

Generosity: Time

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[0 : 00] You are joining us for the first time. You are at the end of a three-part series we've been doing. We've been going through, we finished Luke and Easter. We've been doing that for three years.

We're going now through Romans and looking at it verse by verse and section by section, see what we can learn on that. And as we looked at where we were as a church and what things people were experiencing in their life, we realized that we needed to talk a little bit more about this idea of being generous.

And so we stayed in the book of Romans. We went to Romans 12. And we've been looking at that idea as we've talked about earlier, the idea of what does it mean to be generous with the gifts and talents that God has given us.

The Bible says God has given each one of us gifts and talents. Everyone is unique. Everyone has talents that I don't have. I have talents that you don't have. And the issue is we don't work together. We're lost.

We've talked about the issue of being generous with our finances and gifts and realizing that everything we have is God's and God's given us this money. And he wants us to enjoy it and enjoy it on ourself, enjoy it around us.

[1 : 01] And just to be good stewards of that. And the question maybe we often ask is why do we keep what we keep? And why do we give away what we give away? And if that's what God's called you to do, then that's where you want to be.

And that's what you want to be asking. Today we're looking at this idea of time. And there's really not passages that talk about being generous with your time. They kind of do, but they talk more about using your time wisely.

What does it look like to be wise with the time that God's given you? How do you use and invest your time wisely in that? And so I want to look really briefly on that.

This has been just a crazy two weeks for me. For me personally, this is like the two weeks big events in my life collide. It's like these worlds collide and everything is hitting at one time.

So I have our wedding anniversary. So that's May 10th, right? So that's 17 years. I got that down.

[2 : 01] So 17 years. So I got to remember that and all these big events and remember exactly that day. So I have my birthday, May 14th. I turned 51, to which I was reminded by my little daughter, you know, wow, you're over halfway to 100.

Which, you know, for a seven-year-old, I guess that's important. I don't know. And then I was reminded by one of my other kids who will remain nameless, do they have color pictures back when you're little? Because I just want to know everything we see is in black and white.

And so I have to remind them, yes, color was invented in 1920s and I'm not as old as 1920. And then this Wednesday is another anniversary and it's the anniversary of a heart attack that I had.

And for me, it was one of those events that God uses in our lives and he just kind of, he teaches you something. But the thing about those things is that he just keeps teaching you and teaching you and teaching you.

And so if you were to ask me May 23rd, several years ago, would I be here? My answer probably was, no, I wouldn't be here. I probably wouldn't be alive.

[3 : 08] I can remember waking up in the middle of the night and it's one o'clock in early Sunday morning. I felt this incredible burning sensation on my chest. Like, oh, I have indigestion, though I've never had indigestion before.

And I woke up and I was grabbing Tums and eating it and trying to reposition myself. And the burning got harder and worse and worse. And finally I woke Christina up and said, hey, we've got to

go to the doctor.

Something's going on and I'm not feeling too good. I think I have maybe a heart attack. But I worked in a trauma unit and I was checking my neck, my nail beds and everything was okay.

And so we went to the hospital and the guy goes, yeah, you have indigestion. Take this pills and you'll be okay. And I said, okay, I think I can do that. So I go home and right as we get home from the hospital, the heart attack hits.

And it's intense. It's an incredible amount of pain. And so Christina is in the bedroom getting ready to go back to bed. And I'm just pacing through the house like a mad person. And I'm feeling this pain and I'm like this caged animal and I want to pound against the walls.

[4 : 09] And finally I walk into there and she sees this crazy look on my eyes and she goes, what's going on? I said, we have to go back right now. And we called the doctors and they said, come back right now.

And I went in there and I was having a heart attack. And who knew? I was 40 years old. I wasn't overweight. I was in fairly good shape. My cholesterol was really low. And the doctor kept asking me, do you do drugs?

Do you do drugs? Do you do drugs? And after about the fifth time, I'm like, you know, I'm a pastor. I don't make enough money to do cocaine. So, you know, it's just something he had to get in his mind, that checklist, you know.

And so the doctor came in and he basically said, yeah, you're having a heart attack. And the only thing I can do is get you in there and clean it out. And he put me in his gurney and I'm just kicking and struggling and just like a crazy person.

