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## Lessons Learned

### Part 3 – Make the Most

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We're going to finish up a series today called *Lessons Learned*. A few weeks back, Ted said, "Hey, we're going to do a series called *Lessons Learned* and I want you to grab from Ecclesiastes a passage you want to share just kind of how God used the pandemic to teach you some things," and I love it. When he asked me that, I started thinking of when Ted, Joe White, and I used to travel about ten years ago. We used to do a deal called Men and the Cross where we would travel all over the nation and do these men's events with fathers and sons and just encourage them to be the leaders of their home and the disciple their sons.

I was turning 30 so I started asking all these speakers and authors and business owners, people who were part of these events, this question: "What do you know now that you wish you knew when you were 30?" I was trying to learn lessons from them. Then, ten years later, I'm 40 and I'm looking back at the same things they shared with me.

I compiled this list of like 100 answers from CEOs, guys from the Forbes 100 list, division one coaches, authors, pastors, CFOs, just a really good, compiled list of advice. Then I narrowed it down to things that were synonymous things or that I just thought were really poignant. Here are some good lessons that I want to share with you guys. This is a list of 15 things. Lessons learned from people that have lived life much longer than I have.

1. The most important person you can lead is yourself.
2. Nothing is more valuable than relationships. Especially our relationship with Jesus. Amen?
3. Maximize the moments with your children. I'm actually going to talk about that a little bit today.
4. Listen. You will never find the pulse of your family or your organization if you don't learn to listen.
5. Worrying is as effective as trying to solve an algebra problem while chewing bubble gum. Rid yourself of worry.
6. Become a better steward of your financial resources through investments and wise decision making. The older you get, the more you'll want to give away, and being able to do so begins with the financial decisions you make today.
7. Balance. The words *no* and *not now* are empowering when accompanied with wisdom.
8. Spend time reading and receiving the truth everyday because the world will only lie to you the rest of the day.
9. Saying I'm sorry, when spoken from a genuine heart, has great healing power.

10. Character should always trump talent. This was ten years ago, so don't think this has anything to do with today.
11. Retreat and rest. If ships don't come back to a harbor, they'll eventually sink. You guys have seen those motivational posts that just say, "Ships weren't made for the harbor." You're right; they were meant to sail, but if they don't eventually come back to the harbor... If we don't come and retreat and rest at Jesus' feet and we're going all week... If we don't come here and retreat and rest, we'll eventually sink.
12. Don't stop learning; you are not as smart as you think you are.
13. Learn to value patience. We have a lot of those opportunities with roundabouts in this town, don't we? You're likely to learn more while you wait.
14. Time management, without it, time will control you.
15. Develop authentic and deep relationships with men and women who will sharpen you and see through you.

Those were some really good lessons applied for me in the last decade, and they've held true and they still hold true as I go into this next decade of living.

Today's title is *Make the Most*. I'm keenly aware of everything that is going on in our culture and everything that is going on around us. And the worry and the anxiety and all that stuff that is filling this place today and our online viewers as well. I'll be honest, I can go there. I got this amazing text from a friend this week that I have to share with your guys. It is so powerful on the heels of the week we've just been through as a country. Here's the text:

*Don't feel sorry for or fear for your kids because the world they're going to grow up in is not exactly what it was for you. God created them and called them for the exact moment in time that they are in. Their life wasn't a coincidence or an accident. Raise them up to know the power they walk in as children of God. Train them up in the authority of his Word. Teach them to walk in faith knowing that God is in control. Empower them to know that they can change the world. Don't teach them to be fearful and disheartened by the state of the world, but hopeful that they can do something about it.*

*Every person in all of history has been placed in the time that they were in because of God's sovereign plan. He knew Daniel could handle the lion's den. He knew David could handle Goliath. He knew Esther could handle Haman. He knew Peter could handle persecution. He knows that your child can handle whatever challenge they face in their life. He created them specifically for it.*

