

Sure-Fire Time Wasters!

Ephesians 5:15-17 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

¹⁵ So then, be careful how you walk, not as unwise people but as wise, ¹⁶ **making the most of your time, because the days are evil.** ¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Introduction

In January, everyone seems determined to keep their new year's resolutions. For instance, some want to get into daily exercise (walking, jogging, yoga, Pilates, jazzercise...) and to eat more nutritious foods. Others start the New Year with godly resolutions such as attending services more often this year, daily prayer, and reading the Bible more often. Many more want to make every moment count this year, that is, to spend the time wisely, productively, and efficiently.

Well, speaking of managing our time, just for some tongue-in-cheek fun (I got this idea from Rev. Chuck Swindoll's message some years ago), this morning I am going to present to you a series of suggestions of time wasters—sure-fire time wasters! If you follow the five suggestions that I am about to make, I can guarantee that you will make no progress this year and find yourself wasting your time --big time and every minute of it!

Content

First, be unforgiving: Lengthen the list of your enemies this year. Have a goal to double it up. Hold your grudge against your enemies as long as you can. Don't even try to forgive those who made it on the list this year. If necessary, never forgive them at all, saying that it is 100% their fault and not yours. Say that there's nothing you can do about it. Dump your hurts on family and friends. Harbor your anger and resentment day in day out. Nurse your grievances against your enemies throughout the year forgetting and denying how it negatively affects you; spiritually, emotionally, and physically. Be unforgiving.

Next, keep comparing: Compare yourself with others always. Be dazzled with your life's successes while you pity those who have failed or not so good as you are. Take every opportunity to toot your own horn before others. If you are an underachiever in life, please be sure to throw a pity-party, dwelling on negative thoughts about yourself all the time. As a matter of fact, it will do the trick for you for many years to come. If you are really into physical beauty stuff and envy the youth, count the wrinkles on your face and hands everyday, but be sure to have the Valium ready. Keep comparing.

Thirdly, doubt: Make doubt your number one priority and the dearest ally this year. Put the Doubting Thomas to shame. Doubt everything. Always doubt that God loves you. Doubt that He cares for you. Doubt that He knows everything about you. Doubt that He counted all your hairs. Doubt more that He is with you. Doubt that He is going to see you through this year. Question God's credentials. Question more His faithfulness. Doubt that He already knows what you need. Never trust that He takes care of your daily needs. Doubt most that He is a personal God who understands your daily challenges and provides the way out from your temptations. Doubt.

Fourthly, grumble: Complain all the time that everything goes wrong against your plans. Grumble that God's provision is never enough for you and your family. Always ask for more even beyond what you need. Demand that you want them right now. Be an Ebenezer Scrooge this year. Never share God's blessings with others. Be a mean person. Be the champion of the game. Take everything for granted. Never miss the opportunity to let everyone else know your absolute entitlement. Never take time to count the blessings from God. Never share the credit with anyone else let alone with God. Rather, take all the credit to yourself for your prosperity. Never thank those to whom you owe your success. Grumble.

Finally, worry: Worry a lot: day and night. Make a goal to be on the Guinness World Record as the number one Worrier. Worries are contagious, so spread your worries to anyone and everyone that this year is going to be a disastrous year for all and for the global economy. Keep on worrying about what to wear and what to eat everyday. Lose your sleep by worrying that tomorrow is going to be the end of the world. Spend everyday twice longer than usual looking at the numbers of Wall Street. Have your mood swing with those fluctuating numbers in economy. Worry.

There you have it: five proven and sure-fire time wasters! Put them into practice and the year 2024 would be the year of wasting your time.

But, on the other hand, who really wants to do that? No one.

So, let's get serious. My real message this morning is: Beware of those timewasters!

Here's what I really want to say:

1. **Forgive** as if you have only one day to live. Forgive your enemies and pray for those who persecute you (Matthew 5:44). Bless every one of them in Jesus' name. Do good to them. Overcome evil with good. Don't prolong your forgiveness, or it may cause cancer in you. Remember what Jesus said: *But if you do not **forgive** other people, then your Father will not **forgive** your offenses* (Matthew 6:15). Forgive others for your own sake. Forgive.

2. **Stop comparing** yourself with others. Instead, be thankful and content with the way God has created you. Remember, you are a masterpiece of God's creation. You are one and the only one in the world. In the entire human history! He has a unique purpose and plan for you. By pitying on yourself, you are dishonoring your Heavenly Father who is so proud of how He has created you! Also, remember that your body is God's Temple where the Spirit of God dwells. Honor the Lord with your body. Present your bodies as a living sacrifice to the Lord which is good and pleasing to the Lord (Romans 12:1). You're no longer your own. You are bought by a price, that is, Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Now, you are God's. You're not the owner of your life. Rather, you are the steward of God's property. Therefore, take good care of yourself, your soul and body, and glorify God with your life. Be thankful and content with the way God has created you. Stop comparing.