It's like, I don't know if you've ever had that type of pain, but it's just like you just thought that I just want to get rid of the pain, whatever it meant. So I could just say kill this person, I would kill that person because that relieved the pain.

[5 : 10] And I started thinking, you know, dying isn't that bad. Dying just means no more pain. If dying just means no more pain, then that's really, that's a good thing. Because right now there's a lot of pain. And they drove me, put me into the surgery.

And as I went to the surgery, I gave Christina my ring. And I said, okay, I'll see you in heaven. Because I thought, man, there's no way I'm going to make this because it's just an intense pain of it. And I made it. And I came out. And God has used that moment to make me ask myself a lot of questions that I wouldn't normally have asked.

I asked myself questions like, was I using my time well? Was I a good husband?

I mean, I went around for about a year and I'd be asking my friends, have I been a good friend to you? They thought maybe I was like on a 12-step recovery program and I was going around step five and doing all those things.

[6 : 14] And how could I be a better friend to you? And was I a good husband? And was I a good dad? And was I a good pastor? What was it meant to be good? Was I using my time wisely?

I wondered, because we preach about often that we're going to get to heaven, every one of us. And we're going to come before the Lord. And he's going to say, okay, I've given you all these gifts. I've given you all this time.

I've given you all these talents. How have you used these things? Have you used them wisely? Or have you used them selfishly? And so I started collecting data and I was reading the scripture and just time and usage of time.

And what does it look like to use our time well? And I came across this poem. And for a long time, this poem was something that I wondered, was this me? Was this me before the heart attack, even as a believer?

Did I live my life this way? It's called Seasons. It was spring. But it was summer I wanted. The warm days and the great outdoors.

[7 : 16] It was summer. But it was fall I wanted. The colorful leaves and the cool dry air. It was fall. But it was winter I wanted.

The beautiful snow and the joy of the holiday season. It was winter. But it was spring I wanted. The warmth and the blossoming of nature. I was a child.

But it was adulthood I wanted. The freedom and the respect. I was 20. But it was 30 I wanted. To be mature and sophisticated.

I was middle-aged. But it was 20 I wanted. The youth and the free spirit. I was retired. But it was middle-aged I wanted.

The presence of mind without limitations. My life was over. And I never got what I wanted. I clung to this poem and I wondered, was this me?

[8 : 17] Is this us as we live life? You know, the scary thing about this thing to me is this poem was written by a 14-year-old girl. A 14-year-old has that much presence of mind to look at our life and to ask us questions.

How are we using our time? Are we being wise? Are we being foolish? Are we happy in here now? Or do we want something else that might not ever come?

And when it comes, we want something else again. I want to look at just being wise with our time. I'm going to do something. I haven't planned this. I'm just thinking, what am I doing here?

And as I try to share these things, because I'm still processing it, so we're processing and setting it together. I want to start a dialogue with us as a church and as individuals to talk about stewardship and generosity and wisdom.

So what I want to do is I'm going to, what I wanted to, what I was going to do is I was going to talk about two passages, the Romans 12, the Ephesians 5, and then look at some things I've been learning in applications.

[9 : 17] What I think I'm going to do is I want to look at just the applications of things I've been learning. And I want to try to weave those into Romans 12 and Ephesians 5. Now we'll see if that works.

You might tell me afterwards, don't ever do that again. That was a terrible idea because I surely have not planned it this way and I've been thinking through this. But I just want us to think a little bit about time and our stewardship of it.

Because I think that there's probably no greater issue that we in Hong Kong need to hear. I think that it's one of those things. Some of us will talk about our stewardship of our money.

Some of us will talk about stewardship of our relationships and our gifting. But very rarely will we talk about have we used our time wisely.

And you know what I've seen working in a trauma unit and watching people die? I've never seen somebody die in front of me and they said, you know, I wish I'd spent three more hours in the office.

[10 : 16] Man, if I just spent one more day in the office, I'd be happy. It was always, man, I wish I had more time with my family. Oh, man, I wish I had gone to my son's baseball game.

Oh, man, I wish I had told my wife one more time that I loved her. I think it's a message that we need to hear, we need to think about.

And it is a heavy message, but it's a message I think that we can keep coming back to and learning and processing. And I'm wandering around here praying through this as we talk about it.