*Don't be scared for your children but be honored that God chose you to parent the generation that is facing the biggest challenges of our lifetime. Rise up to the challenge. Raise Daniels, Davids, Esthers, and Peters. God isn't scratching his head wondering what he's going to do with the mess of a world. He has an army he is raising up to drive back the darkness and make Him known all over the earth. Don't let your fear steal the greatness God placed on them. I know it's hard to imagine them as anything besides our sweet little babies, and we just want to protect them from anything that could ever be hard on them, but they were born for such a time as this.*

Amen? So, we've been going through these lessons learned. I think we like to take quotes and attribute them to more popular people we know of at the time so it sounds more credible, but this was not a Tim Tebow quote, contrary to what people try to say. This was actually from Ralph Abernathy, who is an activist and a Christian. He said this: *"I don't know what the future may hold, but I know who holds the future."* I think in that reality, we can find great solace. I know the world is crazy, but it has never not been crazy. You think it was easy to be a Christian in Rome, post Jesus' days? And God is going to use everything and anything to get our heart and he is in control. He has never not been on the throne. He is still on the throne and he will continually be on the throne.

How many of you know who this is a picture of? Do we have any Vietnam war vets in the room today? Did anybody in here serve in Vietnam? Thank you so much for your service. This is actually Admiral James Stockdale. James Stockdale was actually a VP candidate with Ross Perot a few years back. Before that, he served in Vietnam. He was one of the most recognized and accredited naval officers of our time. He has about every award and purple heart and medal of honor you can imagine. He is highly revered in naval circles.

Admiral Stockdale was shot down on September 9, 1965 in Vietnam where he would be a prisoner of war for the next seven and a half years. While he was a prisoner, the Vietnamese would try to use him as propaganda. When he knew this was about to happen, he would beat his face up so badly or he cut himself or mar himself so that he couldn't be used for their agenda. He was very brave.

Jim Collins, who wrote the book, *Good to Great*, which I just finished reading, interviewed Admiral Stockdale a few years ago and asked him why he survived prison camp and so many other people didn't. He said it was a difference of this: "So many people that I was a prisoner of war with would say, 'Hey, we're going to get out by Christmas.' And then they would say, 'We're going to get out by Easter.' And then Easter would come and they still wouldn't be out and then they would say, 'We're going to get out by thanksgiving.' And then thanksgiving would come and they still wouldn't be out. And then it would be Christmas again and they would die of a broken heart. They would lose hope.

So, when Jim Collins interviewed him, he came to develop what is known as the Stockdale Paradox of what he was explaining of why he was able to survive seven and a half years in a prison camp and why so many other people that were with him were not able to survive. His focus was different. So, this is, in essence, what the Stockdale Paradox was.

This is very important lesson. You must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end, which you can never afford to lose, with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality whatever they might be.

We're doing this with the Corona Virus and the pandemic and politics. "It's going to be done by Christmas." "Everything is going to be back to normal by Easter." "Everything is going to be back to normal by the summer." And when it gets there and it's not, we just stay more anxious and more fearful. God just wants us to live in the moment. Admiral Stockdale would tell you he went through seven and a half years of H-E double hockey sticks because he lived in the moment.

He realized he had faith that he was going to get through it, but he was also willing to confront the facts and live there in faith rather than if this just gets here, if this just gets here... God hasn't promised you and me tomorrow. I don't know that I'm going to wake up tomorrow. I might. He promised me today. That's why it's called the present; it's a gift of today. He has given all of you and me today. We get to live in today. You don't need to worry about tomorrow. We don't need to worry about what's on the horizon.

Yes, I think we should be planners. Do you know how to get God to laugh? Tell him your plans. Do you know the biggest joke of 2020? It was a day planner. How did that work for you? That was the biggest waste of money any of us had last year. We just need to realize we can maximize today, we have this moment. That's why the title of this final part of the series is *Make the Most* of the moments God gives you.

Do any of you know what this number is? Any guesses. That's a record. 100,825, 272,852–1. Does anybody know what that record is? Do you want to take a stab at it? That's death. That's approximately how many people have lived. When I asked Katie this when we were setting out notes up before the services, she goes, COVID deaths? Katie, you've been watching too much CNN, girl. That's definitely not the COVID deaths. That's approximately how many people have lived on earth and died.

