



Following Jesus
Part 3 – Is Not On the Clock
Pastor Ted Cunningham

If you're just joining us, we have started a series called *Following Jesus*. We're spending the months of September and October talking about discipleship and what it means to follow Jesus. Today, we are moving into what it means to follow Jesus in our everyday, ordinary lives. We're looking at this talk called *Following Jesus Is Not On the Clock*.

Let me direct your attention to these hour glasses. I have a 15 minute one and then, for my sermons, I have the 60-minute one that we can use and the 30-minute one. We live our lives on a clock. How many of you are tired of the clock? How many of you wear a watch? How many of you, while someone was talking to you this week and in the middle of a deep conversation, you looked at your watch? That's called rude; I don't know any other way to say that. That's not good.

My son borrowed my watch this summer on a trip and never gave it back to me and I haven't been wearing a watch for about a month and a half and I love it. I'm late everywhere, but I'm enjoying life like I've never enjoyed it before. Think about it.

Our work is on the clock. How many of you still have an actual card that you punch a clock? Some people still have it. How many of you have a card that you go in and swipe at work to punch in? How many of you haven't punched a clock your entire career? Those are the self-employed people. It's not because they're lazy; it's because they work 90 to 100 hours a week. So our work is on the clock.

Our meals are on the clock. Just to let you know the difference between our culture and let's say France. People in France spend two hours and forty-five minutes a day eating. We spend seventy-five minutes a day eating. Eighty percent of their meals are with people. Sixty percent of our meals are alone. But our meals are on the clock and we rush through our meals.

Our sleep is on the clock. This one we know for sure. How many of you wake up with an alarm clock? How many of you wake up on your own at 4:00 am because you're old? That's all the old people. That's a good place to be. You nap all day to Fox News and you're not tired when you go to bed. It's a fantastic way to live.

Our family is on the clock. What's sad is that for a part of the way we live our lives, our family is on the clock as well. Probably 20 years ago, the big conversation in marriage and family ministry became quality time versus quantity time. We actually started making the argument, "I don't get to spend a lot

of time with my kids, so I'll just make the time I do have quality." We believe here that it's quality and quantity. That's the problem with us living on a clock.

Our faith is not on the clock. This is the part that may be a struggle for some today, but I hope this very simple approach to the message will change your outlook on your faith. I was with a senior adult man last week. We were having a great visit. He is up well into his 80s. He said, "Sunday is an important day. Sunday is God's day." I got the sentiment. I understood. He said he wanted to prioritize it. He had missed a Sunday at church and he felt bad that he missed that Sunday. I'm thinking, *You should come to Woodland Hills; half our people miss Sundays and they don't feel bad at all. That's just the way they live.* But, he was like, "If I don't get that day in..." But that's not our faith. Our faith is not on one day of the week.

If you have your Bibles, turn to Ephesians 5: 15-20, as we kind of take a different approach to time today. Maybe for some of you who are schedule people... Raise your hand if you are a schedule person. You love a schedule. You love to stay on a schedule. How many of you hate schedules and you're not good at making them, keeping them, or having other people follow them? So we're all over the map today on this.

I have to be honest with you, some of you will struggle with some of the things said today, but I want you to be able to understand the difference between your faith and your personality. For some, your personality is going to get in the way today and you're going to be frustrated with what I say. You may think we should be all about the clock, all about the schedule. The problem with that in the church today is we like to schedule all of our faith activities and we forget that our faith is our life. It's all consuming, it's everything we are. We don't have a box for faith. We don't have a box for following Jesus. "This is my work box, this is my family box, this is my meals box, this is my sleep box, and this is my faith box. I have certain activities I do at certain times and that is why I'm a Christian and that's what it means to follow Jesus". We hope to completely blow that out of the water today.

15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise... So we're going to take a wise approach today towards our time as followers of Jesus. **16 ...making the most of every opportunity...** Some of you have a translation that reads "making the most of our time." In a second we are going to look at the difference between time and opportunity. **...because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.**

18 Do not get drunk on wine... There are two groups of people in here today. There are some that believe wine should be abstained from completely for personal, traditional reasons. There are others who drink wine in moderation. Whatever your belief is, whatever your personal standard is, this we know from the scripture: drunkenness is a sin. I'll say it again. Drunkenness is a sin. And Paul is going to give you a reason why you don't want to be drunk. Other than the fact that we are called to abstain from drunkenness, he says this. ***Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit...***

