

# Stretch Your Time

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning. You ever feel like you have too much going on?! Nobody ever feels that way, right?

! Raise your hand if your calendar feels less like a schedule and more like a game of Tetris! Tetris. Yeah, good. Okay. That's most of us. That should speak to the age of this church. All right.

There is no kind of panic like that Tetris-induced panic when at first it's like, yeah, I got this, man. I can slot them right where they need to go, and then they just start falling faster and faster, and you're like, I can't keep up. You ever feel that way in life?

Sometimes we feel like we can slot it all right where it needs to go, and then other times, you just can't, and it's spiraling away from you. Just keeps coming and coming, doesn't it? We're getting closer to the start of the what?

School year. I know where all your heads are at. Same place mine is at. The boys are counting down how many more mornings they get to sleep in. We're like, all right, guys, next week, you got to start going to bed early, you know? Where are the boys? They're somewhere. There they are. They're scattered all over this church. Anyway, Holly's in the nursery, so they sit wherever they please. Look, can I give you some good news? Whether last Sunday we wrapped up our series, Stories of the Kingdom, talking about the parables of Jesus, and we talked about, you know, our garages and storerooms just being full of stuff and having so much stuff and having to sort through it all, and of course, someday Jesus is going to sort through the good from the bad, and by that we mean those redeemed by him and those not. So maybe you looked at your storage room when you got home and said, man, we've collected too much stuff. Have you ever then looked at your life and said, man, somehow we've collected too much on our schedule, on our calendar? Can I give you some good news, though? That is not the life that Jesus planned for you. Often it's the life that we have adapted for ourselves, but it's not the life he intended us to live. Now, right now, we're going to start this series called Summer Stretch. I don't need to remind you that it's summer outside. Boy, wasn't yesterday nice, though? We got like a little break. It was great. I looked at a high of 90 and I'm like, yes. I was never so happy to see 90 degree weather. Do you feel like you have too much going on? We're going to look at this series called Summer Stretch. Now, stretching can be a good thing, can't it? Does anybody feel like stretching right now? Look, you have permission.

[ 3 : 07 ] It's the start of our summer stretch, so if you need to stretch, just do it. It's the only time you can get away with it without people looking at you like, what are they doing? All right. Stretching can feel very good, right? How about when you go to a physical therapist? Not so good. If stretching feels good at a physical therapist, they're probably doing it wrong, right? They're going to say, all right, well, we're going to put a little more on you then, and then it won't feel so good because the whole point is to stretch you. So this series called Summer Stretch is going to look at different practical applications of the Word of God to our lives in some areas that we commonly struggle in.

And we're going to try to apply the principles of Scripture and God's teachings to those areas. Let's go to Ecclesiastes. I think this is the first time that I've preached out of Ecclesiastes in this church. So we are going to look at Ecclesiastes chapter 3 and verse number 1 down through verse 11. Ecclesiastes chapter 3 verse 11. If you're looking for Ecclesiastes, find Psalms. It shouldn't be too hard. Just open the middle of your Bible. You'll find Psalms and then Proverbs and then Ecclesiastes.

It's not a long book. It was written by King Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, the richest man who ever lived. Those things are often tied together. Not always.

But he writes some real valuable wisdom in this book. So let's look at Ecclesiastes chapter 3 and verse 1. The topic we're going to be talking about, some of you are still turning, topic you're going, we're going to be studying today is how to stretch your time. How to stretch your time. How do we

do that? How do we make our time go further than it seems to be going? Well, let's look in Ecclesiastes chapter 3 and verse 1. There is an occasion for everything. A time for every activity under heaven.

[ 5 : 15 ] Time to give birth, a time to die. Time to plant, a time to uproot. A time to kill and a time to heal. A time to tear down and a time to build. A time to weep and a time to laugh. Time to mourn and a time to dance. Maybe not some of you. The dancing part. A time to throw stones and a time to gather stones.

A time to embrace and a time to avoid embracing. You ever just felt like, don't touch me right now. A time to search and a time to count as lost. A time to keep and a time to throw away. A time to tear and a time to sow. A time to be silent and a time to speak. A time to love and a time to hate. A time for war and a time for peace. What does the worker gain from his struggles? I've seen the task that God has given the children of Adam, that's all of us, to keep them occupied. He's made everything appropriate in its time. Did you hear that? He's made everything appropriate in its time.