So, what's the one? Come on, you're in charge. What's the one? Jesus. Thank you, that's the one – it's Jesus. He's the only one that has defeated death. So, not to be a pessimist, but every single one of you in here is going to die. Unless Jesus comes back, which please Lord Jesus come back. But every one of us in here is going to die. But what's great about that one is if all of us are going to die – and death is inevitable, it's knocking on all of our doors – the sting of death is gone. Jesus has taken it. He tasted the sting of death so that you and I don't have to.

But if this is a reality, if this is death's record and we all know it, what are we living for? Are we living for 401ks, are we living for a big house, are we living for to accumulate materials? Billy Graham say he's never seen this in his entire life and neither have I (a picture of a hearse pulling a U-Haul trailer). I haven't seen that, have you?

Can you imagine walking to the pearly gates, seeing Jesus at the throne of God, and you're like, "Hold on Jesus, let me get all my stuff out of my U-Haul real quick." I've never seen it and it's crazy that so much of our worry and so much of our anxiety and so much of what's going on is really protecting our money and our resources and our taxes and everything else. You ain't taking it with you. Naked you came into this world and naked you're going home. That's what the scripture says. You ain't bringing anything with you. But your body will be glorified, so be encouraged.

How about this number? What about this cash number - \$86,400? Does anybody know? If I gave you \$86,400 when you woke up and I said, "This is yours, but whatever you don't spend by the end of the day does not carry over. You're not going to get it back. You don't get to invest it. What ever you spend is yours and whatever you don't spend all comes back to me. But when you wake up tomorrow morning, I'm going to write you another check of \$86,400 and whatever you choose to spend, you get to spend. And whatever you don't spend, I get back."

Every single one of you knuckleheads in here would spend every last penny of that \$86,400. Can I get an amen? You ain't giving me anything back. There's no way.

That number, 86,400, represents seconds in a day. Every single one of you in here has 86,400 seconds every single day. The hourglass turns over, time starts going. The next day, you don't get any of those seconds back. You don't get any of those moments back.

So, when Ted asked me what Corona has done for me, what is the lesson I've learned, it's moments. I go, go, go. I don't sit still very well at all. The family got to go to Disney World before Christmas break. We were down there, and my wife was videoing stuff. She showed me a video of myself and I was astounded. I leave them in the dust all the time on accident. We've got to hit Thunder Mountain, we've got to hit Space Mountain, we got to hit Splash Mountain. I'm just bing, bing, bing. I just go fast. I don't sit still very well. I don't speak very slowly either. I'm just wired that way.

But Corona slowed me down a ton. And what God taught in that lesson, in this season is to maximize the moments with my two boys. Maximize those moments with my wife. Sit in this season. Sit in this moment. It was like a beautiful sabbatical that I didn't know I needed. Everything slowed down for me and I was just sitting in the moments with my kids and my wife and God was teaching me, "I give you those moments all the time, even when things are normal in our world and there isn't a pandemic, and you miss them all the time. But guess what? I have so much grace and so much love for you I'm going to keep giving you moments every single day."

And he gives them to every single one of you. He gives you moments. Every single day, he is giving you moments. He's giving you moments at the restaurant with your waiter or waitress. He gives you moments at Target or Walmart when you go through the checkout stand and there is someone you can encourage. He gives you moments with your spouse. He given you moments with your grandkids. He gives you moments with your kids. He gives you moments with your peers and co-workers. He given you moments every single day and we get so distracted and we miss these moments. And we don't get the opportunity to walk into them because of our phones or football games or different things and we miss them.

Ted and I have been walking with a married couple through some things, and Ted has been teaching me a lot. He showed me this thing on the Gottman Institute. The Gottman Institute talks about "bid for connection." All day long, spouses make bids for connection. For example, I could be watching a football game and my wife could want to come show me something from one the Instagram follower girls, trendy ladies that she follows on Instagram. And in that moment, she's making a bid for connection. I can ignore that bid for connection and keep watching the football game or I can hit mute on the football game, turn to her and engage in that bid for connection at that moment. That's a moment God has given me with my spouse.

