Ephesians 5:15-16

Today's passage is directly related to the task that God gives us as recorded in verses 9-14. We see the linguistic link when we read the initial words of v. 15 which says, "Look carefully then…" That little word "then" is very important because it shows us that the reason for our obedience is connected to the setting that has just been described by Paul. We have been reminded that darkness is all around us, that we are to attempt to discern what is around us and that our job is not to join the darkness but to expose it whenever and wherever we see it. Consequently, we must be wise in our walk and, according to this text, we must think especially in terms of how we spend our time.

1. The Time Wasting Epidemic
    a. I am reading a book this week that was written by Brad Huddleston (who will be visiting our church in January to speak)
        i. The book is entitled "Digital Cocaine" and it is about the various ways that technology influences and harms us (particularly our cognitive function and disposition)
        ii. One of the things he mentions in the book is that technology is rife with opportunities for distraction
        iii. Many studies have concluded that having so much at our fingertips causes us to wander, rather aimlessly, through all kinds of apps, search engines, emails and the like
        iv. The result is that we can waste countless hours of time consuming entertainment and information without really accomplishing much of anything!
    b. The point of the book is that we need to stop being "unwise" and wise up to the ways that we can be knocked off course in accomplishing our God-given responsibilities
    c. This is just one way that Paul's warning in v. 15 can be pertinent to us today
2. The Motivations for Using Time Wisely
    a. Time is limited
        i. Why does Paul stop here and admonish the people to use their time wisely?
        ii. One reason is that time is a finite resource
        iii. Time passes so quickly and it can be wasted if we are not intentional
        iv. When we consider the fact that we only have our children under our roof for a relatively short time, that we are only married for a portion of our lifetimes, that we only have so many hours to devote to study, that we can only serve the Lord physically for so many years, then we are reminded that we have real reasons to use our time wisely

v. So many people are full of regrets because of all the things that were left undone, many of which they had every intention of getting to eventually!
vi. Dear friend, every day you live is precious… don't waste it!
vii. How does the world encourage us to waste time? Let me give you a few:
    1. The world has attempted to lull us to sleep with pleasures and distractions
        a. These things can cause us to piddle and waste away the very moments God gives
    2. Sometimes we are tempted to think that the prizes of this life are worthy the countless hours we dedicate to achieving
        a. So, people pursue careers at the expense of making disciples and serving their neighbors
        b. Many are distracted by vacations and hobbies, so much so that the call to make disciples is neglected until it is too late
    3. Sometimes we are tempted to fight battles in ways that are inconsequential
        a. Many seem to think that the war against good and evil will be won with endless debates on social media or by watching as much news as possible
        b. Others think that making disciples is a "peace time" strategy but, at the moment, it is imperative that we devote all of our attention to campaigns and social movements with little concern given to sharing the Gospel and teaching others to walk in holiness

b. Many are lost
    i. This leads me to the second motivation… people need the light
    ii. Stated differently, they need Jesus
        1. When we waste our time, we take ourselves away from the responsibility that God has given to proclaim the good news
    iii. How many of us are so distracted by the cares of this world that we neglect the souls of those who are in our midst?
        1. God has placed us in our settings for a larger purpose than simply getting by or dealing with temporal issues
        2. The world needs Christ and Christ has ordained that we are the ones who will share it with them
        3. Many of us are in the light but we refuse to turn on the switch in the dark places we inhabit

a. The result is obvious… people who need the truth are neglected as we seek to use our time in pursuit of other things that simply won't matter in 1,000 years

c. God deserves glory
    i. Our lives are a gift from God and they are given to us for the purpose of making much of Him
    ii. We exist to glorify God… we will not bring Him nearly the glory He deserves if we are wasting our time on frivolous, mindless or sinful pursuits
    iii. Notice here that God does gain glory through our joy
        1. The point of this lesson is not that we should neglect anything that brings us pleasure… the point is that we should see to it that God is made much of in all circumstances and environments (pleasure, pain, work, recreation, family, friends, etc.)
    iv. This means that our ultimate aim is to see to it that God is magnified in everything we do which requires us to use our time in a way that is mindful of Him
        1. Do you have a vacation scheduled? Be sure to enjoy it and praise the Lord as you do
        2. Do you have a place of employment? Don't waste the time by neglecting the opportunity to glorify God in the quality of your labor and the conversations you may have the privilege of enjoying
        3. Do you have a spouse? Don't waste your time neglecting your relationship by replacing investment in your marriage with mindless pursuits
        4. Do you have children? Don't get so sucked up in the hustle and bustle of extracurricular activities and technological "babysitters" that you miss the chance to invest in them, imparting the truths of God so that they can walk in the faith and glorify God as well
    v. One day we will stand before the Lord and answer for the ways that we have used this life, we must live today in light of that day
    vi. As we do, recall the words of the great missionary C.T. Studd, "Only one life, twill soon be past, Only what's done for Christ will last"