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"Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time"
(Colossians 4:5).

Time Well Spent

Lesson Subject: Family recreation and leisure time should be guided by biblical principles.

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"Come ye yourselves apart. . . , and rest a while" (Mark 6:31). That simple invitation of Jesus to His disciples teaches a great truth. We need time away from our regular duties to rest and be refreshed. The family needs those breaks in the daily routine the same as the individual does.

The typical family spends too little time sharing good times together. We need time for the family to relax together and enjoy being with one another.

The right use of leisure time is an increasing problem in our day. Family interests are so divided between work, study in school, extracurricular activities in school, and personal interests that it is difficult for many families to feel like a unit. Many families sleep in the same house, and sometimes eat at the same table, but have little more in common.

This study deals with the family sharing recreation and leisure time together. (The key word in that sentence is together. Time that the family spends relaxing together and enjoying one another is "Time Well Spent."

I. DISCERN BETWEEN GOOD AND BAD USE OF TIME (Ephesians 5:6, 7)

A. The world uses its time in a bad way. Its "fun" times are marked by sexual vice, debauchery, ruthless greed, shamelessness, indecency, suggestive jesting, and other degrading things (Ephesians 5:3-5). No

marriage is ever strengthened, no parent-child relationship is ever improved, by that life-style. That *“is not of the Father, but is of the world”* (I John 2:16).

B. The Christian will be tempted to copy the world's use of time. So he is warned, *“Let no man deceive you with vain words”* (Ephesians 5:6). Television programs, best-selling novels, slick advertisements, and depraved people may boast of how much "fun" it is to drink liquor, take drugs, practice sexual immorality, and dance in the discotheques. God says all such is designed to cheat you with empty promises. We are warned, *“Beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness”* (II Peter 3:17). We are further admonished, *“Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men”* (Proverbs 4:14). Beware!

C. We will be judged for the way we use our time. *“Because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience”* (Ephesians 5:6). The Bible warns *“Walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment”* (Ecclesiastes 11:9). Is it worth what it costs to hinder one's family here and face God in judgment there? *“We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad”* (II Corinthians 5:10).

D. Conduct must be kept pure all the time. God is very clear in His command: *“Be not ye therefore partakers with them”* (Ephesians 5:7). The world may go to its excesses in sin, enjoying its pleasures for the moment, only to face God in judgment later. Christians can remain *“blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom (they) shine as lights in the world”* (Philippians 2:15). Live in such purity *“that when he shall appear, (you) may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming”* (I John 2:28).

II. REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE IN USING YOUR TIME (Ephesians 5:8-10)

A. Your past was in the darkness of sin. *“The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not”* (II Corinthians 4:4) so that their hearts were full of darkness. All sinners are in the same condition, *“having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their*

heart" (Ephesians 4:18). That is what each of us was before Christ came in.

B. Your present is in the light of life. *"God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"* (II Corinthians 4:6). It can be said of Christians, *"Ye are all the children of light"* (I Thessalonians 5:5). What a change for the better!

C. Your challenge is to "walk as children of light" (Ephesians 5:8). Here is the Bible principle: *"As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation"* (I Peter 1:15). The person who trusts Jesus is to *"eschew evil, and do good; . . . seek peace, and ensue it"* (I Peter 3:11).

Does that describe your leisure or recreational time? Do you have an honest Christian witness among those who see you at those times?

D. Your life-style is to be productive of "all goodness and righteousness and truth" (Ephesians 5:9). When the fruit of the Holy Spirit is produced in you (Galatians 5:22, 23), you will *"walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God"* (Colossians 1:10). That is how you can prove what is acceptable and pleasing to the Lord (Ephesians 5:10). Set as your goal in personal and family life to *"prove all things; hold fast that which is good"* (I Thessalonians 5:21).

III. SET AN EXAMPLE IN THE USE OF YOUR TIME (Ephesians 5:11-14)

A. Be an example in what you do. *"Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness"* (Ephesians 5:11). *"Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean things; . . . be ye clean"* (Isaiah 52:11). *"Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil"* (Exodus 23:2). The fact that "everybody is doing it" may be one of the best reasons for a Christian to refrain. Parents, take care about what you influence your children to do in their leisure time. And that includes teaching them not to take time away from the worship of God to have recreation. Be an example.