The first thing that I've learned and I continue to learn from my heart attack in these experiences with being good and wise with our time is that we have to recognize that our time on earth is short. Scripture says that our life is incredibly short. You know, in Ecclesiastes it says our life, what it makes our life equal to is a vapor. When Solomon's talking about our life, he blows.

[11 : 25] Oh, a bell. And he tried to grab onto it. And he said that's what our life is like. Our life is like this vapor that we blow out one time and then it disappears quickly. I know that you don't need to hear this because you think about this all the time.

But I need to hear it because I don't. Sometimes I ask myself the question, self, why don't you think and use better use of your time?

And this little voice comes back to me and says, because you think you're God, Tobin, and you're in control of everything. Now, I hate that little voice. But it answers me when I ask the important questions.

And so I wonder, why do we think that time just keeps going and going and going? In Psalm 39, the psalmist says this. He says, show me, O Lord, my life's end.

He actually asked God to show him how his life ends. And then he says, okay, I've seen how my life ends. Will you help me number my days? And what he means there is he wants God to show him how he's to use his days so that when he comes to the end of his life, he would have done everything that God wanted him to do.

[12 : 40] Show me how to number my days. He says in that psalm, actually, I spend all my time gathering and collecting and building and producing so that someone else is going to come along

after I die and to use it.

And I realize that that is probably the struggle that a lot of us are in Hong Kong. We spend all of our time building and using and collecting and gathering.

And we don't realize that we're probably never going to be able to use all that because our life is short. In Psalm 90, the psalmist says in Psalm 90, help me to measure my days.

Our days are 70 years, 80 if we're really, really strong. But they're going to pass away quickly.

They're going to fly away as a bird.

The thing that I learned and continue to learn is that life is short and it passes away before our eyes and that we are not in control of it. Let me ask you a question.

[13 : 45] If you found out today that you had 10 years to live, would you start living differently?

Someone's recording. If you found out today that you had 10 years to live, would you start living differently? How would you live differently?

One of my favorite movies, and the staff and I talk about this all the time, and they just give me a hard time about it. And it is kind of a cheesy movie, but the idea is amazing. It's called In Time.

Have you seen this movie?

It came out about maybe two years ago. I think it's Justin Timberlake. And, you know, he's, I still don't know what I think about JT, but in the movie you're born, and at the age of 21 you go boom, and something hits you, and this wall hits you.

And all of a sudden this clock ends up on your arm. And it starts counting down the next three days, three years of your life. And you're given three years. And in this culture, there is no such thing as money.

[14 : 51] Money doesn't exist. What you buy things with is time. So if you want a car, you go in and you put down 20 years of time. Well, most people don't have 20 years of time.

And so you work to earn time. And as you earn time, you know, you get money stuck on your hand, and it gets more and more and more. And there's this group of guys that go around, and they steal time from people. Here we would call it like HSBC bankers or somebody like that.

I'm sorry, Elaine. I love you. But they steal time. So they're the time patriots. They come in and they steal time from you. And so this idea is that your life consists of how much you have on your arm.

And it's not a bank account. It's a time code. And when that time code ends, boom, you die. And so you start at 21, and some people die at 24. Some people die at 25 because they buy a lot of stuff with their time and food and other things like that.

But the issue is your life consists of your time. Well, how would you live if you had a clock on your arm that shows you have three more years to go?

[15 : 58] And then everything you did, either it sucked away time or it added on time. Would you live differently? Would you spend your time differently?

The passage says that our time flies by quicker than we know it. He says in verse 16 that the days are evil. And there's two meanings to that in Greek and Hebrew.

One is that times are difficult. They're going to be hard. But the next meaning is that time goes by quickly. And before you can grab onto it, it's past and you don't have it anymore. The next thing that I've been learning and I continue to learn, and this is a really hard thing for me.

And what it is is the Bible says that being wise with your time and how we use it, it has nothing to do with speed. It has nothing to do with efficiency. It has nothing to do with being busy.

It has nothing to do with multitasking. All these things in Hong Kong, when we say we're using our time well, it always deals with speed, efficiency, multitasking, getting things done, being busy. You know, the Bible says that none of that pertains to using time in the Bible.

[17 : 03] None of that. That's never talked about in the Bible. When it talks about being wise with our time, what it talks about is having the right priorities. How are you using your time?

