

- I. Does anyone know what is the most valuable commodity in the world? Crude oil is the most traded. The most expensive substance is this stuff called antimatter, which costs only about \$62.5 trillion per gram. Inc.com, in article from earlier this year, said the most valuable commodity is ‘your digital self’ – better known as all the data that Facebook, Google, Apple, Amazon, and every other connected entity is compiling on us as we sit clicking away, blissfully ignorant.<sup>1</sup>
- II. In seminary, one of my professors, Roger Nishioka, taught aspiring youth ministers that the most valuable commodity everyone in the world has is time. What a person chooses to do with their time says equally, if not more, about them than how a person spends their money. When a member chooses to show up for worship or a committee meeting; or a young person shows up for worship or youth group they are telling you that what we offer here is important to them. Therefore, he instilled within us the importance of valuing the time of our volunteers, parents, and youth.
- III. Speaking of effective ways of using one’s time I’ve spent two hours of mine this week catching up on the HBO series *Hard Knocks* which is following the Cleveland Browns during training camp and the NFL preseason. Really, I watch it for Nick Chubb, but being that he is Nick Chubb who doesn’t make a scene, keeps his head down and works hard he hasn’t been part of the drama. In the first episode, fringe player Carl Nassib tried to give some life advice to his fellow defensive linemen. He started out with his financial advisor hat on and tells them to put at least \$100,000 of their paycheck away, and continue to do so every year. He tells them never touch it, let it compound and earn interest. I don’t know where he gets his interest rate and other percentages from, or what sort of hedge fund he’s using, but he tells the guys that if they do this they won’t be like countless players before them, who are broke shortly after retirement. Instead, they’ll have \$64,000,000 dollars forty years down the road. I’m not sure about his math, but his basic premise to this group of guys is spot on: watch how you spend your money now and you’ll be set for life.
- IV. At the end of the episode the producers cut back to Life Coach Carl who is back at the whiteboard and this time he’s talking about time. All the players have social media accounts: twitter, facebook, instagram, Snapchat, and whatever else is out there now. He asks the guys how much time a day they spend on social media posting, checking in, responding to comments and questions, etc. One of them says, “2 hours”. Coach Carl does another one of his quick head calculations and says, “That’s a month. That’s a month of your life every single year you’re not bettering yourself.” Their life hack coach is trying to help them understand exactly how valuable money and time are; how they need to respect them and use them wisely.<sup>2</sup>
- V. This is what Paul tried to help the congregation in Ephesus comprehend. Paul wants Christians to be wise in the ways they choose to live out their lives. Wisdom was not only a

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.inc.com/thomas-koulopoulos/this-is-most-valuable-commodity-of-21st-century.html>

<sup>2</sup> *Hard Knocks* Season 13, Cleveland Browns, 2018.

cardinal virtue to be attained for the furthering of a person's own intellect, but was "acted out in one's daily experience. True wisdom is reflected in the community's life and the behavior of its members."<sup>3</sup>