Do you know what's crazy? The Gottman Institute says marriages don't fail because of infidelity and money as much as they fail from disconnection. That's because over time, spouses keep missing those bids for connection. And your spouses are giving you a bid for connection all the time.

“Hey, sweetie, can I tell you how work went today?”

“Uh, maybe later; I’m busy right now.”

“You're busy doing what?”

“Uh, you know, the football game is on.”

So, you miss these bids for connection. I call them moments, these divine moments that God gives us throughout the day.

About a week ago, I was checking out at Walmart. Sweet John is a retired war vet. He’s semi-retired because obviously he’s not fully retired if he’s working at Walmart. He’s checking me out and the guy in front of him was grumpy. I thought, *You know what? God has given me a moment right now to speak life and love into John’s life. That’s a moment. Now, I could be like most of us that go through the check stand and look at my phone the whole time and completely miss a moment God has for me with Mr. John at Walmart. But you know what? God, this is a moment.*

So, we got into a good conversation. I encouraged him, I loved on him. He had a smile on his face when I left. It was a great interaction. All of the sudden his demeanor changed. Now I could have chosen not to walk in that moment like several of us do all the time. But God keeps giving us these moments. And you’ll wake up tomorrow and you’ll get another 86,400 seconds. What are you going to do with it? If you wake up tomorrow. I don’t want to sound pessimistic, but the reality is none of us are promised tomorrow. Right here today, in this church, worshiping Jesus, which is a gift from God, we get to maximize that.

The Ecclesiastes passage that ties into maximizing moments is Ecclesiastes 9: 7-9. **7 Go, eat your bread with joy...** The word *enjoy* literally means to be in joy. Remember, when your source of joy is Jesus, nobody can rob you of your joy. When your source of joy is your work or your success and your boss gets mad at you, your joy is going to be robbed. When your source of joy is your spouse and you get in a fight, your joy is going to be robbed. When your source of joy is your kids and they start making foolish decisions, your joy is going to be robbed.

But when your source of joy is Jesus, nobody can take that from you. He has promised. He sealed you. You are his. The shepherd has not allowed his sheep to be lost. ...**and drink your wine with a merry heart...** Sorry for all my legalistic friends. God is saying this, not me. You can have a glass of wine. Don’t get drunk. Jesus’ first miracle was turning water into wine to celebrate a wedding. It’s a celebratory thing. He’s saying celebrate life. Don’t walk in licentiousness like, “I’m not under the law; I’m under the grace.” No. That leads to drunkenness. Be wise. No legalism, no licentiousness; the gospel. Celebrate life. Regardless of the predicament we see ourselves in now, celebrate life.

The Donyes have seven pillars. They are on our wall. We walk through each pillar every night at the dinner table. One of those seven pillars is table. So, for us... And this happened before the pandemic. We sit down at the dinner table as a family every night. Cell phones aside, no TV on, no Nintendo

switches, nothing. We sit down at the table, we go through the table, highs and lows. And then we talk about one of our seven pillars. Because we honor the table, we laugh, we joke. Our six-year-old says some pretty off the wall things that we all laugh at. We have an enjoyable time. We celebrate family, we celebrate that moment that we get, and we get technology away. ...**for God has already approved what you do.**

Here's the problem. **The ability to enjoy the moment is often hijacked by outside distractions.** All week long, God has given you and me moments. All week long. He'll give you a moment when you leave church here today. He'll give you a moment with a person or an individual. He'll give you moments continually. And we miss them. He'll give you a moment with your spouse. He'll give you a moment with a stranger. In that opportunity, you either can step into that moment or you're going to retreat. Technology has given us a shield or a wall to where we are so easily able to retreat from stepping into those moments. So many times you have no idea how much you're going to enjoy that moment if you would step into it, rather than allowing distractions to hijack them.

**8 Let your garments be always white.** That color white is a celebratory thing. It's to celebrate weddings. So, he is saying, "Celebrate life. I gave you this gift of life, celebrate it. Don't live in despair. Celebrate life." **Let not oil be lacking on your head.** You guys know Psalm 23, the Lord is my shepherd, he anoints my head with oil. That's a powerful passage when it says, "Let not oil be lacking on your head."