He has also put eternity in their hearts. But no one can discover the work that God has done from beginning to end. Let's pray together. God, we've been praying much throughout this service and we continue to pray. We pray for enlightenment by your spirit. Maybe, may he open our eyes, reveal his truth to us. May you not let anyone leave this place without having heard from you today. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. A time for everything. There's an interesting principle in the scriptures that Paul teaches that says, to all those who have been redeemed by Jesus, been bought by his blood, been saved, become a child of God. We know what we're talking about here. We're not talking about coming to church, living a good life, being so-called a Christian on the outside. We mean a radical transformation because you gave your life to Jesus and he forgave you of all your sins. If that happened for you, then the Bible teaches some really interesting principles. All things are now lawful for you. All things are now okay. Say, is this okay or is this not okay? It's okay. But then the Bible says, all things are not expedient.

All things are not necessarily good for you. And so how do you know what's good for you and what's not good for you? You're guided by the Holy Spirit of God. God himself will be guiding you.

[ 7 : 54 ] So how do we know if it's lawful, if it's okay, or if it's good for us to go out and do something? The Holy Spirit will guide us. That means we've got to listen to him, right?

So when you look at your schedule and say, which of these things is good and which of these things is bad? There's not necessarily anything bad on your schedule unless you're going out and willfully breaking God's laws. And that Holy Spirit is certainly not guiding you to do that.

So you're going against his guidance. But most of us aren't scheduling that kind of thing into our day. So how do we know what to keep, what to cut, how to stretch our time? We have to listen to the Holy Spirit of God. So that's the overarching principle here, but we got to keep in the back of our minds. All right. So how do we stretch our time? Well, Ecclesiastes 3, we just read it. It says there is a time for everything. There's a season for everything. Every activity, it's not necessarily wrong.

There could be a time or season for it. It may not be right now. You might be in a season of rejoicing, not a season of mourning or vice versa. You might be in a time of planting, not a time of harvesting. There are different seasons that we go through and God will reveal to you in your close walk with him what season it is for you right now. Time to laugh, time to grieve, time to scatter stones, time to gather stones. You remember, man, we're going back a couple of months now probably, but I preached a sermon talking about gathering stones and scattering stones and the significance of those. And Jesus came, he came to actually scatter, tear down the system of religion that had been built up that was leading people further away from God, not toward him.

Sometimes there's a time to gather. Sometimes there's a time to scatter. Sometimes there's a time to be quiet. Proverbs has all kind of wisdom talking about when it's time to just be quiet. He said, a wise man usually is known because he doesn't speak much, but then there may become a time when you need to speak up and you need to stand for what's right. So this passage has much to teach us.

What do people really get for all their hard work? All these different times, time for war, time for peace. God has made everything beautiful for its own time. But even so, people can't see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end. So if you could go back, how many of you would love to say, I would love to go back and change the past? Something in the past. You say, I wish I could go back and do that differently. I've got two hands up, right? There are any number of things that I would love to go back and say, if I could have that choice again, I would make a different choice.

[11:19] Hindsight is what? Come on, y'all talk. Here we go. Ready? Y'all know that phrase. Hindsight is what? There you go. There you go. Hindsight is 20-20. I have 20-20 vision, I think, except my last couple eye doctor appointments didn't seem to reaffirm that. I always used to have 20-20 vision. Seems like as you get a little bit older, that tends to go away. 20-20 vision is great. You can see clearly. And when you look in the past, you can see clearly. But when you're facing the decision right here and now, you see both sides. You're like, man, the pros outweigh the cons, or do they really? It's hard to know and see clearly in the moment of what we should do, what we should take time for, what we should schedule, or what we should let go or release. So, many people feel overwhelmed, constantly busy.

I pray that this addresses the practical struggle of time management, scheduling our time, discerning what season it is in our life right now from a biblical perspective, emphasizing rest, emphasizing intentionality, prioritizing what truly matters. So, let's move on.

So, did Jesus stretch his time? Anytime we want to look at something and study it out in the Bibles, let's go to the life in the Bible. Let's go to the life of Jesus and see what he did.

What did he have to say about it? What did he actually practice? Let's go to the Gospel of Mark. We just spent Matthew. We did Matthew justice for about 12 weeks. We're going to go on to the book of Mark. Truth is, we barely even scratched the surface of Matthew, but that's all right. We're going to, I don't want to do it all. I want to have, leave some for y'all to dive into. So, Mark chapter 1.

