trap of busy-ness,***  
and trying to cram too much into too little time.

Pandemic times have exacerbated this as we try to do more and more, on screens!

So some of the ***best ‘tips’*** for how to make the most of the day were:

Get plenty of sleep

Wake up early (hmm...do those two things go together?)

Smile.

Laugh (my personal favorite).

Focus.

Make plans.

Write lists (that you will actually use).

Prioritize what’s important versus what’s urgent.

Say No.

Delegate.

Slow down and think.

Think of the energy you have, not just the time you have (wow, how true for anyone with a chronic illness or pain).

Take breaks.

Exercise.

Eat well.

Show love.

<https://www.huffingtonpost.com/jay-lickus/time-management-tips>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/communication-success/201206/how-be-ultra-productive-10-tips-mastering-your-time>

<https://www.lifehack.org/articles/productivity/17-ways-make-the-most-every-day>

These were just a few of the tips and tricks.

I also read that ***busy-ness is NOT the same as productivity.***

Some of the most **productive** people are actually **less busy**, and some of the **busiest** people are the **least productive**.

Think about that.

We can become 'busy' with almost anything—right?

Henry David **Thoreau** once said, *"It's not enough to be busy, so are the ants. The question is, what are we busy **about**?"*

### ***WHAT ARE we 'busy' doing?***

Listen to this, in Greek when Paul says '***making the most of the time***', the word for 'making the most' is actually '***REDEEMING***' the time.

That's helpful—because ***redeeming time***

Means making the most of it, making it better, regaining possession of it.

The use of the word redeem also suggests that God is involved!

We all know that the things we do today are ***gone tomorrow***.

We may have the fruits of our labors later, but we cannot 'get back' any of today after today.

***We do need to "redeem" our time***, don't we?

But when Paul says redeem the time,

***because the days are evil***, what is he saying?

If we go back to the original Greek again,

The word for evil—***poneros***—can mean evil, as in bad.

It can also mean ***full of labors, annoyances, and hardships***, causing ***pain and trouble***.

***Paul of all people knew*** about hardship and pain.  
He knew that the days are evil, in that respect.  
But he also knew ***WHO is with us in that pain***.  
God never leaves us alone.

Which leads us to a special ***twist*** in this part of Ephesians 5.  
It seems like this is just a ***list of things*** we should be ***doing***.  
*Be careful.*  
*Make the most of your time.*  
*Be wise.*  
*Don't be foolish.*  
*Don't get drunk.*  
*Praise and thank God.*

***But is that ALL it is? A list of to-dos?***

Notice what he says in verse 17: *do not be foolish, but understand what the **will of the Lord is**. Do not get drunk with wine, that's debauchery, but **be filled with the Spirit**, as you sing and make melody and give thanks...*

He says two important things:  
Understand ***the will of God***.  
***And Be filled*** with the Spirit.

Both of those things involve something truly difficult and profound.  
They both involve: ***SURRENDER***.  
To understand the will of the Lord,  
we have to ***give up*** just wanting our will, and our way.  
To be filled with the Spirit,  
we have to ***open up our hearts and lives*** to the Holy Spirit.

What if Paul is doing ***much more than saying***  
***don't*** get drunk, but ***do*** all this good stuff?  
What if beneath it all he's telling us something far more powerful:  
***Surrender***.  
***Give up control—to God, who can redeem our time!***

That's not easy, is it?  
To surrender our time?

Don't we try *so hard to control* all of our time?  
(even though paradoxically it *feels out of control* much of the time!).

What if we were to *give that control of each day---to God?*  
What if we opened our calendars and asked—  
*God, what do you want me to do today?*  
What would you have me do this *week?*  
This *month?*

What if that's the key to us finding some sanity in our days?  
I mean, aren't we the reason our days get so *out of control?*  
Aren't we the ones who *overschedule?*  
*over commit?*  
*don't delegate?*  
*And procrastinate?*

What if we turned our focus to asking God—  
*what do YOU want me to do with my time?*

I just received something called *the Monk Manual*  
that my spiritual director told me about.  
It's a fascinating 90-day planner, journal-style,  
that asks these questions as you move throughout your day, week, and month!  
I'm looking forward to trying it!  
The whole premise is that it's not about doing more,  
it's about *doing what really matters.*

You know, some of the most amazing saints are men and women who would  
get up early in the morning and spend *hours ---in prayer.*  
People like Martin Luther. Mother Teresa. Susanna Wesley. Charles Wesley.

Now before you *tune me out* because you don't have time to get up earlier  
and pray, hold on.

*I believe God meets us right where we are.*  
Some of us are morning people, some of us do better in the evening.

Some of us can spend hours reading, others need to spend hours outdoors in prayer and meditation.

We have to find what works for us.

And we can't just say—my life is too busy for all that.

***We ALL have life happening to us.***

We all have something ***stressful*** going on—right now.

We all have ***heartache and pain and hardships***.

***No one has the market cornered*** on stressful living.

Just take the time to really listen to someone else and you'll see.

The stress is just different in different ***seasons*** of life.

The season of raising small children is different than raising teens, or being an empty nester, or retired.

Each season has the ***challenges and the things that can over-fill a day***.

For some that might be changing diapers, or driving carpool,

for others it might be caretaking, or attending appointments.

But, we all have the ***same 1,440 minutes*** in each day.

