

The Big Idea: Where your attention goes, your identity follows.

The Take Off

What do you give your attention to, and does it deserve it?

That's one of many questions we want to try and answer today and over the next week. If everything from people to jobs to hobbies to "time killers" were banks, where are you depositing your time? Are you getting good return on investment?

We're going to look primarily at [Ephesians 5:15-17](#) today. A little backstory on the church in Ephesus.

- Paul was the author of this letter
- The church in Ephesus, a major metropolis in Asia was the recipient
- Ephesus was famous for the Temple of Athena (Diana)
- Most of the books written to churches/people in the New Testament include some sort of rebuke for wrongdoing/sinful acts.
 - i.e. legalism, sexual impurity, or division
- Paul seems to be encouraging a very healthy, successful church.
- The Ephesian church was an evangelistic hub where miracles happened ([Acts 19](#))

Paul writes this letter to encourage them to keep pushing on towards **spiritual maturity, the understanding of God's purpose, and the acceptance and pursuit of God's very high standards for the church.**

In short, the message to the church at Ephesus is:

"Great job church! BUT don't get content. Keep striving for excellence!"

This is the same message for us today. Near the end of the book, in chapter 5 Paul gives them a warning in the midst of the encouragement:

"Be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is."

1.) Track Your Attention

What has your attention? And does it deserve it?

Let's build a scenario. The average adult...

- Sleeps 6 hours per night
- Works 8 hours per day

This leaves **10 hours** left to...

- be mom/dad, husband/wife, son/daughter, grandson, niece, uncle, cousin etc.
- build relationships with friends
- be missionaries and build relationships with non-Christians ([Matthew 28:18-20](#))
- be Christians and pursue relationship with Jesus ([Matthew 22:37](#))

Oh yeah, and we probably still have to...

eat practice good hygiene (most of us) mow the grass vote
buy groceries wash cars feed the dog go to the dentist
go to birthdays, weddings, funerals (no pun intended) go to church
etc.....

Oh yeah, and that's without washing one dish, folding one towel, or cleaning one toilet. You know, all the little things that help keep us off the show "Hoarders: Buried Alive." You probably thought of about 812 more things too!

And these are the non-negotiables! These are the things you can't exactly strip out of our lives for the sake of Jesus, right? We'd never ask you to respond to your hungry kid asking for a bowl of food: "*Get behind me Satan! Don't you know I'm fasting for 40 days? No soup for you!*" We're not looking for kids to get lost in your 7 foot tall grass you haven't mowed in a year because you never leave your prayer closet. Don't let your appendix rupture because you won't squeeze a doctor appointment into your Bible study. You get the point, right?

On with the scenario. Now the other things; **the negotiables; the time killers...**

- TV/movies
- web browsing/blog hopping
- sports (playing and watching, though preferably not worshipping...)
- reading a magazine, book, newspaper
- playing/listening to music
- shopping
- lifting weights
- video games
- WHAT ELSE??? everyone's favorite: SOCIAL MEDIA (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)

Think about how easy it is to waste an hour on Facebook and YouTube following links and watching dumb videos like the one I just used to waste about a minute of your life.

Confession: I spent a good hour trying to find the perfect funny video for today...

If you really want to blow your mind, follow [THIS](#) link and download the PDF titled "Track Your Attention." Take the next week and HONESTLY jot down what you're doing on an hourly basis. **It may just be eye opening and life changing to see what you give your attention away to. It may give you some valuable insight to make necessary changes.**

Ok, one more time: [Ephesians 5:15-17](#)

Now, are you ready for me to give you the list of things you CAN and CAN'T do with your time? And the chart of acceptable time spans for these things? I won't be giving out

this information primarily because Jesus didn't. Unless it's sinful and unBiblical, you're free in Christ to choose TO or NOT TO do it. If I instructed you against doing something Jesus didn't instruct against, I'd be a legalist Pharisee, precisely the guys He kicked in the tail on a regular basis. Jesus didn't tell us...

- how many hours a week of TV are acceptable
- how much time with our kids is Holy and responsible
- to read our Bibles 3 hours and pray for 4 every day
- to quit playing video games (although I REALLY REALLY want to tell you that...)
- to only check up on 5 Facebook friends per day

So instead of telling you how to “walk as wise men and women, making the most of your time because the days are evil,” I'm going to give you some QUESTIONS to ask your self and answer and some SCRIPTURES to consider and pray over. I want us all to do some SELF EVALUATION and GOD EVALUATION. Some of these questions we'll answer this morning. Most of them we need to ask ourselves and ask ourselves often!

