

I'd do more projects around the house, if I only had the time. I would love to exercise more, if I only had the time. I would learn to fly, volunteer more, and take more vacations...if I only had the time. How many great opportunities to do something have been missed because we couldn't take the time, or didn't? On Tuesday my sister called and left a message. Thursday morning she called again and as soon as I saw it was her I realized I didn't take the time to call her back. Once I found out why she was calling I was even more disappointed. She had given birth to my newest niece on Tuesday. A baby girl I didn't know about right away because I didn't take the time to call her back.

Is your life hectic? Are you waiting for a break just so you can catch up? Life seems to have become too busy. We say time slips away. Do you realize it's already the last week in June? But each day has no more or less minutes than always. We've just complicated life and made it more confusing because we've lost sight of our reason for being here. Where we spend most of our time indicates what our heart is set on.

How we use our time is important. Time can be our biggest enemy or one of the great tools to accomplish our calling. Paul's letter to the Ephesians gives us the encouragement as we seek to do that today...

Take time for your calling
Your calling to light
Your calling to love

You were once darkness! Not that you lived in constant darkness but you were darkness. That's a shocking statement Paul makes. Speaking of the Ephesians he's not saying they lived in caves where it was dark or that the world all around them was darkness. Paul was actually saying they were darkness. Darkness that came from within. They had no light. They even led others into the darkness. But what's the darkness? The previous paragraph mentions things you might recognize. **"Sexual immorality, any kind of impurity, greed, obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking."** This was what they once were.

Contrast that to what Paul says they are now. **"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord."** No two things are more opposite than light and dark. That's exactly what Paul was saying. Previously they were darkness before the Lord. They knew nothing of his expectations or will. They didn't want anything to do with God. But things were different now. Now they were light. Not that they were brought into the light or made to see the light. They became light. How? **"Now you are light in the Lord."** It happened because of Christ. Completely changed by the message of the gospel they became an influence to others by that same gospel.

Every time a suicide bomber blows up we recognize darkness in the world. It's easy to recognize darkness in people who kill others thinking they're doing a good thing. Or we might identify darkness as homosexuals gratify their sinful lusts in unnatural ways. Or we recognize darkness in CEO's greedy practices to get rich while others suffer. But you're looking for darkness out there. Paul is pointing at the darkness in here. We've been darkness when we cursed the driver who cut us off and silently hoping for a second that something bad would happen to teach them a lesson. We've been darkness when we satisfied our sinful lusts by checking out a questionable movie, magazine, or internet site. We've been darkness when our greedy thinking led us to work extra hours thinking that was the only way to survive. And we've been darkness when we tempted anyone else to think these were acceptable or right.

If you've ever seen the sunset and the dusk that happens right before the darkness of night you know how beautiful it can be. Not quite dark but not the bright light of day either. For Paul our lives are the same if we live in the not quite light of dusk or in the darkness of night. Nothing will save us from those. Only the bright light, the piercing light of God's Word lets us know who we really are. **"But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible."** When we see ourselves in that light its clear we're sinners. In that light I can't hide. I can't cover up myself so God doesn't see my darkness. The light that exposes also brings healing. Jesus is the light that won the victory over darkness. Darkness has nowhere to run and cannot win. Sin, darkness, and death have been defeated by our Savior. He won and made you light by his grace.

The moon is naturally dark with no light of its own. But when the sun shines on the moon it can't help but reflect that beautiful light. Christians face the reality of having no natural light of their own. Since we only shine when God's love shines on us through Jesus, it's time to shine. Now we look for opportunities to do what comes naturally for a Christian, reflecting God's light. It's time to **"find out what pleases the Lord."** Listen to him. Serve him. Follow him. Let the Word of God transform your hearts into light. Light serves Christ in prayer, praise, and worship. Light shines into other people's lives to expose their darkness. **"Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them."** Light doesn't hide from the darkness of sin. The darkness of this world needs your light. If Christians don't shine their light and point out sin no one will. Shining the light of the gospel on sinful people only makes more light. Your calling is to light.

If you live to be 75 years old you'll spend on average 23 years of your life sleeping. That's 31% of your total time on earth. 19 years will be spent working. Nine years watching television or on the computer. Six years eating and traveling. Only half of one year will be for worship and prayer. The vast majority of your time on this planet will be spent doing things for yourself. That's certainly loving yourself but where's the love for other people? "Love takes time" we say. "Look at my total time, I just don't have it to spare."

What's taking up your time? Are you invested in Facebook or text messaging? Are you constantly working with no time for anything or anyone else? Do meetings on top of meetings waste your time instead of focusing you to actually get the work done? Who has time to love when all that's going on in life? How could we possibly find time to love those around us?

Love plans. Love protects. Love is not self-seeking. Love sacrifices for others. Love is patient. Love takes time. Love like that only comes from God. And that love is shown to you in Christ. It's a love that chose you before the creation of the earth. A love that planned for you to hear about Christ at just the right time. A love that determines your time on this earth and when you'll join Jesus in heaven. And it's a love from God that prepares in advance opportunities to share his love. God gives you time. **"Be very careful, then, how you live...making the most of every opportunity..."** Full, satisfying life is characterized not by our love for ourselves but by our love as a reflection of him who loved us first. Love toward God with our whole being is our most important response to Christ's love. This transforms our love for family and others.

God's grace allows us to live in the moment of time we have right now. You can't go back and change the past, all the wasted time and misplaced priorities. But you can live in the moment to reveal God's love right now. Love takes time, yes. And time is what you have from God to love him and show love to others. Live in God's love and reflect that love in your life. Take time for your relationship with God. In his Word is where you'll be strengthened to find the time to demonstrate love to others. Time is the gift God gives us to fulfill our calling in Christ, our calling to love.

How would you react if each day the bank told you they would deposit \$1440 in your account for you to use? The conditions stated you had to use it because none would carry over and you couldn't save it. You'd use every cent each day with thankfulness. You'd want to use it wisely because it's a free gift yet limited. Each day you're allotted 1440 minutes. You can't carry any of it over and you can't save it up. Every minute you fail to use wisely is gone. Take time for your calling. You have a calling as light to shine in this dark world. You have a calling to love and demonstrate Christ to others. You have roughly 780 minutes left for today. How will you use them to show Christ's love?