***God knows*** exactly how much time we have,

and God knows what we need to get done—

what we ***actually need*** to get done—not what ***we WANT to do, or NOT do***.

What if we looked more to the ***One***

who could help us make the most of our time?

Have you ever found that after ***just pushing and pushing*** yourself

to do too many tasks in too little time,

that when you gave up, and took a break,

to daydream, or walk outside,

to do a little woodworking or crafting or reading....

That, suddenly when you returned, you were even ***more productive?***

I find this to be so true!

It's a huge life-saver to me while writing sermons!

***What happens to you--when you spend time with God like that?***

***What happens when you stop and just sit quietly?***

what does it do for your day?

When Jesus started his ministry he started preaching,  
 About a new kingdom—  
 a ***new way of living and loving.***

And his new way didn't always make sense.  
 Possibly because ***he wasn't operating on human power.***  
 His miracles and healings and teachings—  
 it was all done through the ***power of his heavenly Father.***  
 It's why he removed himself so frequently from the crowds,  
***to be alone and pray.***  
***To spend time with God.***

***Jesus is the focus*** of the Gospels, but it is ***more than Jesus at work.***  
***It is God—the Triune God***—it is Jesus relying upon his ***Father God.***  
 It is Jesus and the ***Holy Spirit.***

If Jesus ***ordered his life and ministry in full surrender to God,***  
***Why would we not strive to do the same?***

Jesus said this very simply in ***Matthew 6:33:***  
***seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be***  
***added unto you as well.***

You know ***when*** he said that?

After he told us to not ***worry*** about anything in Matthew 6:25-32!

When we become members of the church,  
 We are asked a simple question:  
***Who is your Lord and Savior?***

If Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior, if we want to follow Him,  
 and become more like him,  
***why would we not follow HIS example of time management?***  
 Why would we not ***redeem our days as he did his?***

***With prayer.***

***With Surrender*** to God's will, and not our own.

All of that does take time,  
 but somehow **Jesus** was able to teach, and heal and preach,  
 and still make time to be alone with God, and alone with his disciples—  
 and he was working a **24/7/365 day job** with literally **thousands** of people  
 depending on him all the time!

Jesus was the **CEO of needy people!**

If HE needed God's help, **if HE surrendered** his life to God's will,  
 why do we think we can survive without time with God?  
 Why do we think we can have peace, or joy, or fulfillment without  
 surrendering **our** lives to God?

Paul isn't just giving us a list of things to do—

**Paul is giving us a way of living:**

**Seek the will of God.**

**Be filled with the Holy Spirit**—not with anything else that numbs you to the  
 world around you—be filled with the Holy Spirit instead.

Paul is saying:

**Give up control** of your life.

**Surrender your time** to God.

You know, people in **12 step programs** know this method.

They **admit they are powerless,**

and they **need the help of a higher power.**

**When do we sit down and decide the same thing?**

When do we **admit that we feel powerless** over our time—

and we need the help of God to find a better life?

If we read all of Ephesians 5:15-20 thinking it's just a 'to-do' list,

the last few verses **sound like extra work:**

*sing psalms and hymns, make melody in your heart, give thanks to God at all  
 times and for everything in the name of Jesus.*

But this is **not a 'to-do' list, right?**

**This is a way of living.**

So, what if the singing and praising and thanking God—  
is all a **RESULT** of having **surrendered** control to God,  
and of **being filled** with the Holy Spirit?

Now that makes more sense, doesn't it?  
The joy of being filled with God—**that seeps out of our hearts**—  
some might say it has to come out---  
into music, and singing, and worship....into praise and thanksgiving!  
When we are filled with joy—it overflows!

Sometimes we are a little **reserved** in our expressions of praise, and  
thanksgiving, and joy—even in worship!  
But aren't there times that we are we moved by the **music**?  
Overwhelmed by **God's presence** in this place?  
Full of **gratitude** for what God has done, and who God is?

And isn't worship the perfect place to express that?  
There are a hundred different ways to praise and thank God,  
and make melody in our hearts!  
How do you do that?

I once read about a worship service full of some very overt praise and  
thanksgiving, **in the Congo**.

Dr. Rick Dietrich says that his friend Gerald Stephens had "never seen so much  
**unmitigated joy** during worship."

Gerald wrote: "probably the **most joyous times were the offering** times...  
Worshippers come forward **dancing and singing** as they put their money in a  
box at the front of the sanctuary.

I most enjoy," he said, "watching the older men dance to the front,  
chuck their money in the box, and then dance back to their seats. ....

Can you imagine if one of our members  
would come forward with his or her offering like that?

From the sermon, "Hey, Pay Attention", by the Rev. Dr. Rick Dietrich, *Day 1*, 2003.

**Can you imagine?**

Well, why not?

We can praise and thank God **any way we want!**



When the ***result of our surrender is JOY***—  
That can flow out of our hearts, in so many different ways!

Friends, there is a ***lot of Good News today***—  
A lot of things to ***think*** about, to ***praise*** God about.  
The first is that ***we don't have to*** manage our time all alone.  
We can ***ask God for help***.  
We can go to God in prayer, We can ***surrender***.

We can rely upon God to help us order our time.  
This is how we ***redeem*** our time, and ***make the most of our days***.

And the result is joy and praise, gratitude and thanksgiving!  
Who doesn't want that?  
For that, all God's people say together, Amen.