We're going to spend the next 12 weeks in the book of Mark. Just kidding, we're not. We're going to do all kinds of, bounce all kinds of places. But we are going to be in Mark 1 today, and let's jump down to verse 21. Mark chapter 1 and verse 21. I'll have some of the other scriptures on the screen, but I love to hear pages turning, and it's not a bad thing for us to be flipping through our Bibles and getting more familiar with it and reading from our own Bibles. If you don't have a Bible today, there should be one on the seat back in front of you. Or, of course, if some of you have the Bible app on your phone, that's fine too. Mark chapter 1, verse 21. They went into Capernaum, Jesus and his disciples. Right away, he entered the synagogue on the Sabbath and began to teach. They were astonished at his teaching because he was teaching them as one who had authority and not like the scribes.

[14:18] Just then, a man with an unclean spirit was in their synagogue. He cried out, what do you have to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God. Jesus rebuked him, saying, be silent, come out of him. And the unclean spirit threw him into convulsions, shouted with a loud voice, and came out of him. What a crazy story.

Could you imagine being there? I've been on missions trips to India where you see demonic spirits start to take evidence of people. These far-off remote villages in the middle of the night, and we're going there, I've been having evangelistic meetings in different towns all around this part of India, and my dad and I were there, and other people. And you start preaching the gospel, and then people down in the front row just start falling on the ground, and foaming at the mouth, and spouting all kinds of stuff out of their mouths. And you're like, wow, spiritual warfare is real. Demonic possession can actually happen. And we see it in the scriptures. Jesus knew how to deal with it. And the Holy Spirit of God can help us in those moments know how to deal with it by his word, according to his power, not ours. So you see this crazy thing happen, and the unclean spirit comes out. And everybody's amazed.

Yeah, you think so? They begin to ask each other, what is this? A new teaching with new authority. Hey, what was that crazy Hebrew word? When a rabbi would have new teaching with new authority, they said he had what? Shmiha. Look at y'all remembering things from how long ago? That's great. So Jesus is getting that reputation. Wow, man, this guy has new power, new authority, not something we're used to seeing from the rabbis we know. And he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him. Verse 28, at once news about him spread throughout the entire vicinity of Galilee. As soon as they left the synagogue, they went into Simon and Andrew's house with James and John. Simon's mother-in-law was lying in bed with a fever. They told him about her at once. So he went to her. Doesn't always go.

Jesus encountered different people throughout the time. He didn't all, throughout his time, on earth. He didn't always go right away. Think about when he heard Lazarus was dying. He didn't pick up and go right away. Jesus had a plan. He knew there was a season for healing. There was a season not to heal. But in this moment, Jesus went to her. He took her by the hand. He raised her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them. He's doing miracles left and right. What a time to be

walking with Jesus. When evening came after the sun had set, they brought to him all those who were sick and demon-possessed. If he healed those people, bring anybody you know who seems demon-possessed or is sick. Jesus can take care of him. The whole town was assembled at the door, and he healed many who were sick with various diseases and drove out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak because they knew him very early in the morning while it was still dark. What happened?

He got up. He went out, and he made his way to a deserted place. And there he was praying.

[ 17 : 48 ] Simon and his companions searched for him. And when they found him, they said, Jesus, everyone's been looking for you. We didn't know where you were. You didn't tell us. You didn't inform us of your schedule, Jesus. We were all wondering where you were. We've been searching for you. And he said to them, let's go on to the neighboring villages so I may preach there too.

This is why I have come. And he went into all of Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out the demons. How does this passage, let's pretend this is a little Bible study for a minute.

How does this passage apply to what we're talking about with time, schedules, all that? What do you think? Pray before you do anything. That's good. Take time to pray before you do anything.

What did Jesus do right in the middle of all that ministry? He prayed, but physically, what did he do? What's that? He got alone. He went away. He removed himself.

He took time off. Not to play video games or whatever the ancient equivalent of that would be. He took time away. He took time away to pray, to re-center, to refocus, to refill.

[ 19 : 28 ] Now, something we can gain from that is if Jesus in his human form was overwhelmed, what can God do? It's not a hard question. What can God do? Let's ask the kids. What can God do?

Louder kids? Anything. That's right. We sent the kids out to children's church. That's all right. We got some of the older ones in here. Austin, what can God do? That's right, sir.