In other words, you don't want to be controlled by anything other than the Spirit. You don't want drugs or alcohol, sex or money... These are all areas of our lives that people can take what God has given, the

good stuff, the food, the wine, sex... The work is to be done unto the Lord. All of it is to bring glory to God. We can take all of these gifts and abuse them and look to them to be our source. They are not meant to be our source of life, they are gifts. So too much food leads to gluttony. Too much wine leads to drunkenness. Too much work can lead to greed. Sex outside of the relationship between a husband and wife leads to fornication, adultery. In our culture, we run to all of these. Some of you are eating, some of you are drinking, some of you are working, some of you are having sex to get out of this frustration in your life, to get out of this irritation, to get out of the hurt and the pain that has been caused in your life. That's not at all what is supposed to control you. As a follower of Jesus, you are to be controlled by the spirit.

19 speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. This is how we engage one another. ***Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, 20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.***

So going back to the beginning of that text, you see this idea of time. There are two words for time. The first one, which a lot of you will understand and it's how we think of time mostly in our culture. It's where we get the term *chronological order*. How many of you love chronological order? "When I get to hit that button online and look at my emails in chronological order, how they came to me, and stay organized..."

Chronos refers to the time in seconds, minutes, and hours. And it's how most of us live. But let me tell you that Ephesians 5 is not talking about making the most of seconds, minutes, and hours. It's not the word that's used.

It's a different word that is used and it's the word *kairos*, which refers to opportunities or special occasions. That's why it says "make the most of every opportunity." You and I, as followers of Jesus, should look at all of our time, every second, every minute, every hour as a special occasion, as an opportunity. In other words, following Jesus means we pay as much attention to *kairos* as we do *chronos*. That means we pay attention to opportunities. We are looking for opportunities everywhere we go. We're asking this question which is stated a few verses earlier in Ephesians 5: 10. ***...find out what pleases the Lord.*** Look to the Lord. Find out what, in this moment, is going to bring glory to the Lord.

You've heard the expression "Time is money." The business guys in here love that expression. I can make more money, so if I spend it, that's no big deal, but my time is precious. I've got to make the most of my time because time is money." But for the follower of Jesus, ***time is ministry.*** Whatever you do, whatever your job is, whatever you work at, wherever you live, whether you're single or married, whether you have no children or you have many children, it doesn't matter your season of life. For all of us in the room today, time is ministry.

Here's what I want some of us to take a big, deep breath with today. Following Jesus does not mean we ram as much as we can into 24 hours. That's where a lot of us get. Making the most of time means do more. No, making the most of time means making the most of the opportunities, being filled with the

Spirit to know this is an opportunity that is being presented to me right now and I want to do something with it. I don't want to waste it.

So this is going to be for those of you who love the schedule, from the Type As in here or the detailed personalities... You're going to believe this next point is heretical, but I want you to begin to see time this way. **Every interruption to your schedule is an opportunity.** You're like, "No, no it's not because the stuff I have on the schedule is good stuff." Yes, it's good stuff, but we call it an interruption. We sometimes call our children an interruption. We call the co-workers who has just had a death in the family and would like to talk to us for a while, an interruption. "I've got work to get done; how long is this going to take?"

I have some friends in here that are great with interruptions. My mentor for a number of years, Gary Smalley, lived for the interruption. That was his life. He hated the schedule and he would take as much time as possible. I have other friends that are kind of painful to be around. It's exhausting being around you because we've got to catch up on some stuff or we're trying to have good fellowship and you're just... I know you've got something else to do and talking to me right now is wasting your time. Do you know what I do when I get around that uncomfortable person now? I give them the emoji thumbs up. Right in the middle of the conversation, when I can tell they have something to do... If they look at their watch one time, I give them the thumbs up and I back out of the conversation. You should try it sometime with your kids. Every interruption is an opportunity.

We thought we would put this idea of kairos, opportunities and special occasions, out there for us to think through the purposes of the church that we find in Matthew 22, Matthew 28 and Acts 2. We are passionate about these five purposes around here at Woodland Hills and we're going to just talk a little bit about them because I think the church has become good at... I'm not just talking about Woodland Hills, but the church in general has become good at scheduling ministry opportunities. But, we've got to get back to followers of Jesus being aware of opportunities because they're hitting us all day long.

Following Jesus leaves room in the schedule to seize opportunities of worship. You're here today worshipping. For some of you, that's in a box. "I don't need to worship Monday through Saturday because I did that at Woodland Hills." But there are opportunities and especially in the Ozarks. We have opportunities to worship and bring praise and declare our love for the Lord all the time.