3. **Have faith** in God. The LORD your God is with you all the time. He has chosen you to be His people and His treasured possession (Deuteronomy 7:6). In His love, He will no longer rebuke you. He will rejoice over you with singing (Zephaniah 3:17). Listen to His promise: *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, Nor will the flame burn you* (Isaiah 43:2). He is at your right hand; you will not be shaken (Psalm 16:8). He will never allow you to be shaken (Psalm 55:22). He will see you through no matter what happens to Wall Street. Trust God rather than numbers in your checkbook. He will provide your daily needs. Therefore, keep your eyes, not on the problems, but on the Lord who is right beside you (Psalm 16:8). Have faith in God.

4. **Stop grumbling.** Be careful what you say with your mouth. It may come true. There's such a thing called "*The Spiritual Law of Spoken Words.*" That is, *the Lord will do to us as exactly as we have said in His hearing.* Here's one example from the Bible. After the Exodus, the Israelites were ready to enter the Promised Land. Before they did, though, they sent out twelve men to spy out the land. After 40 days, the spies came back and gave the congregation the report: ... *a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone, in spying it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great size... and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight"* (Numbers 13:32-33).

How did the congregation react to the report?

² *All the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron; and the whole congregation said to them, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! ³ Why is the Lord bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become plunder; would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?"* (Numbers 14:2-3)

What did the Lord say to the people of Israel?

²⁶ The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, ²⁷ “How long shall I bear with this evil congregation who are grumbling against Me? **I have heard the complaints of the sons of Israel, which they are making against Me.** ²⁸ Say to them, ‘As I live,’ says the Lord, **‘just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will surely do to you;** ²⁹ your corpses will fall in this wilderness,... ³⁰ Surely you shall not come into the land in which I swore to settle you, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun (Numbers 14:26-30).

Repeat: What did the congregation say in God’s hearing? Numbers 14:2.

“Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness!”

Repeat: What did Caleb say? Numbers 13:30.

“We should by all means go up and take possession of it, for we will surely overcome it.”

Both the Israelites and Caleb got from the LORD as exactly as they had spoken in His hearing. The Israelites died in the wilderness and Caleb entered the Promised Land.

Remember: the words we speak make things happen *in us, out of us, and around us*. The words we have prescribed, either positive or negative, affect everyone who hears them including ourselves. We live with the consequences thereof, too.

The lesson? Speak with conviction that your words have power. Be careful of what you say, though. Don’t speak out anything negative or destructive, or you may end up living in the environment that your own words have created: *I am miserable. I am sad. I am depressed. Nobody loves me. My life sucks. Nothing’s working. It’s not going to work.* Of course, it won’t, because you have spoken so.

Whatever you say, it will happen to you as exactly as you have spoken. This is where the power of praise and thanks comes in. Say: *I am thankful. The Lord is good to me and He’s awesome. He will heal me. He will see me through. He will help me and rescue me from my troubles. He loves me. I am His child. By myself I can do nothing, but I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.* It is more than positive thinking. It is God’s law on the spoken words. **Be thankful** for what you have and content with what God has provided you. Give thanks to God daily for all His blessings. Here’s a few examples. Life, health, family, friends, food, clothing, shelter, jobs, and things that went well that day. Also, share your blessings with others more often.

Give more. One who is **gracious to a poor person lends to the Lord**, And He will repay him for his good deed (Proverbs 19:17). Stop grumbling.

5. Worry less and Pray more. You can't change a thing by worrying. Prayer works. Listen to Jesus: ²⁵ "For this reason I say to you, **do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on.** Is life not more than food, and the body more than clothing?" ²⁶ **Look at the birds of the sky, that they do not sow, nor reap, nor gather crops into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more important than they?** ²⁷ **And which of you by worrying can add a single day to his life's span?** ²⁸ **And why are you worried about clothing?** Notice how the lilies of the field grow; they do not labor nor do they spin thread for cloth, ²⁹ yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! ³¹ **Do not worry then, saying, 'What are we to eat?' or 'What are we to drink?' or 'What are we to wear for clothing?'** ³² For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ But **seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided to you"** (Matthew 6:25-33). Worry less and pray more.

Conclusion

The days are evil. The Lord wants us to understand what His will for us is. His will is not to waste our time. Instead, He wants us to be wise by making the most of our time.

May this year be the most productive year of all. Amen.

Let us pray.