So if God can do anything, but human Jesus, he was 100% God and still 100% man, humbled himself, came, took on human form, grew up with a human body, with all its faults that ours have as well.

If he needed to stop in the middle of what he was doing and get away, then what should we learn from that? We also need to what? To get away. We also need to get away. So if you went on vacation this summer, how many of you went on vacation this summer? I can raise my hand high. Yes, it was wonderful.

We went to Wisconsin. The weather was delightful. Except the very first day we were there, a tornado warning came through the area. They said, we never get tornado warnings up here.

[ 20 : 52 ] Y'all brought that from Texas. I said, yeah, we did, man. Just want you to have a little taste of it. So Jesus withdrew for prayer, for strategic planning, prayer, rest, just to get away.

So we have to be conscious that that is important to build into our schedule. Okay? So let's keep diving in. How do we stretch our time? Number one, protect your Sabbath. Is that big enough to see?

Protect your Sabbath. What do we mean by Sabbath? It's not Sunday, by the way. How many of you think that the Sabbath is Sunday?

After I just told you it's not Sunday. Nobody wants to raise their hands anymore. That's a common misconception. Sabbath is a principle. Now you go to the Old Testament. It was a law. It was a command.

Now we are no longer under the law, but it is a principle, God-given principle that we must build into our lives. It is a time to get away, a time to remove yourself, a time to stop everything else you're doing, and focus on rest, focused on your relationship with God, your relationship with your fellow man. That is what the Sabbath is for. Now, ideally the Sabbath could last 24 hours.

[ 22 : 25 ] It's not always possible in everyone's lives. And sometimes if you say, I have 24, depending on what stage of life you're in, you say, I have 24 hours at home, you know it's not going to be Sabbath for you, is it? If you've got little kids running around the house, and you got a pile of laundry waiting on you, and all the things that need to be done, you're like, this is not Sabbath. Take me to work so I can get away, right? Sometimes that's reality. Sometimes that's reality. So how do we stretch our time? Number one, we must protect our Sabbath. This is a command to the Old Testament, to the God's people back then, Deuteronomy 5, 12, keep the Sabbath day to treat it as holy as the Lord your God commanded you. That is still a principle that you and I should follow. We must keep the Sabbath.

What do we mean by keep? You mean guard, protect. I want to show you this. It's going to be hard to read, so I'm going to have to read it for you probably. In my head, that was larger on the screen, but that's all right. This is from the Christian Counseling Center. In our culture, we seem to value those who accomplish a lot, who have a lot going on, or are really busy. But researchers in the area of stress management would argue that a life with no margin is a very dangerous thing.

What do you mean by margin? Dr. Richard Swenson defines margin as the space between our load and our limits. Did you get that? The space between your load that you have to carry and your limits that you're able to carry. The space there is margin. If there's no space, you're overwhelmed. We have to keep space between that. Implied are two major concepts. The first is the idea that we have limits.

Well, we do. If you think you're unlimited, then you're lying to yourself. The second is the idea that there should be a difference between the amount of our resources and the expenditure of those resources.

So we're getting a little bit science-y here, but let's look at it this way. This is a quote from Dr. Richard Swenson's book, which is titled Margin. If you ever get a chance to read it, pick up that book. It'll do you a lot of good, a lot of good principles in there. And I believe he was actually a Christian as well and kind of wrote from that perspective. So let's look at this.

[ 24 : 59 ] Margin is the space between our load and our limits. It's the amount allowed above what is needed. It is something held in reserve for contingencies or unanticipated situations.

Margin is the gap between rest and exhaustion, the space between breathing freely and suffocating. Look, we're about to kick off the school year. You thought the summer was busy. It's about to get a whole lot busier, right? The school year is always full of all kinds of busyness because now all of a sudden we're not just busy, the kids are busy too. You got teams going on, you got practices, you got games, you got meets, you got competitions, you got everything demanding your time.

What God is telling you is protect your margin. Protect your Sabbath. You know what you're going to have to do?

You're going to have to fight for it. That word in Deuteronomy 5.12, I'm going to go back to it. Keep. You know what that word means? In the Hebrew, it's the word shamar. It means hedge about with thorns.

