

# Using Your Time Wisely

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Does this scene sound familiar?

You come home from a long day at work. You feel so exhausted that you just need a break. So you pull out your phone to scroll through social media, look at the news, or play a game. Or you turn on the TV to watch a show. Or you put yourself in front of a screen to distract yourself in any number of other ways. Before you know it, the evening is gone and you've spent the whole time consuming information from these digital worlds that distract you from your own.

Although there is nothing wrong with enjoying a little entertainment every now and then, this kind of consistent routine reveals a potentially dangerous pattern in our lives. When we routinely turn to a screen (or any other worldly distraction) whenever we have leisure time, we are investing valuable time that God has entrusted to us in the *world* instead of in *His Word*.

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How we use our time matters. It matters because the more we use our time to invest in the world, the more our lives will *look* like the world. And the more we look like the world, the more we fight against God's will for our lives—to be conformed to the image of His Son.

## How NOT to Use Your Time Wisely: Investing in the World

We live an age in which we have more leisure time than ever before. But rarely do we use that time wisely. More often than not, we choose to invest almost all our spare time in worldly things that do not benefit us spiritually. Although the ways we entertain ourselves are often not immoral in themselves, the way we consistently invest in them is an unwise use of our time.

Let me be clear. I am not suggesting you become a hermit and live in complete separation from the world. In fact, in order to fulfill Christ's command to be "shrewd as serpents" ([Matthew 10:16](#)), we need to understand our times. But don't forget the other part of that command: be "innocent as doves." There is a fine line between engaging with the world to understand the times and engaging with the world in a way that causes us to become *like* the world. To help us understand this distinction, let's look at two different ways Scripture uses the term "world."

### Two Kinds of "World"

The New Testament draws an important distinction between two ways of thinking about "the world." On the one hand, Jesus tells us in John 3:16, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." But on the other hand, 1 John 2:15 commands us: "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

Clearly, "world" is being used in two different ways in these two verses. In John 3:16, Jesus refers to the world as the object of the Father's redeeming love, specifically His love for the *people* in the world who would "believe in Him."

First John 2:15, however, is not referring to the people or events in the world, but rather the sinful pull that, apart from God's grace, defines everything about the world. This becomes clear in the next verse when John describes the "things of the world" as "the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life" (1 John 2:16).

God never calls us to separate ourselves from the "world" in the former sense of the word. But Jesus explicitly tells us that we are called to be separate from the "world" in the latter sense ([John 15:19](#)).

This distinction is perhaps most clear in Jesus' High Priestly Prayer of John 17: "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (vv. 14-16).

What Does "Investing in the World" Look Like?

So, we know that we are supposed to be "in" the world but not "of" it. But where do we draw the line? When does cultural awareness and entertainment as a means of legitimate rest cross over into an unwise *investment* in the "things of the world"?

Let me suggest this principle. In John 15:19, Jesus says that "the world would love its own" but would "hate" His disciples. The next time you open your phone to scroll through social media or play a game, or the next time you binge-watch TV or seek any other kind of distraction in your free time, ask yourself this: *Does the way I am acting right now look any different from what an unbeliever would be doing? Am I living in such a way that the world does not recognize me because I belong to Christ and not to the world?*

Here are just a few ways you might be using your time unwisely by investing it in the world:

- Spending an inordinate amount of time watching or reading the news.
- Scrolling through or posting on social media every time you get bored.
- Binge-watching TV shows, movies, or sports.
- Spending more time in front of a screen than with your family at the end of the workday.
- Escaping to the metaverse or video games in order to avoid real life issues.
- Neglecting regular rhythms of rest from work.
- Prioritizing self-entertainment over fellowship with other believers.

Investing in the world could take on any number of other forms as well. Every believer will have his or her own struggles. Ultimately, using your time wisely is a matter of Christian wisdom and listening to the prompting of the Spirit. The more you obey the prompting of the Spirit, the more aware of His voice you will become. But remember that the reverse is also true: the more you *disobey* the prompting of the Spirit, the more that awareness will atrophy. Do not underestimate the deceptive nature of your own mind, which is able to rationalize almost anything ([Jeremiah 17:9](#)).

### **The Dangers of Not Using Your Time Wisely**

Not only is it unbiblical to invest all our free time in worldly things, but it is also dangerous to our souls. Here are two of those dangers.

**Danger #1: Not using your time wisely makes your heart value the wrong things.**

Because of our fallen nature, the world is already too much with us. When we spend 99 percent of our free time on worldly pursuits, we only reinforce the gravitational pull of the world, the flesh, and the devil on our lives.

As I said before, there is nothing wrong with enjoying entertainment. However, when we consistently spend the majority of our leisure time in front of a screen, consuming non-edifying media, this reveals that we value the world more than God's Word. Jesus told us, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21). The same goes for your use of time. Where you choose to spend your free time, there your heart will be also.

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Danger #2: Not using your time wisely will stunt your growth in Christlikeness.

When the Israelites committed sexual immorality at Baal-peor and began worshiping the Moabite gods ([Numbers 25:1-2](#)), their idolatry changed them. They began to resemble what they worshiped. By worshiping idols that encouraged sexual immorality, Israel became like a harlot, flaunting her unfaithfulness to her covenant God. Recounting this incident, Hosea says the Israelites "became as detestable as that which they loved" (Hosea 9:10).