- VI. Therefore, to be wise in the ways of the Lord in Paul's opinion meant that Christians were to live a manner that is worthy of their calling, reflecting the love of Christ, and their adoption as children of light. Christians should be careful of how they live and make the most of their time, do not be foolish but rather understand the will of the Lord. Being wise also meant showing and sharing a life filled with Holy Spirit, rather than spirits, and giving thanks to the Lord with a song in your heart whether you can carry a 'tune in a bucket' or not, it is all a joyful *noise* to God.
- VII. It is the wise who give glory to God, and lift up his praises. There is nothing better in my mind than the community of believers coming together at this table where we are reminded whose we are. Through the communal act of taking the sacrament we show that all other affiliations we claim fall away because of our ultimate allegiance to Christ. But what Paul urges the church to do is be wise every day and show our wisdom out in the world. We need to go out into the world and engage the world around us, find and do things that you love and that give you energy and strength, but remember you are the Lord's above all else. Remember that because you are the Lord's you are to give glory and praise every day of your life.
- VIII. Author N.T. Writes states, "It is vital not to slide through life in a general haze, hoping things will work out all right, but not being prepared to think them through to figure out where this or that type of behavior will really lead. Christians are to see every day, every hour, every minute as an opportunity for serving the Lord, for understanding what God's will is and doing it."<sup>4</sup> An understanding such as N.T. Wright suggests could lead to an obsessive lifestyle. But I don't see the main problem of Christians in the West as serving the Lord too much. I think we can all agree it is the opposite.
- IX. More scientific studies have been done on our relationship with our cellphones than Coach Carl asking the locker room for their opinion. They show that on average we spend five hours a day on our phones interacting on social media, responding to emails, taking selfies, or gaming. That means we spend over two months a year, more than twice the amount mentioned by Coach Carl, "not bettering ourselves," not deepening our relationships with God and one another. Two months a year letting our days slip through our hands like sand through an hourglass. There are apps that will track how much time you spend on your device. It's going to be incorporated into the newest Apple operating system, and I guarantee you if you don't know how much time you spend on your phone it will shock you. I'm sure you're thinking in your head there is no way I spend that much time on my phone. I tracked it for a week during the summer and my time hovered around an hour and 45 min a day, and then spiked up to 3.58, 4.25, 4.57. Let me put that into perspective, I'm awake 17 hours a day, and a quarter of them were spent on my phone. There were a few

<sup>3</sup> Susan Hulen, Lectionary Commentary, workingpreacher.com, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone*,

outliers of 20 plus minutes on the phone but most were between 2-10 minutes picking up to see what was going on on social media or checking notifications.

- a. There are parental controls out for children on their kindles and iPads. You can set the a total number of hours they spend a day on their device or require them have to play a certain amount of educational material first. Maybe we need to set it for ourselves. For me, one of things I did was to turn off notifications except for calls and messages. But its still a problem. Shortly after I did this experiment I shut the tracking app off because it used to much data, at least that's what I told myself.
- X. Being ultra-connected though is not the only way to numb ourselves from being wise in the ways of the Lord. Melinda Quivik writes, "God has given us time, ourselves, and Earth in which to exercise reverence by being wise, focused on God's desire for all creation, and Spirit-filled. If we spend our days numbed to God's gifts (that is, inebriated by a myriad of possible anesthetics, including greed, power, contempt for others, and all manner of unfocused indulgences), we cannot experience life 'filled with the Spirit.'"<sup>5</sup>
  - XI. Are we letting our days pass us by without even knowing it? Our days on this earth are too fleeting to let them pass us by without deepening our relationships with one another and with our Lord and Savior. Consider how you spend that most precious of commodities. Consider how much time you spend with your families and how you are spending that time, consider how much time you pray, read scripture, or just read in general.
  - XII. When I think about this past year and how I've spent my time it is the time spent with family, friends, and God that I will remember, and I hope others will remember about me. I am going to remember taking my kids on their first trip to Disney World, seeing Bryan battle Darth Vader and taking Tucker on his first roller coaster, and of course moving to Tallahassee. I will remember my relationships with two lovely women who passed this year. They brought me up in my home church and helped deepen my relationship with God. I will remember the rainy drive to Montreat to be with the youth and the time spent with them, and the installation service here a few weeks ago. I will remember the journey to South Bend, IN with my dad last September to watch Georgia play Notre Dame.
  - XIII. Be careful how you live, make the most of your time. I promise you, you will not be remembered for your gameplay, for the number of likes, followers, or retweets you have, you will not be remembered for your wealth or the power you accumulated. You will be remembered through the relationships you formed, and the lives you enriched through the communities in which you were involved. For doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God, this is what it means to be awake to the will of the Lord and live a life filled with the Holy Spirit.
  - XIV. Be wise and faithful with what you have been given, and remember to praise the Lord every day of your life for all of your blessings.

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<sup>5</sup> Melinda Quivik, Lectionary Commentary, [workingpreacher.com](http://workingpreacher.com), 2012