What are your priorities? And once you set those priorities, you live by them. You keep them. These are your priorities. They're what you use your time clock up on. That's how you live. In the Bible, that's what it calls being wise.

So a wise person uses their time with the right priorities. I mean, often I think that we're overloaded, aren't we? We're overloaded. We're overloaded with commitment.

We're overloaded with information. We're overloaded with work. We're overloaded with stuff. And we often live our life unwisely. As a pastor, I have the incredible privilege of coming into people's lives, and they ask me questions.

And some of them I don't know the answer to, and I'm still trying to figure them out in my life. And I just go back to God's Word, and, well, what does God's Word say? Let's talk about these things. But often what I realize is that in these questions that people ask, often people ask me questions, and they want a good or bad answer.

[18 : 12] Is this good or is this bad? Is this evil or is this good? But what I've learned and what I continue to realize is that probably 85% of the questions we ask and the things that we do and deal with in life, they're not good or bad questions.

You're not going to answer it, should I take this job or this job? Which one is bad and which one is good? And usually when I say, well, what you're doing right now, that's not bad, we automatically assume, well, then it's good.

Well, it might be. But it might not be wise. It might not be along with the priorities that we've been set.

It might not be in line with God's priorities for us and the world around us. I mean, often I think we struggle, and the struggle is that we're selfish.

I'm selfish. And we struggle with these choices. And sometimes we say, yeah, I'm making the right use of my time. You know, I should do this instead of hanging out with my family, and because in the long run I can make it up with my family, or I should do these things instead of these things, and this isn't bad, so it must be good.

[19 : 23] But the Scripture says it's not often an issue of good and bad, but it's issue of wisdom. And wisdom is knowing how to live life.

Wisdom is knowing what is on the heart of God. Wisdom is knowing what God is like. Wisdom is knowing God's Word. Wisdom is knowing how God made you and the gifts that He's given you. So I know God. I know His Word. I know the gifts He's given me. And so when I get these choices, then the question I have to ask myself is, is what I'm doing, is what I'm investing my time in, is it a wise use of my time?

From what I know of God, from what I know of what God is doing, from what I know of how God made me, am I being wise with my time? It's not an issue of good or bad, but it's an issue of wisdom.

Do I live my life selfishly? Should I take this job or this job? And I'm like, I don't know.

[20 : 34] Let's talk about it. Okay, we'll talk about it. This job's going to make me a lot more money. It's going to give me these opportunities. It's going to be doing these things. So how's that going to affect your family? Well, my family's going to sacrifice a little while, but then after a while, we'll make it up.

And we'll have all these new cars and new houses. Okay, so how's it going to affect your church? Well, we'll find a new church when we get there. Now, all that might be good. It might be bad. It might be wise. It might be unwise.

I don't know. But you have to determine that. You have to determine from what you know of God, from what you know of God's word, from what you know of how God has made you, from what you know of what God is doing in the world around you.

Is that choice the wisest use? Of your time? Or is it being selfish? The hard thing is when you say, hey, it's being selfish.

And sometimes we can be selfish for good things, right? Can't we? I mean, I'm working on a sermon, and my kid comes in and needs help, and their life is falling apart. And I'm like, well, I really don't have time to mess with you because I'm working on this sermon, and I've got to do really well on this sermon.

[21 : 45] Is that really the wisest use of that moment? Is that really the wisest use of my time?

I mean, think about it. If tomorrow God gave you five extra hours, what would you use those hours for?

How would you use those five extra hours? Okay, now, you find out you're going to die in one week, and then God gives you five extra hours tomorrow.

Do you use those five extra hours differently? Or do you use them the same? The question is, are we learning as God's people to use life, use time, use our resources wisely?

You might say, well, I don't know. Help me. And the scripture says that a wise use of time is always being in God's word, being with God's people, and investing in people's lives.

[22 : 53] I mean, the Bible says that there's only two things that are eternal, right? Two things. Okay, two things. There's God's word. Not one jot or tittle will pass away.

God's word is eternal. The word of God, the spirit, who God is, it's always there. Men's souls. So if you want to work with significant, eternal things that are wise, and you don't know what to do, a perfect default is always to say, well, does this get me into God's word?

Does this get me with God's people? Does this help me deal with relationships in people's souls?

That is always a good default as we go on the journey.

