

## Use it or Lose It: Ephesians 5:15-17, March 25, 2020

Use it or lose it. This is a phrase we use a lot when it comes to data on your phone plan, but there was a time before cellphones had data plans, anyone under 25 is shocked by this statement. There were no smartphones...all phones were just for calling. And your monthly minutes were sacred! Every month you had a certain amount so when people would call you, you would say- "Hey I will call you back on my house phone." Teens are saying, what is a house phone... Sometimes you'd have a lot left over at the end of the month so you would try to call everyone you knew...because you either use it or lose it. Now, most of us think- Vacation days for work. Use it or lose it. You may be surprised to hear that the average American only uses half of their vacation time per year? Raise your hand...

But I believe the one thing we all struggle to use and not lose is TIME. And we tend to think of our greatest resource as our money, or possessions or education, but time is the most valuable resource we can spend. You can always make more money, you can get more education, but you once you lose time you can never get it back and not one of us knows how much time we have. So we will use it or lose it. COVID-19 has invaded every aspect of our lives resulting in an unprecedented shift in how we spend our time. Many of you are working from home and probably not working nearly the same hours, some of you are furloughed from work altogether, all students are home from school, most of our extracurricular activities have been shut down and nightlife is gone. We have lost sports almost completely...men everywhere are going into through serious withdrawal and I'm taking many counseling calls as they grieve, walking them through the grief cycle. We have never seen anything like this in our lifetimes.

And as I talk with people about their perspective, my sense is that many of us are viewing this season as a massively annoying interruption to your life. We feel like our lives are that little ring that spins around and around on our computer waiting for something to load. Some of us are disappointed and anxious because all our plans are now on hold...we were really looking forward to these days. You had a trip planned, you were about to take SATs and getting ready to graduate, your sports team was headed toward the tournament, maybe you were ready to launch a business or buy a house or get married and you just feel like everything is stuck...

I want to share with you an alternative perspective. I believe this perspective has the power to completely shift how you think about the days of the pandemic. **What if this time is actually not something happening TO you, but something happening FOR you?** In fact, I want to show you from Scripture that this is God's perspective that he wants us to adopt for this time in our lives.

Turn with me to Acts 17. In Acts 17, Paul is sharing the gospel of Jesus in Athens and He is trying to persuade the people of Athens to see that the sovereign, reigning, one God of the universe is the one who created all of us and desires to be known, and desires a relationship with them through Jesus Christ. Notice what he says in verse 26 about where and when we live in history.

**Acts 17:26-27**

*<sup>26</sup> From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands.*

This is a fascinating aspect of God's infinite wisdom and providential work in our lives. Paul is saying God didn't just make humans and then sit back and say... "let's see how all this works out." It is that God is engaged in his creation, and in fact He appoints (decrees, determines, sets up) our time and space. When we will live AND where we will live.

Why?

*<sup>27</sup> God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us.*

And his ultimate purpose is so that in the season in history we find ourselves, in the place on the planet we find ourselves, that we would seek him and find him. I believe what Paul is saying is that through our unique experiences, the people we meet, the places we live and what we see of God's creation, the events that happen in our personal history, that through all of it, we would seek God and find Him actively engaging in our lives.

And he doesn't just do this on meta-level...but on a micro-level. Just as he appointed Esther in the Bible to be in an influential position for "such a time as this" Esther 4:14, He has appointed each of us in the space and time we live. Ephesians 2:10 says that those who trust Christ and, that *we are Christ's workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.*

So what is God telling us? *You are WHO you are and WHERE you are and WHEN you are is destined by God.* Take in what this means for us as Christ followers in our time. He has destined us for this time of the Covid-19 pandemic. That means that this is not coincidental, bad luck, unfortunate or a wasted season of our lives. This time has meaning, God inspired purpose, it has good. It means there are things God wants us to do to seek him, to experience, to grow from that only a time of social distancing and home-boundedness could accomplish.

This leads us to this question: *Since God has destined us for "Such a Time as This" how does He want us to use it?* This leads us to Ephesians 5 that I introduced last Sunday on the live chat.

**Ephesians 5:15-17**

*<sup>15</sup> Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup> Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.*

Am I really careful about how I live? Most of us don't think that way, we just sort of let life happen. The NIV translates verse 16, "making the most of every opportunity" but the literal translation is redeeming the time. This is a powerful idea. The word "Redeem" means to buy back something. Why do we need to buy back our time? Because the days are evil... What does this mean? The law of entropy, 2<sup>nd</sup> law of thermodynamics, things move from order to disorder

in their natural state. The days are evil- What this means our enemy, Satan, the world system, our own sin tendencies and habits will be wasted if we don't do something about it. Wasted it on worry, waste it on fear, on comfort, on an abundance of mindless entertainment...passing the time, as if the goal is to get rid of it. Our enemy is trying to suck every bit of time that you have on this earth away from you so that it is squandered and useless. What Paul is saying is that in order to live a life of wisdom and purpose, we need to buy back our time from the clutches of the evil one. We either use it or lose it.

So let's talk practically what this looks like for our appointed season of this pandemic. Last week I quoted C.S. Lewis in his timely quote during a time in England when the threat of the Atom Bomb loomed large.

