Making the Most of Your Time Sept. 21, 2025
1 of 3 in *Your Best Yes: Making the Most of Your Time, Talent & Treasure* Eph. 5:15-17, etc.

Today, we begin a 3-part series called *Your Best Yes: Making the Most of Your Time, Talent and Treasure.*

What does it mean to give "your best yes"?

Well, every time you spend your time, talent or treasure, you have to say *yes* to something, right?

> If I want to spend my *time* in this way or that, I have to say *yes* to the way I'm going to spend it, and then actually *make time* for that priority, that person, that activity, or that opportunity.
>
> If I want to use my *talent* in the service of a certain purpose, then I have to say *yes* to that purpose, and live up to my commitment.
>
> If I want to spend my *money* on a certain purchase or cause, then I have to say *yes* to that purchase or cause, and follow through with actual giving.

And for everything I say *yes* to, I am at the same time saying *no* to a number of other possibilities, because I only have so much time, talent, and treasure to spend.

Your *best yes* flows from growing in the freedom to say *yes* to *God's* priorities for stewarding the resources he's blessed you with.

Because God hasn't put you here just to bless *you* and leave it at that. He's put you here to bless you *so that* you can be a blessing to others. *You've been blessed to bless.* Repeat after me:

> *I've been blessed to bless.*

Indeed, you have. God has put you here to shape you in the love of Jesus, and to make your life a channel of his love to others, in his name. According to the Bible, if we don't get love right, there's nothing else worth getting right. *Life minus love equals zero*. [1]

And so, this series has been designed to encourage you to give God *your best yes*— to spend your time, talent, and treasure on living a life of Christ-like love, which is precisely what matters most.

Today, we're going to focus on how we spend our *time*.

Listen to these words from author Mark Scandrette:

> Bring up the subject of time in almost any group and you will likely get a variety of impassioned responses about busyness, regrets or competing demands. Most of us have charged emotions or insecurities about how we spend our time. [2]

[1] 1 Corinthians 13:1-3
[2] Mark Scandrette, *Free: Spending Your Time and Money on What Matters Most*.

Of the following statements, how many can you relate to? For each statement, I invite you to raise your hand if you can relate.

- I live a fast-paced life.
- I'm tired most of the time.
- I wish I had more time.
- I should be getting more done than I am.
- I feel expectations and demands on my time from others.
- I fear that I might be wasting my time.
- I sometimes or often wonder whether I'm spending my time on what really matters.

It's important to recognize that our *feelings* and *decisions* about how we spend our time are powerfully influenced by the underlying messages we *believe* about time.

Of the following common messages that have to do with how we spend our time, how many can you relate to? (And I won't ask you to raise your hands for these, because they hit closer to home.)

- If I want to be successful, I have to work harder than everyone else.
- Because of FOMO—the fear of missing out— it's sometimes hard for me to say no.
- Because I like to feel needed, it's sometimes hard for me to say no.
- I want to maximize my time, so I cram as much into my schedule as I possibly can.
- If I say yes to an opportunity, I'm afraid I'll feel overwhelmed.
- I put as little as possible on my schedule, because it helps me feel safe and in control.
- I find ways to distract myself rather than face the real issues and responsibilities of my life.

All these statements, in one way or another, speak to *motivations* that can drive the way we use our time. But at the end of the day, time is not a commodity to be manipulated. Rather, time is a *gift* God gives you so that you can use it to become the person he created and redeemed you to be.

To put it another way, **time is life**. How you spend your *time* is how you spend your *life*. In the Bible, the Apostle Paul puts it this way, as we heard earlier in the scripture reading:

> So be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise. Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days. Don't act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do.[3]

The phrase "make the most of every opportunity" is a translation of the original Greek word *kairos*, which has to do with time and how we spend it. A *kairos* moment is a moment of opportunity.

Every moment can be a moment of opportunity for those of us who follow Jesus. Each moment is a chance to live out God's purposes and priorities for our lives.

God calls you and me to be good stewards of the time he's given us—to spend our time on what matters most—living in Christ's love, and sharing that love with others according to the particular callings God has for us.

[3] Ephesians 5:15-16 (NLT)

How can we make the most of the precious gift of time that God has blessed us with? Because remember, *time is life*.

