

“Wise with Your Time”
Psalm 90:10-12

This month we’re doing a brief series entitled, “Make Your Life Count in 2005.” I think you’ll agree that the best way to make your life count this year is to live with wisdom, exercise sound judgment, and follow the best course of action to ensure your success. One way to gain wisdom is highlighted in this well-known story. The young new president of a bank made an appointment with his predecessor to seek some advice. He began, “Sir, I lack a number of the qualifications you already have for this job. You have been very successful as president of this bank, and I wondered if you would share with me some of the wisdom you’ve gained over the years here that have been keys to your success.” The older man looked at him and replied, “Young man, two words: good decisions.” The new president responded, “Thank you very much, sir, but how do I come to know what is a good decision?” “One word, young man: experience.” “But how do I get experience?” “Two words, young man: bad decisions.”

Learning from your mistakes is certainly one way to become wise. A distinctly different way to gain wisdom is found in the Bible. According to God’s Word, if you’re a believer in Jesus Christ, you’ve been given wisdom, the wisdom of God Himself! Paul wrote to Timothy, “You have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15). First Corinthians 1:30 says that to be saved is to be “in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.” When you receive Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, you receive supernatural wisdom, all the wisdom necessary to live for the Lord and to live well. It’s your possession. The question is, do you draw upon it, do you use it, over time, does it become more and more influential in your life? It’s for this reason that we’re repeatedly encouraged to grow in wisdom, or as verse 12 says, “gain a heart of wisdom,” so that the wisdom of God that is your possession has greater and greater impact on your life. One of the key ways you exercise this wisdom in your life is in the way you use your time. As we look at Psalm 90, especially verse 12, I want to make three points today about the wise use of your time.

One, you wisely use time as you realize that time is precious. Verse 12 speaks of numbering our days, which is recognition that you have a finite amount of time to live this life. One thing that’s always impressed me about friends and loved ones who have had to confront their own mortality because of cancer or some other disease: they have a wisdom the rest of us typically don’t have. They know their time is precious, and they’re committed to making every day of their life count. I wonder, why do we have to confront death in order to gain that wisdom? Here’s an important truth about making each day count: God has given you the time to do His whole will for your life. Ephesians 2:10 says that we have been “created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” One benefit of having Jesus as your personal Savior and Lord is that you know that God has a plan for what you will accomplish in your life. That plan won’t exhaust you or overwhelm you or burn you out. In fact, Jesus promised that in that plan you will find rest for your souls. That being the case, when the tasks pile up, when we get behind, when our schedule is so full it has us overwhelmed, the most important thing we can do is ask the question, “God, am I doing what you want me to do? Am I in your perfect plan for me, or am I doing it my own way?” More often than not, if we’re honest, we’ll have to admit we’re not in God’s will, we’re not working His plan for our lives.

Given that time is precious, and that God has a plan for your life, as a wise person you prioritize your use of time, which is our second point. In general, God’s plan for your life revolves around four key relationships. If you’re wise, you make these relationships priorities, and then you act to ensure that you do them. What are those four priority relationships? If you say Jesus Christ is your Lord, in that confession you’re declaring that your relationship with God is priority one. When it comes to using your time, putting God first doesn’t mean He gets the majority of your time, that you’re supposed to pursue full-time Christian ministry. Affirming He’s in charge means you live all of life affirming He’s number one. You’re committed to His will, His plan for your life. You live your life, you “do it all for the glory of God,” as I Corinthians 10:31 says. One way to ensure that that happens is to spend time with God every day. Systematically getting into God’s Word, prayer, devotional studies are great ways to grow in wisdom, to set and maintain and strengthen that number one priority in your life. One of the results of putting God first in your life is that He will ensure your other priorities fall into place in their proper order, in a positive and helpful way. Putting any other priority in first place will only bring frustration, disorder, and chaos to your life.

The second priority is family. Notice in these excerpts from Ephesians 5:21–6:4 how the family relationship is tied to your number one life priority: “Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church...Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord...Children, obey your parents in the Lord...Fathers, bring your children up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” The marriage and family relationship is a key one in your life. A sad reality of the age in which we live is that the divorce rate among Christians is no different than the divorce rate of non-Christians. I have to think that one reason that happens is that marriage and family for too many believers is not the high priority that God makes it, a priority that is tied directly to your relationship with God. Husbands and wives, in the coming year, will you make your marriage, your family the priority God has set for it?

The third priority is your church. Ephesians 2:19 says, “You are fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household.” The church is an important priority in God’s will for your life for a couple of reasons. One, what you’re doing in the church of Jesus Christ is of eternal significance. Jesus said that the investment of your time, your energy, your resources here are laying up treasures in heaven, in glory. That’s a dramatically different result from other pursuits in this life. Two, the church is important because we need one other as we go through this life. We need to be with other believers, where we can encourage and be encouraged, where we can give and be given to, where we can love and be loved, where we can serve and be served. We know that God’s plan for our lives includes an important part to play in the church because He’s given each one of us gifts, spiritual gifts for use in His church. Ephesians chapter two tells us that it is in relationship with one another in the church that we seize the opportunity to reach unity in the faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ. It is in the church that together, we become mature, that we reach for the whole measure of the fullness of Christ Himself! There’s glory in this priority! I’m excited about the people I’m meeting with in the Discovery Class. They’re going to become a part of that great work in our church in 2005!

The fourth priority relationship is your work. Those of you who are in school now, please understand that your education is your work at this point in your life. Colossians 3:23 says this, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.” There’s a challenge and a warning in these words. The challenge is to excel, to do the very best you can in your work. The warning is in the words working for the Lord, which means you remember who’s number one in your life. Over the years I’ve seen too many men (and sometimes women, too) make work their number one priority. That’s one of the best ways to destroy the other priority relationships in your life, especially your family. You make work number one and you’re headed for trouble. God, family, church and work: four priorities that are critical to managing our time wisely.

Third, as a wise person, you recognize the obstacles to prioritizing your time. Even when we get the priorities right, we live every day with powerful influences that can distract us from doing God’s will for our lives. On your outline I’ve listed a couple of them, busyness and entertainment. Let me say this about entertainment. Entertainment is the product of an affluent society, and that should tell us something right there. It can be a wonderful opportunity for rest and quality time with family and friends. But immersing your daily life in movies, videos, games, and television shows to the exclusion of more important activities has a destructive impact on our lives, especially on these priority relationships. A war correspondent observed the tragedy of squandering our lives on entertainment when he wrote, “Some men die of shrapnel, some go down in flames, but most men perish inch by inch, who play at little games.” God has a great and a full plan for your life. Don’t waste it on “little games.”

My application today is a simple one. As a believer in Jesus Christ, you have been given wisdom, God’s wisdom. That wisdom helps you to use your precious time wisely. Listed on your outline are God’s top priorities for your life. Are you living in the wisdom and the plan of God for your life? You say Jesus Christ is your Lord. Is He the number one priority in your life, or is another in first place? Do you spend time with Him each day to maintain and strengthen that priority? Those of you in the workplace: is work number four, or is it number two, or maybe even number one? Young people: the decisions you’re making now are setting the course for your life. How do your life priorities stack up against the plan and priorities of God? For all of us: how much time do we give to distractions that take us away from what’s really important? To be wise in the use of our time is to recognize it’s precious, to prioritize our use of it, and to protect those priorities from distractions that would take us to unwise, unproductive, and unsuccessful life. Jesus Christ has so much more in store for you than that.