I don't know if you're aware that sheep... So, here's a picture of a sheep. Sheep are really dumb. They're dumb animals. By the way, we're all sheep. That's just reality. The Bible says we are sheep and sheep are dumb. So, the reason a shepherd would anoint a sheep's head with oil is because there would be flies and maggots and infestations and they would plant things in their nose and then worms would come out. A sheep can't scratch its head like a dog does. It's can't scratch its nose. So, what a sheep would do, when they would get these itches so badly, is they would literally bang their head against rocks or a wall because it was so annoying. It would kill some sheep if these infestations got so bad. So, a shepherd would put oil on a sheep as a protection from these insects and things.

So, when you hear anoint your head with oil, it means protect yourself in the Lord. Stop hitting your head against the wall thinking you've got to figure everything out. The great Shepherd already has it all figure out. And he's not surprised by any of this. He's not sitting being like, "On my gosh! How did that happen? Oh my gosh, they stormed the capitol! How did that happen? How did he become president?" He's God! He's not surprised by any of this. Anoint your head with oil and sit in that.

Do you know where the phrase "they pull the wool over their eyes" comes from? It comes from the sheep. What would happen at night is the shepherd would allow these sheep to come into the pen and they would run their fingers through the sheep's wool to make sure there weren't any ticks or mites or anything that would be detrimental to their sheep. They would put some oil on them. But when their wool would get so long, sometimes they would miss it and the sheep would end up dying. We need to not try to pull the wool over anyone's eyes and continue to let the great shepherd to anoint us with his oil.

It goes on to say in Ecclesiastes 9, **9 Enjoy life with the wife whom you love...** Fellas, this terminology should never be in your mouth: "The old ball and chain..." No, she's not. She's your better half. Stephanie is my better half. She's not the ball and chain. Do you know whose idea marriage was? It wasn't ours. It was God's idea. He performed the first marriage. Why? So that they could enjoy everything but one thing together and they didn't listen and now we're all in the trouble. But he said, "Enjoy everything. I want you guys to be together and I want you to enjoy it together. I want you to celebrate together. I want you to enjoy all this together."

He gives you a wife, yes, for your holiness, but yes, for your happiness. And if you're missing that, you're missing what God blessed you with. I know that you're different and you have disagreements, good, but you can love each other and enjoy life in the midst of that, right? You should enjoy life together. We're about to jump into a series in a couple of weeks on dating and marriage and the whole bit. I'm so excited the direction they are going with it, so buckle up. Especially if you feel, right now, in this season... Winter is a really tough season sometimes for married couples. After the holidays and in laws and everything, there is just tension, and tension builds up. But guess what? God wants you to enjoy the moments you have with your spouse today. Be in that moment. You don't have to worry about work. Work is tomorrow. Today, you get to enjoy moments with your spouse.

**...all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun.** Toil under the sun... Vanity, right? Back to the U-Haul. You're toiling for what? I've been able to pray with some people at their bedside when they are about to pass away. Every person I've prayed with that's about to pass away has never... Never once has anybody that's about to take their last breath in that hospital ever told me, "I wish I would have accumulated more stuff." "I wish I would have made more money." "Hey, will you go get me my trophies?" "Will you go get me my awards?" "Will you go get me my plaques."

Do you know what they all want? They want their loved ones. They want the people that they care about. They want the people they made memories with. They want to share stories. They want to relive those moments they have. Moments over materials. So, if that's the way 100 billion plus and one live and you know that you go to your death bed not wanting any materials, but just the people that matter the most to you, then why won't you maximize those moments you have with those people today, rather than worrying about "Oh my gosh, am I going to get taxed? Oh my gosh what's going to happen?" God's in control. You don't need to worry about that.

James 4: 14 says, **What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.** Think about that word picture. You a mist or a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes. All of our clocks are ticking and none of us in here know when we are going to take our last breath. I pray that all of you in here know Jesus so that when you do taste your last breath, you don't have to taste the sting of death. David called it a fleeting shadow. It's short, it's quick. Some of you are like, "Yep, I'm 80. I blinked and I got here, and I don't know how." And when we get to 80 or 90, we think *well, I'm done*. No, you're not.