For the remainder of this message, I'd like to share with you **four keys for making the most of your time**. The first key is this:

1. Appreciate that life is short.

It is wise, says scripture, to reflect on the fact that our lives are short. Some of us get more years; some get fewer. But in the end, none of us really get all that many. Even my dad, who will turn 99 this October, keeps talking about how incredibly quickly life has passed him by. The psalmist puts it this way:

> Seventy years are given to us!
> Some even live to eighty.
> But even the best years are filled with pain and trouble;
> soon they disappear, and we fly away…
> Teach us to realize the brevity of life,
> so that we may grow in wisdom.[4]

In hearing those words, you may be wondering, isn't it kind of morbid to intentionally reflect on how short life is? But the psalmist isn't trying to depress us. On the contrary, the more we appreciate just how short life is, the more apt we'll be to spend our moments and days wisely, and when we do so, our own lives—not to mention the lives of others that we help—will actually be better and richer for it.

We see the theme of the shortness of life again in Psalm 39, a prayer which says:

> Show me, LORD, my life's end
> and the number of my days;
> let me know how fleeting my life is.
> You have made my days a mere handbreadth;
> the span of my years is as nothing before you.
> Everyone is but a breath,
> even those who seem secure.
> Surely everyone goes around like a mere phantom;
> in vain they rush about, heaping up wealth
> without knowing whose it will finally be.
> But now, Lord, what do I look for?
> My hope is in you.[5]

Here we see that faced with the thought of how short life is, the psalmist looks to God, and finds his hope in the eternal one.

Indeed, back in Psalm 90, we're taught that there is nothing more important we could do with the limited time we have than to seek and walk with the one whose days are without end:

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[4] Psalm 90:11-12 (NLT)
[5] Psalm 39:4-7 (NIV)

> Lord, through all the generations
> you have been our home!
> Before the mountains were born,
> before you gave birth to the earth and the world,
> from beginning to end, you are God.
> You turn people back to dust, saying,
> "Return to dust, you mortals!"
> For you, a thousand years are as a passing day,
> as brief as a few night hours.[6]

Yes, our days are short. But the one who has no beginning and has no end has called us to himself!

As Christians, we know that through his cross and resurrection, Jesus has defeated sin and death. Therefore, those who put their trust in him are promised everlasting life. Nothing, not even death itself, can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. [7]

And not only that. While the time we have on this side of eternity remains short, in Jesus we are given the incredible opportunity to make an eternal impact with the years we do have. As he told his disciples:

> You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last... [8]

Will the fruit of your life be fruit that will last? May the prayer of the psalmist always echo in our hearts: Teach us, O Lord, to realize the brevity of life, so we might redeem the time, living wisely and well for your kingdom's sake.

The second key for making the most of your time is to:

2. Get clear on your God-given purpose.

Jesus modelled an intriguing perspective on time. In John chapter 7, we find Jesus' brothers trying to convince him to make a public appearance at an important feast. In essence they were telling him, "If you want to get noticed and be famous, you need to show up at this event." Listen to how Jesus responded:

> My time is not yet here; for you any time will do. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that its works are evil. You go to the festival. I am not going up to this festival, because my time has not yet fully come.[9]

Notice how Jesus could resist the efforts of others to impose their own values and agendas on him, because on the basis of his own close walk with God the Father, he was very clear about his own purpose and calling.

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[6] Psalm 90:1-4 (NLT)
[7] Romans 8:38-39
[8] John 15:16
[9] John 6:7-8 (NIV)

Therefore, Jesus could make the most of his time—including what to say no to, what to say yes to, as well as *when* to say yes.

Philosopher Dallas Willard famously observed that Jesus was never in a hurry; he was always prepared to do that which his heavenly Father was calling him to do. From this observation, Willard suggests that there must always be enough hours in the day for us to do what God actually requires of us.

Therefore, if you and I can't get through most days without feeling rushed or hurried, we're probably attempting to do more than God has asked of us. Could you be attempting to do more than God has actually asked of you?

Mark Scandrette writes:

> Perhaps our hurry and busyness come from not being clear about what our purpose is. When you don't know what you're about, you'll say yes to anything, anxious to fill the void with activity. Those who are clear about their purpose are able to rest and live deliberately, free of hurry and striving. [10]

If this is the case, then a key question is, "How do I get clear on my God-given purpose?"