The Bible gives us a GREAT rule of thumb to work with in 1 Corinthians 10:23.

A healthy relationship with Jesus starts with an honest evaluation of self.

?-What happens to the things you give your attention to?

- You get better at them (*practice makes perfect*)
- They can become an idol (1 Corinthians 10:14)
- They flourish (i.e. relationships, skills)
What you give your attention to will flourish. What you ignore will waste away.
- What else?
-

?-When you're trying to decide if something is worthy of your time ask:

- Does it bear fruit? (1 Corinthians 10:23)
- Does anything good happen because of it?
- Mark 11 - Jesus and the fig tree
- The fig tree wasn't bearing fruit so it was worthless.
- Jesus chose to get rid of it.

?-Will this lead me into sin?

- Mark 9:43-48
- If there is a 1% chance it might lead you into sin, DON'T DO IT!

?-Is this a **mature** and **responsible** use of my time?

- 1 Corinthians 13:11
- Ephesians 5:11

?-What examples does your use of time set?

- For your non-Christian friends? (*Proverbs 13:20*)
- For your children? (*Proverbs 22:6*)

?-Do I believe Jesus is getting enough of my time???

- *Philippians 3:8, 12-14*
- This is something to ask God about!
- If you sacrificed just one thing in life and filled it's spot with Jesus, would you ever possibly regret it?

?-What could you sacrifice to make more room for Jesus?

- sleep? (*Proverbs 6:6-11, 13:4*)
- What else?
-

And just because I'm a jerk... (plus I ask myself things like this)

- If you gave your husband or wife the attention you give Jesus, would they leave you?
- Who would you be if you had spent all those hours _____ on Jesus instead?

Let's go back to the Big Idea: Where your attention goes, your identity follows. Now that we have tracked our attention and thought about what we're doing with our time, let's:

2.) Trace Your Identity

It's easy to be identified by a hobby, a job, a personal characteristic or trait, an obsession, a failed relationship, etc. Where our attention goes our identity follows!

As followers of Jesus we want to trace out an identity in Him. **We want people to identify us by the King we serve, not the things that serve us.**

The key to this is in the same chapter, verses 1 and 2:

"Be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma."

Hold onto that passage. Let's revisit the Ephesians. Paul had nothing bad to say about them, but a few years later, Jesus did. In the opening chapters of The Book of Revelation, the epic end times vision Jesus gave to the Apostle John while exiled on the Isle of Patmos, Jesus writes letters to the primary Christian churches that rose up to take the message of Christ to the world. The church at Ephesus was one of them:

"But I have this against you, that you have left your first love." -Rev 2:4

The first love of a Christian church is Jesus and His mission to redeem the world. How do you lose your love for this? You get "fat and happy," get content, get lazy, waste your time, mix up your priorities. You lose focus.

They spent their time unwisely and filled their lives with so many things that Jesus was buried under the rubble and pushed to the side.

They didn't start a cult, burn babies, steal horses, worship Satan and push old people down stairs. They simply (and probably quite easily) got off track and "left their first love."

The Landing

As we revisit this warning from Paul in [Ephesians 5](#) almost 2,000 years later, let's consider two more things and we're done:

1-You can't transform your life and calendar on your own. You must identify the need to pursue Jesus more and "cut some fat," but ultimately you need The Holy Spirit to do it for you! ([John 15:45](#), [Galatians 2:20](#)) **Set out to imitate God ([Ephesians 5:1-2](#)) but beg Him to enable you to! Evaluate your life, but trust Jesus to change it!**

It doesn't take much to accomplish nothing. It takes the power of God to accomplish the excellence He seeks in you!

2-Think of all this like a coat that doesn't fit right. It might not be that bad of a fit, but it's just "not right." **If you don't have it altered, it won't ever be the perfect coat. If you try to alter it yourself and without a tailor, you'll probably just jack it up more. Will it still be a coat? Yes. Will it still serve purpose? Yes. But will it be as good as it could be? No. It won't be an excellent coat.**

The same goes with your life:

- Jesus won't love you more because you DO more holy things and sin less.
- Jesus won't love you less because you use your time unwisely.
- He won't kick you to the curb if you play video games all day and don't pursue Him.
- You're free to pursue Him as much or as little as you'd like. He doesn't define it.
- But if you don't set out to pursue Jesus more and more, trusting Him to accomplish that, **your relationship won't be as good as it could be. It won't be excellent.**
- Run the race to win the prize! ([1 Corinthians 9:24-27](#))