Build a wall of thorns around your Sabbath. Guard or protect. That's what that word keep means in the Hebrew language. Fight for your Sabbath. Protect it. Guard it at all costs. So, how do we incorporate rhythms of rest into our life, into our schedule? Well, you have to actually schedule it. You can't just say, I'll try to find time for Sabbath this week. You build it in. You build in church, the gathering with the believers. In the large group and the small group. We've got Sunday school at 9.30. We've got small groups. Wednesday night, Penny has her ladies group going at Lily's. Monday night, Wade Pierce has his men's group going at his dad's house. We can tell you how to get to those anytime you need.

[ 27 : 19 ] We have two more small groups. Remember the D groups? Anybody hear about D groups? We're changing them to life groups. You know why? Because everybody knows what a life group is around here. I've learned that in the couple years I've been here. Everybody knows what a life group is. So, life groups, whatever. Small groups, home groups. We're starting those back up again for the fall semester. So, there are multiple opportunities for you to gather in the large group setting and the small group setting with your church family. If you're only coming to the large group setting on Sunday morning, you need to add one more thing to your calendar. You need to add that small group community with the body of Christ. You're missing out on it. If you're not in Sunday school or if you're not in a small group, you've got to get in one. You've got to get in one. Why? Because this isn't enough.

You don't get to get intimate with people here. You don't get to have accountability with people here. You just come, you sit in the pews, and you watch what's going on, and you participate a little bit, and you listen a little bit, and you say hi to somebody on your way out the door.

However, that's not enough. That's not the Christian community that God intended for you. So, find a small group of people in this church that you can do life with, and you can be accountable to, and you can pray for, and you can be an encouragement to, and they can be an encouragement to you. That is an essential part of your calendar. If you don't have it scheduled, get it scheduled.

Secondly, get your Sabbath scheduled. Put it on your calendar. God, I am going to make time for time with you, for prayer, for being with family. Maybe turn off screens, turn off devices, whatever the Sabbath needs to look like for you. We're not going to be out there getting all the things done that nobody wants to do, but you got to do it. We'll do those at other times.

For our Sabbath, we're going to take a family walk. For our Sabbath, we're going to go fishing. For our Sabbath, we're going to go sit on the back porch and talk. Whatever we're going to do, we're going to do it together as a family, or maybe you need a personal private Sabbath.

[ 29 : 41 ] I need five hours just to get away. I need three hours just to get away. I need one hour, if that's all you can manage. But you've got to build in a Sabbath. Sabbath. So, how do you stretch your time? You protect your Sabbath. William Penn said, time is what we want the most, but what we use the worst. Isn't that interesting?

Time is what we want the most, but what we used, what we use the worst. And that leads us to point number two. How do you stretch your time? You eliminate time wasters. You eliminate time wasters. That's how we use our time the worst, is with time wasters. So, what are some time wasters in your life? Yell it out. What are time wasters that are common to all of us? Yep. Somebody's raising the cell phone. That's right. That's a big one, isn't it? Social media. What else? Come on, y'all got it. TV. What's that? Family. Can be. Can be. Food. Yep. That's because when my boys are bored, they're like, hey, I'm hungry. I'm like, no, you're not. You're just bored. Happens during the summertime. Yep. Family can be sometimes. Yep. Food. Yep. What else? Time wasters. Worry. That's good.

How much time do we spend sitting, diving deep into our mind, deep down the dark hole of worry and fear? And then it leads to depression. And then you got mental health problems. And then you turn to medications. And now your life has just gone places you never planned for it to go. Because we allow ourselves, we indulge ourselves in worry, in fear. So, I'm not even going to let myself sit here and brood over what could happen or what I'm worried about happening. I'm going to trust God. Do like Daniel. I'm going to trust and obey. Trust and obey. So, what are some time wasters? Well, we can say time wasters is that which drains your time without returning valuable results. It's that which drains your time without returning valuable results. This is that quote from William Penn I used just a moment ago. Time is what we want the most, but what we use the worst, right?

So, what is a time waster? It's activities or tasks that drain your time without returning valuable results. How much of our day is spent doing things that aren't worth it, that don't return the valuable results that we need? What does the Bible have to say about this? Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 15.

[ 32 : 56 ] Look carefully how you walk. That doesn't just mean whether you have an odd walk or a normal walk, okay? That's a normal walk. That's not what we're talking about. We're not talking about your gait or your stride pattern, all right? We're talking about how you live. So, look carefully how you live.