We gradually come to resemble what we behold. Whatever we set our hearts on will begin to govern everything we do. God intends us to behold Christ and thus become more and more like Him ([2 Corinthians 3:18](#)). Investing our time in the world instead of the Word will stall this process of sanctification and instead cause us to become more and more like the world.

## **Two Common Objections**

Before I get to how we *can* use our time wisely, let me address two common objection that might arise at this point.

Objection #1: "Why shouldn't I be allowed to unwind after a long day?"

There's nothing wrong with resting at the end of a long day. God made us to need rest so that we would learn to depend on Him, and Scripture instructs us in the importance of regular rest ([Exodus 20:8-11](#)). It's also not wrong to utilize various forms of entertainment to unwind occasionally.

But there is a difference between godly rest and worldly relaxation. Knowing the difference requires wisdom from the Holy Spirit. Ask Him to search your heart and reveal your hidden motives ([Psalm 139:23-24](#)). Ask Him to reveal whether the way you rest makes you look more like Him or more like the world.

Also, remember that there are alternative ways to rest besides watching TV or looking at your phone. For example, if your job involves a lot of mental work, go for a leisurely walk and admire God's creation. If your job involves a lot of physical labor, you may prefer to read a good book (it doesn't have to be about spiritual things) or just take a nap. Paul tells us, "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). Even in the way we rest, we should always consider how it can bring glory to God.

Objection #2: "It's not like I'm watching anything bad; it's perfectly harmless."

As I will mention below, the *act* of watching TV is not necessarily the problem. We can watch films in a way that edifies us and helps us think more clearly about our Christian worldview. However, most of the time we watch TV, we have a *consumer* mindset. We do not actively engage with the underlying themes and purposes of what we are watching.

The fact is, every movie and TV show is trying to subtly (or sometimes not so subtly) subvert your thinking to buy into their particular worldview. Most movies do not promote a Christian worldview, and even the ones that do are not necessarily theologically sound. What we consume changes us more than we may realize.

Learn more about [How to "Read" a Film](#).

## How to Use Your Time Wisely: Investing in the Word

God's will for you is your sanctification ([1 Thessalonians 4:3](#))—in other words, being "conformed to the image of His Son" ([Romans 8:29](#)). If it is true that we gradually come to resemble what we behold, this applies not only to the things of the world but also to the way we are sanctified. As Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 3:18, "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit."

We become more like Christ by beholding Christ. And what better place to behold Christ than in the Word of God? Our first strategy for submitting to God's will for our sanctification, therefore, should be to displace the time we spend investing in the world with time spent investing in the Word.

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In order to do this, we need to know what "investing in the Word" means.

What Does Investing in the Word Look like?

The most obvious way to invest in the Word is by reading the Bible. But it goes beyond this as well, as Scripture itself commands us to dwell on whatever is honorable, right, pure, lovely, of good repute, excellent, or praiseworthy ([Philippians 4:8](#)).

How might we use our leisure time wisely in light of this? Here are just a few suggestions:

- **Read all the way through the Bible.** This will help you better grasp the big picture of God's redemptive story. There are a lot of reading plans out there that take you through the Bible in either one or two years. [Here is a list of a few methods I recommend.](#)
- **Meditate on Scripture.** While the previous suggestion emphasizes reading for *breadth*, this one emphasizes reading for *depth*. You may find that the *lectio divina* method helps you concentrate on a specific text. It involves four steps: Read, Reflect, Respond, Rest. [Read more about lectio divina](#)
- **Memorize Scripture.** Memorization can help you internalize key biblical truths. Try this [Memory Verse Guide](#) that takes you through one verse per week for three years, covering the full range of biblical topics.
- **Read devotionally.** This is a great way to glean insights from fellow believers—past and present—who have thought deeply about the truths of Scripture. [Here is a list that contains recommendations for devotional reading.](#) (Note: This list includes a mixture of classic devotional books and classic secular works.)
- **Spend time with other believers,** talking about spiritual topics and struggles ([Hebrews 10:23-24](#)). In particular, make sure you are doing this consistently with your family (if they are believers).
- **Set aside regular time to disciple a younger (or less mature) believer.** There are only two eternal things in this world—God's Word and people. By discipling others, you will be investing the former in the latter.



- **Take a walk**, asking God to cultivate in you a greater [love and fear of Him through the beauty and glory of His creation](#).
- **Watch an edifying film**. That's right! After all I've said about the dangers of media, that doesn't mean all media is bad. The key is to watch with a mind toward how the film points (or fails to point) to biblical truth. This can lead to good discussions among family members or friends—and perhaps it will even turn into an evangelistic opportunity with an unbelieving friend. If you don't know where to start, feel free to refer to my [lists of film recommendations](#).

For more ideas on how to invest in the Word, read Ken Boa and Jenny Abel's *[A Guide to Practicing God's Presence](#)*.

## Using Your Time Wisely

If you want to grow in Christlikeness by using your time wisely, here is my challenge to you. For just one day, monitor how much free time you invest in the things of the world—anything that does not help you in some way to behold Christ. Then compare that to how much free time you chose to invest in the Word—anything that *does* help you to behold Christ.

Based on this experiment, what is your “Word-to-world ratio”? If we are Christ's disciples, we will want to gradually displace time in the world with time in the Word. In this way, we will be conformed to the image of Christ instead of the image of the world.

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