On a very special date night, we wanted to walk around the Top of the Rock. If you've been down there around the circle, you see that beautiful new entrance going in. I was struck. We were getting there around sunset. Is there anything better than a Table Rock sunset? It's unbelievable. I pulled in and you have to pay the ten bucks to park there. They'll give it back to you if you eat something or get a glass of Diet Coke or something at the Buffalo Bar. When you pull in... Does Johnny Morris know how to position buildings and how to organize them? When you pull up to the gate, it's just right there. The lake, the mountain he built to make this thing look fantastic for us, and the sun is setting and I was struck. I had an opportunity to worship and I wanted to share it with the lady taking my money.

She's standing there to take my ten dollars. I started singing to her. I didn't say anything; I just started singing to her. I started in easy. I wasn't going to sing worship to a person I don't know, so I started with

country. I just started singing “Hunting, fishing, loving every day, that’s a prayer that a country boy prays.”

She goes, “That will be ten dollars.”

I said, “Do you know that song?”

She goes, “I don’t like country music.”

I went, “Okay... You’re fired! You can’t work for Johnny Morris and not like country music; you’re outta here.”

As we drove off, Amy goes, “I gotta give you points for trying.”

Are you struck by God’s love in your life throughout the day and you let the moment go by for you and your family, rather than stopping? Don’t just look at bedtime as this frustrating, “just get the little terrorists to bed, this is ridiculous,” routine. That’s chronos thinking. That’s “it’s eight o’clock; you should be in bed. I need me time.” This is how we get, but what if you take that opportunity as a time for worship. If you think about today’s idea of following Jesus and the message, it’s not about asking you to add more time; it’s asking you to make the most of the time you already have. So instead of bedtime being a miserable event, make it a time of worship. Take the time to pray. For some you, your number one takeaway from the message today will be, “We’re going to start praying together as a family at bedtime.” Continue it all throughout the day. Don’t allow scheduled times to rob you of opportunities throughout the day.

Following Jesus leaves room in the schedule to seize opportunities of fellowship. We’ve gotten good at this as well where we just schedule it. Amy and I have led five home groups over the last 20 years of ministry. We would get to the point where that was our time. It’s a great time of fellowship and we encourage you to get in a home group if you’re looking to plug in and find fellowship at Woodland Hills. But we would even get into that mentality of *we’ve got an hour and a half. Let’s get in there and fellowship and then we’ll move on with the rest of our week.* This is the problem with scheduling. It’s not that it’s a bad thing to do. You should schedule, but it often times robs us of the other moments of fellowship.

I’ve told you this before, but I’ll say it again. I find fellowship moments all throughout the week. We live in a town with tourists. Amy caught me years ago and she said, “I find that it’s easier for you to fellowship with tourists than it is with members from the church.” I denied it. She goes, “No, the kids and I are standing at the car and we look back and you’re talking to a couple from Nebraska. You’re hitting them on the shoulder, you’re high-fiving them. You’re hugging the lady, saying good-bye. But then you see a church member and your first thought it to figure out how to get away from them.” I denied it.

The difference is expectation. Don’t ruin moments of fellowship with expectation. When you meet someone that you enjoy being with and spending time with, seize that opportunity of fellowship without

going, “We should do this more often.” You're ruining it. You're sabotaging it. Take that moment of fellowship, enjoy it, soak it in, and then move on to the next moment of fellowship. It's funny to me how many times in town... And maybe this will end after this morning's illustration. I'm enjoying fellowship with you out at the Grand Village Mall or at The Landing and you ruin it by scheduling another moment of fellowship. That's where our brains go. We're having a great interaction, but, wow, let's get it on the calendar. Let's do this again tomorrow at nine! Noooo. We don't have to schedule it all the time. We can seize it.

Following Jesus leaves room in the schedule to seize opportunities of discipleship. I want to let some of the parents off the hook this morning because I wanted to be the parent that did discipleship at the kitchen table with Bibles open, whiteboards, markers. Isn't this how it works as a parent. We are going to study as a family, memorize as a family, talk about Revelation. We're going to do the whole line for Revelation and put Daniel with it. Then I realized this isn't the best way my kids will learn.

My son loves playing with Legos. When he was five and six, I had some of the best conversations with him about death. Or when he lost his grandpa, he didn't want to get involved in the emotional moments, but when he was playing Legos, he'd say, “Hey Dad, what happened to grandpa?” That's a moment. Don't let that moment get away. That's a moment to teach your kids about death. That's a moment to disciple your children.