B. Be an example in how you respond. Rather than taking part in questionable enjoyments, *"reprove them"* by exposing their foulness and by showing them up for what they are (Ephesians 5:11). *"Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind"* (Romans 12:2). Never consent when sinners entice you (Proverbs 1:10). Purpose in your heart to be pure; then live by that resolve.

C. Be an example in what you say. Do not discuss the shameful

actions of sinners in your family circle, except when it is necessary to rebuke them. Do not sin with your tongue (Psalm 39:1) by speaking of sinful things. Wrong conversation can quicken curiosity or arouse desire to experiment with the things prohibited. Be careful what you say before your family.

D. Be an example in your personal influence (Ephesians 5:13). A wife can lead an unbelieving husband to Christ through her influence (1 Peter 3:1). By his "*good works*" a Christian may put to shame those sinners who speak against him (1 Peter 2:12). All deceit and hypocrisy will be brought to light and judged by the Lord in public view (Proverbs 26:26). Do not talk one way before your family and act another way in private. Your personal influence is powerful; make it count for Christ.

E. Be an example by following Christ (Ephesians 5:14). "*Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps*" (1 Peter 2:21). Christ counted no cost too great for Him to pay that we might be holy before God. Even so, no cost is too great for us to pay that the members of our families might know God, love God, and serve God.

Your example is powerful in your family. Be an example in what you do, how you respond, what you say, what reputation you have, and how faithfully you follow Christ. You will never regret being a good example in your home.

IV, BE WISE IN YOUR USE OF TIME (Ephesians 5:15, 16)

A. Evaluate how you use your time. "*See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise*" (Ephesians 5:15). That admonition calls us to look carefully and take great care that we live strictly and without stumbling. What a challenge! The most honorable effort in life is for you to "*walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called*" (Ephesians 4:1). That is a logical requirement. "*He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked*" (1 John 2:6). That is the way to influence your family for good.

B. Make the most of your opportunities. Time is precious to the Christian "*because the days are evil*" (Ephesians 5:16). Yes these days are difficult ones in which to rear a family and "*make ends meet.*" But the days have never been easy in this world. The Christian must make the most of every opportunity to instill spiritual principles in his children. You can teach your children at church, in home Bible study periods, through casual conversation, on vacation, and in scores of other places and ways. Take advantage of every opportunity and use your time wisely.

V. FOLLOW THE WILL OF GOD ALL THE TIME (Ephesians 5:11)

We are warned not to become careless or thoughtless of the will of God. Rather, we are to know it and do it all the time. Let us learn four things about the will of God.

A. God has a will by which He works. *“He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth”* (Daniel 4:35). The wise person will resolve, *“I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father”* (John 5:30).

B. God's will can be known. He is not hiding it from us. *“Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is”* (Ephesians 5:17). The Christian who is *“filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding”* will know by experience *“what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God”* (Colossians 1:9; Romans 12:2). Do not be satisfied without knowing God's will for you personally and for your family.

C. God's will can be done. It is not an impossible expectation which He has placed on us. When you are *“doing the will of God from the heart”* (Ephesians 6:6), you will *“stand perfect and complete in all the will of God”* (Colossians 4:12). You can know and do the will of God. Seek Him.

D. God's will is best. The Bible promises, *“He that doeth the will of God abideth forever”* (1 John 2:17). God's will is that you be saved (II Peter 3:9; I Timothy 2:4), that you be sanctified (I Thessalonians 4:3), and that you be with Him eternally (John 17:24). What could be better for you and your family than that? As you do God's will, you will find it is *“good, and acceptable, and perfect”* (Romans 12:2). The best thing that could happen to you would be for God's will to be done fully in your life and in the lives of your loved ones.

I have never heard an aged man say, *“I wish I had spent more time with my business, practicing my golf swing, or hunting wild game.”* But I have heard many parents say, *“I wish I had spent more time with my family when the children were young.”* Be careful to give time to God, your family, and your church. Give both quality time and quantity time. Our time is brief. Let us use it in the right way to please the Lord and bless those we love.

QUESTIONS

1. How does Mark 6:31 relate to this study?
2. How does the world make a wrong use of time?
3. How is that related to the warning of Proverbs 4:14?

4. What does Philippians 2:15 say about our use of time?
5. What does II Corinthians 4:4, 6 say about how we use our time?
6. How can you obey the command of Ephesians 5:11?
7. What is a wise use of your leisure time?
8. How can you "redeem the time"?
9. What is God's will for the way you use your time?
10. How can you improve your family time this week?