It's a continuous process that takes time and lots of intentional reflection, prayer, and effort. But for starters, it's helpful to realize that God's purposes or callings for your life can be broken into three categories:

GOD'S CALLINGS ON YOUR LIFE

- **General** – aspects of God's will that apply to all of us as Christians
- **Specific** – contributing to God's mission in line with your unique gifts and capacities
- **Immediate –** everyday responsibilities

First, there's the **general**. These are aspects of God's will that apply to all of us as Christians. For example, we are all called to love God, and also to love others sacrificially and unconditionally, as Christ loved us. Whatever else I may do, even if it's done in the name of God, if I have not love, says the Apostle Paul, it amounts to nothing—a waste of time.[11] Remember, *life minus love equals zero*.

But secondly, God's general call for us to love expresses itself in the life of each believer in some **specific** and unique ways:

> I'm called to share God's love, for example, through my calling as a pastor and preacher.
>
> Daniel—and Kristy and Laurelle and Alexis and others are called to share God's love through the musical gifts God has given him.
>
> Other believers have particular callings to partner with God through their unique capacities and skills, like teaching, health care, cooking, or manufacturing quality products.

[10] Scandrette, *Free.*
[11] 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

Renowned theologian Martin Luther once said that the Christian shoemaker fulfills his God-given purpose not by sewing little crosses into shoes, but by making good, quality shoes. God is interested in good craftsmanship because it blesses and serves people well.

The point is, each Christian is called to be an agent of God's restorative mission in this world in ways that are unique to his or her own history, passions, strengths, talents, temperament, and so on. Of course, your specific callings may shift and vary somewhat depending on the season of life that you're in.

Thirdly, there are certain **immediate** responsibilities that God calls us to each day. For me, there's been:

> The call to partner with my wife in the day-to-day tasks of raising three children.
>
> The call to support my father in light of the challenges he faces in his old age.
>
> The common duties that go with owning a home, and having a job.

While these things aren't the same as my specific call, they are nevertheless examples of the important and necessary duties that God indeed *calls* me to *today*.

At Cornerstone, we offer various opportunities for you to explore your *specific* callings. You can begin by discovering your spiritual gifts. If you haven't done so already, I encourage you to take the online spiritual gifts assessment that's available through our website:

> **Online Spiritual Gifts Assessment**
> www.cornerstonechurch.ca/spiritual-gifts-test
>
> **Life Callings Coaching with Pastor Andrew**
> Inquire via email at andrew@cornerstonechurch.ca

As well, as part of his ministry here, Pastor Andrew offers personal coaching for people who are looking to clarify their life callings. Feel free to reach out to him if you're interested in finding out more about the process.

Is God nudging you to make the most of your time by following through on one of these opportunities? How will you make the most of this moment to make sure you don't forget to follow through?

Let's move onto the third key for making the most of your time:

3. Identify your time bandits.

Because we all have them. Time bandits are those activities or habits that take up more of our time than they should. And it's not that such activities are always wrong in and of themselves. But they become time bandits when they keep us distracted from our true priorities—from the things that matter most.

This whole idea of time bandits brings back to mind the words of the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians, which we heard earlier today:

> Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.[12]

There are any number of possible time bandits, but I'd like to briefly touch on two that are especially problematic for many people these days.

The first is **kids' activities**. My kids are all young adults now, but having raised them with my wife, I get it. There's really no way for parents to completely remove the reality of busyness from their lives. Children just don't afford you that luxury.

But as theologian and author Kevin DeYoung says, today's family is structured around the life of the child as never before. Parents in western society today put historically unheard-of amounts of energy, time, and focus on their children.

We assume that if our kids experience any failures in life, it most certainly will have been our fault for not having done enough for them. So, in the name of giving them every opportunity, and also because everyone else seems to be doing it, we drag our children away from home in the late afternoon and evening and weekend hours to transport them to adult-driven, highly structured age-graded activities.

In healthy doses, such programs have much value, but when the dosage gets too high, it can actually have negative effects on our children, including:

- Lost creativity and imagination- because everything is structured for them
- Lost leadership skills—because everything is led for them
- Lost conflict management and problem-solving skills
- Lost finances—because kids' activities cost a lot of money
- Lost family meals
- Lost health: Many children today are simply overscheduled. While they undoubtedly benefit from a variety of activities, children can also suffer from anxiety and burnout when they are over-scheduled.