Making the best use of the what? Time. Can y'all see verse 16 right there? Making the best use of the time. Do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. So, it's foolish to not make the best use of the time. Why? Because God has a will for you. Do we know what the will of God is? He gives it to us in the scriptures. His will is that all the people of the earth would come to know Him. And we know that's not ultimately going to happen. Only those who place their faith in Him will come to Him. He knows who those are. But His will for us is that we would carry out His kingdom agenda.

So, His kingdom agenda, we just got done with 12 weeks talking about the kingdom of God and how God's kingdom is so different than our kingdom on this earth. So, His kingdom has to replace our kingdom.

So, when we look at time wasters, which sometimes might seem very valuable to us, we have to judge them or grade them by a different scale, different litmus test, different standards, right? We've got to look at it and say, does this make sense in my kingdom or God's kingdom? Is this worth it in my kingdom or God's kingdom? That's understanding what the will of the Lord is.

[ 34 : 48 ] So, how do we identify and eliminate time wasters? By judging it, not whether we think it's worth it.

So, man, I just need the next three hours to sit on the couch and watch TV. Say, that sounds crazy. Yeah, but how many of us actually do that? And we sit there and we're just going to watch one

show and then it becomes two and then it becomes three and before you know it, an hour, two hours, three hours has gone by and we time wasted. So, I just need that. Say, no, no, no. What you need to do is let God be your strength. What you need to do is let God be your recovery. And maybe you need to go take a nap. And there's nothing necessarily wrong with watching a show. But when we allow it to start dominate, dominating our schedule, when we allow it to start taking up far more time than we ever would have planned for, now it's a time waster. It's not giving us the return on our investment.

Speaking of investments, Stephen Covey, one of the best time management experts out there, says, the key is not in spending time, but in investing it. And if we stop and we change the way we think, Romans chapter 12, change the way you think. If we stop and we do that and we say, it's not just me spending my time, it's investing it. Because we'll spend money at the drop of a hat, right? We'll go to McDonald's or we'll go to Starbucks or we'll go to the hardware store or we'll go to Walmart or we'll go to Target or we'll go wherever, especially on vacation. We like to spend money, right? We like to drop, we'll just spend it, man. That ice cream's \$7. Okay. One for each of us, right? Whatever it is, we don't have a problem doing that. But if we think of it as investing, I'm actually investing in this, then we're worried about what am I getting back for it?

What am I getting back for my investment? So if I'm going to spend this hour or this block of time doing this activity, am I being foolish or am I understanding what the will of the Lord is?

[ 37 : 19 ] What kind of investment is this? Now, number three, we're almost done. How do you stretch your time? You plan and prioritize what's most valuable. Well, this is the natural outcome of protecting your Sabbath, eliminating time wasters, then identifying what's most valuable and you plan and prioritize for that. That's what we were talking about with putting it on your calendar. You have to plan for it.

If your kid has soccer practice, not soccer, that was Fort Worth. My son's played soccer. If your kid has football practice, track and field practice, cross country, whatever, baseball, we just came through. How about them Rangers, man? They're trying to turn it around after the, all right. But we're coming into football season, all that stuff. If your kid has practice, what's the first thing you're going to do to make sure they get there? What's that? Schedule it. Put it on your calendar. Whether that's a on the fridge thing or it's an on the phone thing or it's a paper calendar you carry, you're going to write it down so you don't forget to get your kid to practice, right? How many of us write down on our schedule our time with God? Look, I am not the best at this, I promise you.

But if we don't plan and prioritize what's most valuable, it'll never happen or it'll rarely happen or it won't happen as much as it could or as it needs to. So we have to plan and prioritize what's most valuable. What does the word of God have to say about this? We're trying to go to that with each of these principles. Matthew 6, 33, seek what? Come on, y'all work with me and we're almost done. Seek the kingdom of God, not seek second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth, where we like to live. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you. All these things, all these other things that we've just got to do, that we've got to keep up with. Well, it's important, man. It's important for my kid to play 12 sports in the same semester. We've got to do it, all right? God says, look, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you. God will take care of all these other things that you're so concerned about if you seek first his kingdom and his righteousness.

That's the principle. So the key is not in spending time, but in investing it. What are the 12 sports going to do for your young person that one or two sports couldn't also accomplish?

What are all the different things that consume our time going to do for you that seeking God's kingdom first could not accomplish in a far better way? What are you investing your time in? So how do you stretch your time? You dare to say no. You dare to say no. John Maxwell, one of the key authors on leadership out there, if you ever see his books on leadership, they can be very helpful. He said, learn to say no to the good so you can say yes to the best. Y'all, I'm not going to get nitpicky.