Does that make sense? Am I speaking too fast? I know I'm speaking passionately because it's things that I struggle with. Man, I'm struggling with these guys.

I just, and it's things that God continues to teach to learn me. The third thing I've been learning, in the critical areas of our life, in the critical relationships that we have, it's very hard to make it for time that we spend unwisely.

[24 : 18] In the things that really matter, if we spend our time unwisely in them, it's very hard to make up for that time.

I mean, it's easy to cram for an exam the next day, but it's almost impossible to cram for a relationship with your wife and kids. You know that? I mean, I've learned that.

You neglect your wife and your kids and your relationships for the six months or a year, all for really, really good reasons, and then you come in and you want to fix them, and it's really hard to cram, and just in one day, wham!

Everything's back to normal. But we think that, don't we? I mean, we think that we can do that, but what the Scripture says, and what I've been learning is that important relationships, like relationships with the Lord, relationships with our friends, relationships with our spouses, relationships with our kiddos, relationships with our church family, all of these relationships require wisdom, and they require investments of time, and often they don't require large investments of time.

They just require investments of time. This is something, and I'm not brilliant. A guy who I was living with as I was going through seminary, he taught me this, and I was like, that makes sense to me, and what he said to me is, he looked at me struggling.

[25 : 44] He said, Tobin, you're using your time unwisely, and you realize you're sacrificing your relationships, and these are the most important things there, and you don't have to go do a massive thing, like a big birthday party every day for that relationship to make it go.

But often it just takes little short snaps of time. And that's what the passage says in Ephesians. He says, use your time wisely. There's six words in Greek for time, and the word here is not timeline, it's not day, it's not hour.

It's the special moments that God's given us. So in Ephesians he says, use the special moments that God has given you wisely. Invest in those things.

And what I realized as we go on this journey, that God gives us these special moments with people, with relationships. I mean, you know, I'm not teaching you anything you don't know. It's like exercise, right? I mean, if you want to get in shape, you exercise, and hopefully you do it two or three times a week, and after two or three weeks or four weeks, you see a difference.

But when you say, hey, which one of those times was more important than the other time? None of them were really that more important, were they? I mean, one hour usually isn't any more important than the next hour, important to the next hour, but it's that we keep building those hours of relationships over and over and over on top of each other.

[26 : 56] And as we build those things up, we build value in relationships, and we go on a journey with people. Now, the hard thing is sometimes that one of those things, again, as I said, isn't the thing, right?

So sometimes it's easy to take out an hour. I can't do it today. I've got to take out an hour. I'm sorry, I can't play ball with you today. I've got to take out an hour. I'm sorry, I can't do this right now.

I've got to work on this. It's really important. I'll be done next week, and next week it's a special time right now. Next time it'll be all not special. We'll take out an hour. And often what I've realized is when those hours I take out and I give them to something else, they're usually not wise things that I give them to.

And so what I end up doing is I end up hurting the relationships that God has given me and the people in my life. Does that make sense?

So as we build life, as we go on this journey, as we use the time wisely, these special events, they're not huge gatherings, they're not, but they're just a little time when you come in alongside of people.

[28 : 05] It's when you exercise, or however you want to do it, you do it every day intuitively without thinking about it. But God says we're to do it with time in this stewardship that he's given us. And if we don't do it, what we realize is at the end, we're going to be having these relationships, and it's kind of like, you know, tomorrow's summer, I've gained 20 pounds.

I'm going to put the really sweatsuit on. I'm going to jog around, and I'm going to try to lose that as 20 pounds in one day. Can you do that? Some of us maybe can.

Just come up here, and you're sweating like, I'm sweating like a pig right now. But you can't. And what Scripture says is the most important relationships in our life, the things that mean everything, the things that are eternal, the things that are going to last, they take time, and that's wisdom.

Wisdom. Little bits of time. How are we using that little bits of time? Are we using our time wisely? Finally, and I don't know where we'll go from this.

We'll see what happens here. In this passage, in Ephesians and in Romans, it's pretty amazing.

The passages are so amazing. What I really wanted to do is I wanted to, I wanted to find a scale and bring this big scale up, the double-sided scale, because I think this is what this passage is.

[29 : 30] Because the passages, Romans 12 and Ephesians 5, they're saying the same thing.