Indeed, kids' activities can be a sinister time-bandit for both kids and parents. Earlier I said if we can't get through most days without feeling rushed or hurried, we're probably attempting to do more than God has asked of us. Moms and dads, when it comes to kids' activities, are you doing more than God really asks of you? Is God convicting you to find the time to reevaluate this aspect of your life?

The second of today's most common time bandits is—does anyone want to guess?

It's **technology/media**. Apart from necessary work, communication, and reasonable periods of media-based entertainment, how many hours of your one and only life so far do you think you've spent looking at a screen for no particular reason other than it's there?

Is that a good stewardship of your God-given time?

I ask this of myself as much as I ask it of you. I'm not saying we should trash all of our devices, but some strategies for managing our technology and media use might include:

[12] Ephesians 5:15-16

- Deciding in advance how much time you're going to spend on media activity before you begin
- Make it contingent on finishing more important activities first: "I can watch TV after I exercise or clean the house."
- Remind yourself of other ways you can rest and relax besides media, and try one of those first. Go for a walk. Read a book. Take a bath. Go to bed.
- Try setting voluntary limits and boundaries on your use of technological devices. For example:
    - Only check email at certain designated times of the day
    - Turn off your phone during family meals
    - Use technology blocking apps if you have to
    - Turn your smart phone into a dumb phone
    - Set aside one media-free day per week—a media Sabbath, if you will— or take a longer period of time—a week perhaps—for a media fast.

Whether your time bandits include kids' activities, media, or anything else, identify those things that take up more of your time than they should—those things that distract you from spending your best time on what matters most— and get prayerfully intentional about managing them.

Here's the fourth and final key for making the most of your time.

4. **Learn to live in the present moment**.

One of the main spiritual disciplines regarding time is learning to live in the now, receiving each moment as a precious gift, with the awareness that Jesus is with you moment by moment. After all, he tells us:

> And surely I am with you always, even to the very end of the age.[13]

But often, we're oblivious to the reality of the Lord's presence with us by his Holy Spirit. Do you need to wake up to the presence of the Spirit of Jesus in the present moment?

Because he is here with us—with you—right now. In this very moment, Jesus is closer to you than the air you breathe.

What we need to understand is that **the present moment is the most important moment**. Why? Well, the past is gone. The future is not yet— we don't know what it will hold. But the present moment *is* here, *now*. This moment, we *do* have.

Therefore, *this* moment is our moment of opportunity, no matter how ordinary it may seem. What will we do with it?

Pastor and author Greg Boyd is a modern-day practitioner of practicing the presence of Jesus. He says:

> To forget that God is present in any given moment is to forget the most important aspect of that moment… The important question is not, "Did I once surrender my life to Christ?" The important question is, "Am I surrendered to Christ right now?" We make him Lord over our life in theory,

[13] Matthew 28:20b (NIV)

> but we do not make him Lord over the moments that make up our life. For Jesus to be Lord, he must be Lord over our *actual* life—the one we live moment by moment. [14]

The real-time presence of Jesus in our lives—and our openness to it—is the key that unlocks all other aspects of what it means to be his disciple. And it certainly the most vital key to making the most of our God-given time.

In order to help you practically learn to stay awake and alert to the presence of Jesus moment by moment, we have a free resource called:

> **The Practicing the Presence of Jesus Worksheet**
> https://cornerstonechurch.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Practicing-the-Presence-of-Jesus-Worksheet.pdf

It's filled with practical ideas and exercises for staying awake, alert and responsive to the presence of Jesus throughout the moments of your days:

If you'd like a copy of this, feel free to scan the QR code on the screen, or help yourself to a printed copy in the lobby at the Welcome Desk.