For some, I know we want the structure of discipleship time and we should have it. For years, Amy and I did those little flash cards with our kids, teaching them the Bible verses and the main points and the text and all of that, but now, as they are 11 and 13, I realize a lot more of the discipleship moments are coming all throughout the day and, as a parent, I want to be ready for them. I want to make the most of the opportunities when they present themselves.

Following Jesus leaves room in the schedule to seize opportunities of ministry. These are some of my favorite calls. If you remember, Ted Burden used to share this all the time because he would handle our benevolence, helping families in our church and community. His favorite phone call that always cracked me up and we still get them today... They are folks calling because they just met someone with a need and they thought it would be great if the church would... Do you know what we want to say? “You are the church. You were right there!” The chance for us to go and replay that... It doesn't mean as much when we call later. The moment is there; make the most of that opportunity. I love when some of you call the church like when we were doing shoes and other things and you say “I know a family.” Some of you didn't want the vouchers and some of you did get the vouchers, but some of you said, “We're going to do for one, as a family, what we can't do for all. “

A guy told me this week, “I can't really meet the needs of 500 kids in Branson, but I can meet the need of one.” He's not looking at bringing it to the church and waiting for the scheduled time or the appointed time; this is it right here.

Following Jesus leaves room in the schedule to seize opportunities of Evangelism. This is a big one because I grew up in a church where we didn't seize opportunities of evangelism; we did it on Thursday nights at 7:00. How many of you know what I'm talking about? This is the problem. The problem, when

we over emphasize schedule and we under emphasize kairos, is that we are saying “We do soul-winning. We lead people to Jesus at 7:00 on Thursday night, door to door,” when the opportunities to lead people to Jesus are around you all day long. Is there anything wrong with going door to door? No. I found it to be awkward. Competing with the Mormons wasn’t something I really wanted to do. Or the Jehovah’s Witnesses. They had bikes! Then you’d knock on the door and the people would answer and you would say “If you were to die today, would you go to heaven or hell?” That’s a pretty blunt question to ask somebody before they’ve had their first cup of coffee. The opportunities are all around you and some of you, when you see that moment of someone seeking, that is an opportunity for you to share what you believe about the power of the name of Jesus.

This week, as I was flipping through the gospels... I love how the gospels lay out the ministry and the life of Jesus. I can’t share it all with you, but let me give you some examples. “As they were walking along the road...” This is one of the most common. This is how you saw Jesus doing ministry. “As Jesus went on from there...” So he left there, tons of opportunities to heal people, to proclaim the Kingdom, to disciple the disciples. But as they went on from there, people followed him. “As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them.” I would never be able to do this – exercise and teach at the same time. You find this in the life of Jesus. It was just all a part of who he was. “On the way, he asked them...” He would ask them great questions and they would have ministry time, discipleship time, fellowship time, worship time all along the way. “As he went along...”

I like this one. I found some that were culturally relevant to Branson. “One day as Jesus was standing by the lake.” That’s a biblical reason to get a boat. Now this one, I don’t want you to do. When Jesus was teaching, a woman called out to him in the middle of a sermon. “As Jesus was saying these things, a woman called out.” We don’t want you taking that opportunity, okay.

But, what if we put this into context right here. For some of you, this is what following Jesus should mean for you this week. “As Mike went into Country Mart...” The opportunities were all around him and will be all around him. “As Caitlyn walked down the hall at school...” The opportunities are everywhere. “As Dad tucked his kids in at night...” Is this stuff you’re already doing? Is this part of your everyday, ordinary life? “As Mom asked the kids on the way to school...” Some of you have a translation that says “redeem the time.” This is redeeming the time. This is making the most of the opportunity. How about this one. This will be tomorrow morning at work for some of you. “As Dave’s friend asked him about his weekend...”

This has been a fantastic week at Woodland Hills Family Church because we’ve had so much going on and 57 baptisms was the headline story. When friends would ask me if there was anything new in my world... Let me tell you about the dads. That probably got me the most all week. The dad’s baptizing their children; it just doesn’t get any better than that. The dads who have led their children to the Lord now baptizing them, holding them, hugging them.

Here’s the takeaway for us this morning. What would happen this week if we spent more time looking for opportunities and less time creating them? That’s why we gave you this card on your way in. We put those five purposes on this card. Our challenge to you is to maybe find one opportunity. For some of you who love lists, you’re like, “Well, he’s given me five; that means I have to do five and I will start

with worship.” What’s funny is, with your personality, the first opportunity will be discipleship, but you won’t accept it until you’ve accomplished worship and fellowship. The list is not in order. If you put this on your calendar, I will punch you in the face with the love of Jesus in my heart as I do it, but I am going to knock you out. You’re looking for these and instead of thinking you have to get a good moment on Instagram... I just encourage you that you don’t need to put any of this on social media. We’re too busy creating moments when we need to be watching out for them.