[ 41 : 17 ] I know pastors who will come up to people and say, you need to stop this activity. You need to pull your kid out of this. You need to quit doing this so you can do this instead. I'm not going to do that. Like that would be overstepping my bounds even as a shepherd of this flock. But I will say this, learn to say no to the good so you can say yes to the best. Because there are many things that seem good and they will pull you away from what God has for you, which is best. So learn to say no to the good so you can say yes to the best. Parents, if we can teach our children this

principle, then they have a chance to seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness.

What is the good that is keeping you from the best? Philippians chapter 3, the last verse we'll read today. Everything else is worthless, Paul wrote, when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake, I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage when it's measured up against Christ. Because my goal is to gain Christ. I want to gain Christ.

So I've let go. I've released everything else. And then what does Matthew 6:33 promise? All these things will be added to you. All the things you're seeking. Well, I want validation.

I want to learn commitment. I want to prioritize these things in my life. And I feel like pursuing these avenues will get me there. God says, I will get you there. I will make your life full. I will make it complete. I will make it happy in me, in my purposes. Even if not everything on the outside looks like you had thought it must look in order to find happiness. It says, you'll find your contentment in me. So our takeaway today is how are you investing your time? You got to learn to say no sometimes.

That doesn't mean when Jared comes up and asks you to be a youth volunteer, you say no. Seek God's kingdom first. All right? So when Megan says, hey, we need somebody to teach whatever grade or help out for a little bit, seek God's kingdom first. Listen, if God gives you an opportunity like that, seriously speaking, youth volunteers, children's volunteers, they are absolutely needed.

[ 43 : 55 ] Media volunteers up on that sound booth. Say, I'm not a tech guy. That's all right. They'll train you in what you need to do. If you can click a button, you can probably serve. All right? Say no to what's good so you can say yes to what is best. So how are you investing your time?

That's our takeaway. Would you bow your head with me? God, I pray that you would right now, right now, at this moment, cut through the distracting thoughts that are in the men, women, women, and children's mind in this church right now. Quiet everything else so they can hear your Holy Spirit. Show each of us, starting with me, how we are wasting our time and how we need to start investing it. Give us the courage, the boldness to say no to the good. Definitely say no to the bad, but even say no to the good so we can say yes to what is best. How do we know what's best?

Is it centered around your kingdom? Does it fulfill your kingdom purposes above ours? Our kingdom has to submit to your kingdom. Help us to say yes to your kingdom and no to ours.

Church, right now, with our heads bowed and our eyes closed, as I do every Sunday, I'm going to give you an opportunity to respond to the Holy Spirit of God. Before we dismiss and go to lunch, I'm going to ask that if God is talking to you right now about something, maybe a step He wants you to take that's lined up with His kingdom, then I'm going to encourage you to say yes and take that step right now.

Maybe it's taking the plunge and joining this church as a member, partnering with us in church membership. Maybe you'd like to come down to the front, talk to me, and say, what can I do to become a member of this church? Anybody can come. It's a commitment to become a member and partner with us in that way. Maybe you've been putting off turning to Jesus for salvation, and today's the day you need to repent of your sins and turn to Jesus. If that's you, walk down this aisle, come talk to me, and I'd love to have that conversation with you.

[ 46 : 25 ] Maybe you need to get baptized. God's allowed us to see a number of baptisms over the last couple years. We're grateful for that. We've got more on the schedule.

Just a few weeks away, we'll have another baptism scheduled. But maybe you need to say, I want to take that public step of identifying myself as a follower of Jesus by being baptized like Jesus did. If that's you, step out of the aisle, come down, talk to me.

Let me ask you this now. If God's talking to you right now about your schedule, if he's pricking your heart about how we're spending your time or wasting your time, and instead he wants you to invest it more into his kingdom, would you slip your hand up and I'll pray for you too? Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. God, I might have missed some hands, but you saw everyone and you know what's going on in each heart. I pray that you would, by your spirit, gently, lovingly, compassionately, like you do, convict us and show us where we've allowed everything else to take the place of what you want to do in our lives, in our children's lives, in our marriage, our homes, in this church.

Do it right now, God. We'll give you the glory in Jesus' name. Amen. Church, would you stand...