I think I'm in half time. I'm 40 so I'm about at halftime. I'm getting a recharge talk. I'm in the middle, I'm in the locker room, I'm getting charged up for the second half to win this game.

If you are 80 or 90, that's the best part of the game. That's the last second shot. That's the Hail Mary. That's the homerun walk off in the bottom of the ninth. He's not done with you. It's the best part of the game. Most of you don't even tune in until then. That's true, you don't need to watch all that other stuff. That's the best part of the game. God still has you here for a reason. He's going to do something with you. Life is a mist and a vapor, and it's gone.

Matthew 6 says, **34 "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.**

Dr. Barbash, psychology doctor, said this, "Worrying is one of the most futile or purposeless things that a person can do."

Ephesians 5 says, **15 Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise...** I think that as Christians, we too often ask the question is it right or wrong? We need to ask the question is it wise? Is it right or wrong to respond to somebody on social media right now? I don't know if it's wise. Is it right or wrong to engage in that toxic social media conversation? I don't know if it's wise. So, how about we stop asking if it's right or wrong in our life and we start leading out with is it wise? Is it the wise thing to do? **16 making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.** So, don't be foolish, make the wise decision and make the most of the time he has given you.

The time here, you guys are probably thinking it's Chronos. Chronos time is 60 minutes in an hour, 24 hours in a day, seven days in a week, 4 weeks in month, 12 months in a year, 10 years in decade. That's not what the word *time* means here. There wasn't even a clock when Paul wrote this. That's not the time he's talking about at all. The time in that text in Ephesians is actually the time Kairos, which literally means moments. So, Paul is saying make the best use of the moments.

So, there are three types of people in here. There are the future oriented where they are worried. "Oh my goodness, our country is going to h in a handbasket. What are we going to do?" There are people who are past oriented that live in shame or guilt or past successes or joys and they can't control the past. And then there are moment-oriented people that learn to live in the moment, knowing that they can't control this, they can't change this, so they are going to maximize this, but be wise stewards of this.

So, you are either future oriented, past oriented, or moment oriented. God calls all of us to be moment oriented. Make the best use of the Kairos, the moments he gives you. And he's going to keep giving you and me moments every single day, even though we blow it. I've blown plenty of moments in my life where I could have stepped into an apology, where I could have stepped in to share Jesus with somebody on the plane, where I could have encouraged or changed somebody's life, where I could have tipped a waitress more to lighten up their day. There are so many moments that God has given you that are blown, but he so full of grace for you and me, he's going to give us more moments today.

You don't have to worry what's going to happen in the next four years in this country. You get to live in today. Guess what? Scripture says, in Psalm 139, that He has gone before you. He has hemmed you in,

behind and before. So, if you do get to wake up tomorrow, God's there with 86,400 seconds for you to spend, and to make the most of every single moment that he gives you because moments are a gift from God. What we do with those moments is our gift back to God. So, you don't have to figure out the future, you just get an opportunity and a blessing to walk in the moments he has for you today. In this life it's a mist, it's a fleet shadow, a vapor. He says, make the most of these moments. In this crazy pandemic, maximize these moments.

In the craziness of this world around us, maximize the moments we are in today and watch what happens. Test me on this. watch what happens when you step into a moment that God has for you and how it impacts somebody's life, how it changes somebody's day, how you are walking out the gospel of Jesus Christ into someone's life. Watch what happens when you maximize that moment.

God, thank you so much that you are in control, that you are on the throne, that you will never cease to be on that throne. We love, we thank you. I pray for this body of believers that they too would walk in those moments that you have for them today. Whatever it be, whatever interaction, whatever phone call, whatever text, may they make the most of that Kairos, that opportunity waiting for them.

Thank you for your unrelenting grace, for continually giving us those moments. We pray for this country, we pray for this church, we pray for the entire world. We trust that it's in your hands.

In the matchless and mighty name of Jesus we pray, and all God's people said... Amen.