I have something called the dad tone. Does anybody know what the dad tone is? The dads are going, “Yeah, I know what the dad tone is. I used it this morning; it’s the only reason we got here on time.” I used it on Friday night. It was a first for me. Friday night, I was doing comedy at a church in Memphis, Tennessee. It was a large church. The pastor introduced me and I came up on stage. As I came up on stage, I was going in for the obligatory hug. Anybody know what I’m talking about? You hug the pastor who introduced you. As I went in for the hug, a guy jumped in between us. I heard him whisper in the pastor’s ear, “A man just entered the building with a shot gun.” My heart stopped.

My immediate thought is Corynn who is sitting at the book table out in the lobby. I jumped down off the stage and I ran back there. As I was walking towards her, probably the best dad tone in my life came out. I said, “Corynn Mae, come here now.” The “now” was deep and authoritative. It sounded like Chuck Swindoll, if you know what I’m talking about. Corynn popped up and came right over to me. I grabbed her by the arm and walked her down to the front row.

For fifteen minutes, we didn’t know what was going on. This was the hardest part. The pastor is asking that no one leave. The reason I didn’t do this illustration at the beginning of the message is because I would have lost you for the rest of the message. What was hard was that during this comedy event, the children were in another part of the building. Now it is Memphis, and Memphis and Branson... I would say there were maybe 100 conceal and carry permits in the room. Dads jumped up and we were ready to go to war. The pastor was trying to go through all this...

Fifteen minutes later, we find out that the school that is attached to the church is practicing for a play called *The Wild West*. The teenager, not really thinking, walked into the building with a fake double barrel shot gun. We were relieved, but I looked out and the moms were still sobbing, wanting to go see their children. I was standing up there with the pastor. He had been praying. About 50 dads ignored the pastor’s advice and took off. I said, “We’re going to start here in a minute.” And I got nothing. My solution is you stand behind the biggest guy. Everybody is shaking because we think that we are in an active shooter situation.

The pastor looked at me, I kid you not, and I looked at him after it was all done and I said “Do we want to take five to ten minutes to calm down.”

He goes, “No, I think you should go ahead and get started.”

So I start with “A Baptist, a Presbyterian, and a Catholic walk into a bar...”

Moms were still crying. It took ten minutes to get everybody back. The Memphis Police were fantastic. Over 30 Memphis Police Officers responded to the scene. And we're grateful this kid is still alive.

We didn't sleep much that night. I can't explain it to you. Some of you right now are figuring out your plan if that were to happen to you. The security team is like, "Man, we got the highlight illustration this morning. This is awesome." It was the first time I was ever involved in something like that. I got in the car and I sat down with Corynn and I said, "Corynn, you responded so well. You knew it was my dad tone. And when I said 'Corynn, come here...'" Now I don't know what your kids do, but a lot of times, when I make a request of my children, I get "Why?" "What's going on?" "Where are we going?" "How long will we be there?" "Will I be coming back out here?" "Let me gather up my stuff. I'll be with you in a second, dad." I said to Corynn, "You did none of that. You heard my dad tone and you responded immediately. Way to go!"

My encouragement for you today is this week, when the Holy Spirit prompts you with an opportunity, don't ask "Why? Let me call Ted, he'll take care of this. Let's get a staff member on it. Let's call Denise." I can call Denise when opportunities present themselves, but you cannot. Just listen to the Holy Spirit's work in your life. When he calls out an opportunity of worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, evangelism, say yes and seize it at that very moment.

Father, it's in the name of Jesus that we thank you. I thank you for our security team here who is watching over us every week and guarding the children and our church. We're grateful for them and the ministry you've called them to here at our church.

We're grateful for the opportunities you give us every single day in our lives. We just don't want to run past them anymore to our next scheduled event. We know we have a schedule, we have school, we have work, we have meals, we have sports... We have so much that is on the clock. May we take all of that that is on the clock and look for the opportunities as we fulfill those errands and those tasks and that work assignment and the next assignment from school. As we walk down the hall tomorrow at school, may it have a different feel for us. As we go to work tomorrow, may it have a different feel for us. May we be looking for the opportunities all around us. May we see them as special occasions to do your work.

It's in the name of Jesus that everyone agreed and said... Amen.