At this time, I'd like to share with you some excerpts from a well-known poem by C.T. Studd, called *Only One Life*. As you listen, consider how Jesus is speaking to you about redeeming the time—about making sure you live out God's priorities for your one and only life:

> *Only one life, yes only one,*
> *Soon will its fleeting hours be done;*
> *Then, in 'that day' my Lord to meet,*
> *And stand before His Judgment seat;*
> *Only one life,'twill soon be past,*
> *Only what's done for Christ will last.*
>
> *Only one life, the still small voice,*
> *Gently pleads for a better choice*
> *Bidding me selfish aims to leave,*
> *And to God's holy will to cleave;*
> *Only one life, 'twill soon be past,*
> *Only what's done for Christ will last.*
>
> *Give me Father, a purpose deep,*
> *In joy or sorrow Thy word to keep;*
> *Faithful and true what e'er the strife,*
> *Pleasing Thee in my daily life;*
> *Only one life, 'twill soon be past,*
> *Only what's done for Christ will last.*

[14] Greg Boyd, *Present Perfect, Finding God in the Now*.

In these next moments, we'd like to give you a special opportunity to do something for Christ that will last.

This Sunday and next are Ministry Fair Sundays here at Cornerstone. On each of these Sundays, we give you space to listen to how God may be inviting you to join the mission of this local church by serving in a ministry role that suits you.

A card has been placed on each chair today. It says, "Current Serving Opportunities." Would everyone grab that card please?

Listed on this card are a variety of opportunities that are available for serving here at Cornerstone. In just a moment, we'll give you a quiet space to prayerfully reflect on and fill that card out as the Lord leads you.

But first, there are two ministries that have key needs for new team members this year— our Worship Ministry and Children's Ministry. Maybe God would call you to serve in one of these ministries, so let me say a little about each:

> **Worship Ministry** encompasses so much more than the musicians you see on stage. There are as many as 10 different teams that work together to shape our Sunday worship services. A few of those teams are more visible and up-front, and others are more behind-the-scenes. Kristy, our Worship Director, says that if you have either musical, technical or administrative skills, there may well be a role for you in Cornerstone's Worship Ministry.
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> She also adds that those who serve in Cornerstone's Worship Ministry not only have lots of fun together, but many have found rich and meaningful community with each other in Jesus, sometimes in surprising and wonderful ways.
>
> **Children's Ministry** is about so much more than babysitting on a Sunday morning.
>
> Annie, our Children's Ministry Director, emphasizes that it's a sacred privilege to help kids encounter Jesus and grow in their faith.
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> Much like in Worship Ministry, in our StarKids ministry, there are also multiple teams that serve in different capacities. Of course, there are plenty of opportunities to work directly with children on Sundays, but there are also midweek opportunities to help with administrative tasks. And if you happen to have experience working with children who have exceptionalities, that would be a significant asset to the StarKids team.

After service, you will find representatives from both the Worship and Children's ministries at booths in the lobby. They will have info available, and will be happy to answer any questions you may have about either of those ministries.

You will find booths for several other ministries in the lobby as well—specifically Youth, Outreach, Young Adults and Operations, which includes Communications, Facilities, Culinary Ministry, and IT.

So, after service today, you can visit any of those booths, and speak with representatives from any of those ministries. Ask your questions, and learn more about ways you can give your "best yes" to God by getting involved in serving here at Cornerstone in a way that fits your giftings and capacities. Because, "Only one life; 'twill soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last."

At this time, I invite you to take your Current Serving Opportunities card, and flip it over to the side where it says, “Areas of Need” at the top. There, you will find a full range of serving opportunities currently available at Cornerstone. For those who are worshipping online, there is a web page where you will find current serving opportunities and indicate your interest in getting involved: **www.cornerstonechurch.ca/serve**.

For those here in-person, I invite you to grab a pen from one of the seat pouches. Or, you can get one from one of the ushers who are making their way around the worship hall with extra pens.

I’m going to give you a couple of minutes to sit with this card. As you look it over, ask Jesus, “Lord, is there any particular area of service that you’re calling me to?” Then, check off the opportunities on the card that you feel most drawn to— probably not more than a few at the most.

And let me be clear: In checking any box, you’re not committing to serve in that ministry. Rather, you are simply saying that you’re interested in possibly serving in that area, and are willing to have someone in that ministry area follow up with you and give you more information.

Last but not least, please don’t forget to write in your name and contact information on the bottom of the card.

Please take a couple of minutes now to prayerfully fill out those cards, and afterwards, we’ll give you instructions on how those cards are going to be collected...