They're saying the exact same thing. They're saying it differently, but Paul's saying the exact same thing.

And what he's saying is this. He's saying, and it's always all of his writings, in light of what God has done, this is what we need to be doing. This is all that God has done for you.

This is how we should respond. Paul's passages never say, you do this, and then God will do that. Because we're not the hero of the story.

We're not the principal actor in the story. God is. And in the passages, especially with time, it always says, this is what God has done. In light of what God has done, this is our only reasonable response.

It's amazing to me, as I talk to people in Watermark, and in Hong Kong, and around the world, there are a lot of people here who feel like their lives don't mean anything.

[30 : 38] When we talk about purpose, and meaning, and how they're using their job, and how they're impacting life and world, people just, they just sit there, I don't know. It means nothing.

I see no purpose to what I'm doing. I don't understand how it's going on. And I look there, and I'm like, oh my gosh. Because the passages tell us that God loves each one of us so much.

He's done so much for us. Not just so he can take us to heaven, but so we can live life here and now, and impact the world around us.

And people say, well, I don't feel like that. But the scripture says, that's what is true. God saved you.

If you're God's child right now, God saved you. He brought you into his family for a very specific purpose, is to live life wisely, to impact the kingdom, and to change people's lives.

[31 : 37] And there's so many people in here who walk around defeated, and scared. I'm just a housewife.

I have no purpose in my life. My time is useless. I'm just a student. What can I do? I'm stuck in this job.

I can't really affect anything. My life really has no purpose. I'm hoping that when I get out of this job, I can find purpose. But right now, I can't do anything. What Paul in scripture says, over and over and over, is that God has an amazing plan and purpose for your life.

You see it through his word. You see it through the spirit put inside of you. You see it through all the experiences he's brought into your life. And the question is, are you going to trust him to go on that journey, and to use your time wisely in people's lives?

I say this because I don't want to end up at any of your deathbeds and have you look me in the eyes and say, I've wasted my life.

[32 : 47] I didn't know what to do. I didn't know how to make a difference. I didn't know how to love my kids. I didn't know how to love my wife. I didn't know how to love my husband. I didn't know how to reach out to people. But the scripture says really clearly, it's really simple.

It's really simple. I split up the Ephesian passage on purpose. The second part of it's on the back of your page.

It talks about living wisely, and he says the exact same thing that we read in Romans 12. If you took all of Romans 12 and distilled it, it's the exact same things that Ephesians 17, 18, and 19, and 20 says.

And what it says is this. If you want to know how to live wisely, this is what you do. You give your life to the Lord. You allow him to take control over it because he's already paid everything for you.

Give your life to him. If you want to know how to live wisely, use your time well, give your life to him, and as you do that, you thank him. You have an attitude of gratitude, and you continually thank him, and thank him for everything he's doing.

[33 : 53] Thank you for what he's brought you. Thank you for what he's doing. And just continue to thank him because he's in control, and you can trust him because he's already done everything. If you want to know how to live your life wisely and use your time wisely, give your life to the Lord, continually be in the attitude of thanking him, serve people.

Be involved in people's lives. How do you know if you're using your time wisely? How do you know if you're using your time wisely? Are you surrendering your life to God?

Are you thanking him for everything he's done? Are you involved in other people's lives? Are you serving them and helping them? Do you know God's word? Do you know what God has in store for you?

Do you know that he's in control? Do you know how he's made you? If you know all these things, you're never going to be in doubt, and you're never going to have to worry.

I mean, sure, it might look different for every person. That's why I don't want to say, this is what you need to do. Do this, do this, do this, because God has uniquely gifted each one of you. God has made you differently. He's given you different experiences, and he's teaching you, and he wants you to use your time in different ways.

[35 : 09] So you need to go before him and ask those questions. What does that look like? How can you do that? Maybe grab somebody in your community group. Maybe grab a friend and say, let's do this again. Maybe husband and wife talk about it.

What does it look like for us to use our time wisely? How do we invest in God's word and God's people and make people's lives different? But don't be thinking at the end of your life, man, I've wasted this time like I did.

I'm so thankful for my heart attack. I'm so thankful that I have an anniversary every year, and you're probably tired that I keep talking about it, but for me, it's a big thing, because for me, it's my second birthday.