*If we are all going to be destroyed by an atomic bomb, let that bomb when it comes find us doing sensible and human things—praying, working, teaching, reading—not huddled together like frightened sheep and thinking about bombs.*

### **7 Ways to Use Time and not Lose Time**

Share 4 of them with you here, and the other 3 on Facebook Live to continue the conversation.

#### **#1 Stop Spinning and Do Something!**

There was a news headline a few years ago from Tupelo, Mississippi: "Man, 91, Dies Waiting for the Will of God. Walter Houston, described by family members as a devoted Christian, died Monday after waiting seventy years for God to give him clear direction about what to do with his life." Now this didn't actually happen...This was from a Christian satire website, but it's funny because we know it could be true.

Sometimes we spin and wait around, worrying about all the what ifs, afraid to make the wrong move, paralysis by analysis when maybe God is saying- Redeem the time! Apostle Paul's life teaches us so much about redeeming the time even when we are self-quarantined. On several occasions Paul was put into prison for sharing his faith. He didn't sit around wallowing in self-pity or spinning in fingers... he shared his faith with those around him, he studied the Scriptures and prayed and meditated, he wrote letters, and thank God he did because we are blessed by them. In fact a great book for your Coronavirus reading list.- *Just Do Something* by Kevin DeYoung. If you are stuck Top Dead Center, start moving in a direction. Stop talking about what workout plan you want to do, pick one and do it. Stop thinking about the perfect book to read and pick one. Stop worrying about that difficult conversation you need to have and go have it. Stop thinking about what exact words you will use to your faith, go do it!

#### **#2 Determine your Priorities**

An incredibly simple question but often one we don't ask...What are the most important things to do with your time?

- Scripture Reading**/Bible Study (Daily Devo on Facebook Live at 10am, Monday-Friday)
- Prayer time**/seeking the Lord

-**Reading and Learning**- Recommended Books on our website under resources, amazon... a question for our Facebook Live- What are you reading right now? What books have shaped your life?

-**Exercise and Diet** - Lots of great Youtubers and Live Feeds doing live workouts right now, jump on board!

-**Relationships**

-**Work** (house work, job, yard) – Honey Do list!

-**Serving and Sharing** your faith

### **#3 Make a Daily Schedule**

Based on your priorities, make a routine. Counselors and Psychologists are telling people just how critical it is for mental and emotional health to set a new daily routine. A schedule that you maintain so that you can stay on track and not lose focus. I am speaking to myself here. When I get out of my routine, laziness, apathy, malaise begins to come upon me in such a way that I don't want to read, I don't want to exercise...I want to melt into the couch. But if you have a schedule you can maintain you can redeem the time and stay sharp.

Parents- help your kids set a daily schedule too...I suggest limiting screen time for your kids. Screen Time on Apple devices, Disney Circle... variety of apps you can use.

### **#4 Build and Restore Relationships**

There is no better time than to hug your wife or husband or kids and tell them you love them. To call your parents, your friends, your small group members and tell them how much you appreciate them. Parents- get on the floor with your kids, invest in their lives. Do you know their favorite color? Their friends? Their likes and dislikes? Their favorite youtuber?

Restore: Some of us have been so busy and distracted by work or school...there are relationships that we have neglected. Maybe the best thing that could have happened for you is a shut down. Instead of avoiding, distracting- maybe it is time to invest.

Jesus never wasted a moment during his years on earth. And one of the ways vital ways he used his time was restoring broken relationships. He spent time dining at the house of the tax collector Zacchaeus and helped him restore his relationship his Jewish neighbors who he had extorted for greed, and ultimately he restored his relationship with God. Jesus didn't spend his time, he invested his time. Just 33 years on earth, seemingly cut off in his prime, but through his death and resurrection, he restores us to God.

Being a Christ follower means that we will invest our time like our savior did. This is a unique time that we will likely not experience again in our lifetime. We can either take the perspective that this is happening TO us, or that it is happening FOR us. We are either going to use it or loose it!

Join us on **Facebook Live** after this service, discuss these 4 points, give you three more practical ways you can use your time and not lose your time.

For FB Live

### **#5 Encourage the Discouraged**

Proverbs 12:25

*Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a good word makes it glad.*

There are so many people who are discouraged, anxious, worried right now...do you know how much it means to hear an encouraging word? Write an email, better yet, a hand-written note, phone call. And it's such mutual encouragement:

*Not to sound all mushy and old but the Apostle Paul, himself, could not have gladdened my own heart like it was seeing and hearing you and Larisa - I don't care how garbled or broken-up the Facebook feed, was! By the time you signed off my spirit felt like the air outside after a soaking Spring thunderstorm when sun-sparkles and a crisp, clean breeze makes everything clean, and bright. Maybe the Holy Spirit did some Spring-cleaning in all of us, today...*

### **#6 Discover God's Creation**

Hike in the woods- Pic of puppy, Cosmo... Look up at the stars at night, watch a sunrise or sunset. Allow God's creation to well up in worship!

### **#7 Serve your neighbors**

What if each of us took just one hour that we normally spend in watching TV each day and used it to serve others- phone call, an encouragement, dropping off groceries, mowing someone's lawn or picking up sticks. 7 hrs. a week, about a 1000 people watching right now... 7000 hrs. redeemed for the glory of God every week to show the Love of Christ.