And I don't want you to have to have a heart attack. And I don't want you to have to have cancer. I don't want you to have something else coming into your life that God needs to wake you up, but God loves you so much, he's going to do that if he needs to use that to wake us up as his people. Does that make sense? So I started from the end, and I worked to the beginning, and we're almost done. A couple thoughts, and we'll close.

[36 : 11] And these are things I've been kind of writing out here. I think for some of us, maybe in this room right now, maybe for some of us, for the first time, we're going to just have to look at our heart. We're going to have to look at our motives. We're going to have to examine our lives and see why am I living the way that I'm living?

Am I living because it's good or bad, or am I living because I want to be wise in what I do? I think for some of us, we're going to have to come to the realization that we aren't in control, that God is in control, and that life is short, and we need to start submitting our lives to God.

We need to start confessing our selfishness and our arrogance and our self-confidence and allowing God to be God in our life and to change us. I mean, for some of us, it might mean that we just have to be more thankful for what God has done and continually have this attitude of thanking Him and realizing that everything that we have and every moment that we have and every hour that we have and every time that we have and every special event that we have is a blessing from Him and stop thinking about the future and what's going to happen next.

Tobin. And so for some of us, it might mean just us asking forgiveness from those people that we love. For some of us, it's going to mean we're going to have to ask for forgiveness for people that we love because we've had terrible priorities and we've hurt people that we really care about.

I almost didn't share this because I think this is really delicate because I think there's some of us in here who have this mindset of, well, I'll just make it up later. I'll just make it up later.

[37 : 39] I'll just make it up later. I'll do these things at a special time but I'll make it up later. And for you, I'm like, grow up. That's me. That's me saying. I talk that way too.

But you never promise later. You can't cram for your relationships. You can't make things better with a birthday party or a great trip after you've abused your wife or your husband for two years. It just doesn't work that way.

But then there's some of us in here who realize, man, I've really screwed up. How can I fix things? How can I make things different? I don't even know where to begin. I feel so much guilt when I walk into this place because I realize that I've been so poor with my resources, my time, my money, my friends.

I don't even know if I can stand before God. And for those of you in here who are like that, I'm like, man, you know, join the club because that's how we all really are.

[38 : 38] And the amazing thing is that you know it and you want to change. And change just starts by little increments at a time. And you can do that.

Don't wallow in your self-pity, in your shame, in your guilt. But allow God to take that from you. Allow him to change it into something amazing. Does that make sense? Stewardship of our resources and gifts, stewardship of our time, stewardship of our money, using our time wisely. Our prayer is as a church that we would continually think about these things and discuss these things. And that we would be a different people two weeks from now. We'd be a different people two months from now.

Again, it's a journey. We're not saying this is where you need to be. We're just saying we're moving in that direction together. Father, you want to join us.

[39 : 49] Let's do it together. Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you for your son who gives us everything. We thank you for your spirit that changes us, that heals us, that redeems us, that brings us to life.

We thank you that you do all these things in Ephesians and Romans more than we can even talk about within a short period of time over and over and over. You are the hero.

You are the leader. You change us. And we look out and we say, how then should we respond? What is our reasonable response to your mercy and your grace?

And your word says it clearly. It says to surrender our lives to you, to trust you because you've already done it all. It says to be thankful and have an attitude of gratitude.

And it says to love people and to encourage them, to go on a journey with them and know that you're in control of all these things. Father, I pray for us as a church and as individuals that we would be different, that we wouldn't walk out of here the same and that we wouldn't be the same next week and we wouldn't be having this attitude that, well, I can make it better later, but right now I've got to deal with these things.

[41 : 06] But that we would deal with these things right now and allow your spirit to change us. Father, for many of us, especially myself, we need to confess. We need to repent because we've been walking around too righteously, too self-confident for too long.

And we've hurt the people that we care about the most. We hurt you. We hurt our relationship with you, our God and our creator. So, Lord, we confess that.

For some of us, Lord, we just need to say, okay, what do I do now? And allow your spirit to talk to us and to show us through your word and through your people what we do and how you've made us. And for all of us, Lord, we just need to be in amazement that you're the God of second chances, that you're gentle and kind and patient and merciful and that you bring us along even when we wander off.

We thank you. We love you. We pray all these things in your son Jesus' name. Amen.