

PRIORITIZING MY LIFE

Wednesday night while we were sitting around the dinner table, I asked the kiddos, "How many of you like video games?"

Jace quickly raised his hand with excitement. No comment was needed. His face said it all.

Braelyn said, "it's in the middle." (She prefers kids' YouTube . . . yes, that's a thing).

Cadence said, "Hallelujah. Sign me in."

Ainsley ignored me as usual (just kidding).

(*It was at this point I realized we're rocking it as parents.*)

I told the kiddos what I was preaching on today and asked, "What could be some dangers from watching too much television or playing games?"

Cadence: "It could hurt your eyes." (*That one never gets old*).

Braelyn: "You need to spend more time with your family."

Jace: "It could take you away from worshipping God."

Cadence: "Sometimes in the day it would be good to take a break and study God's word."

We've never had this specific conversation with the kids, but they get it without help.

Proverbs 7:1–3 "My son, keep my words and treasure up my commandments with you; keep my commandments and live; keep my teaching as the apple of your eye; bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart."

As sons, we need to listen to our Father. When you read this through a 2021 lens, it reads a bit differently. Especially those of you enjoying your apple products. Phones, tablets, computers, t.v.'s, etc. All sorts of stuff out there. Gaming consoles, etc. Whether you're young or old. Our kiddos have a tablet. If we're not careful, they win our heart. The world says, "you're addicted." The Father doesn't call it addiction. He calls them our gods if we're not careful. Our idols. When you turn to other gods, He considers it spiritual adultery. Serious stuff. Needless to say - we don't want to fall into that category.

Recently one of you asked if I could give some words of encouragement concerning the place of entertainment in our lives. Listen, as the kiddos pointed out - there are dangers to it all. They can also cause frustration. It's annoying when you see that parent at the park glued to their phone as their kids are doing who knows what. It tests my patience when I'm trying to enjoy conversation with someone or I'm in a group - you know that person who must be bored with everyone, because they almost never look up from their phone. Yes, I could go on and on. So could you. But, that wouldn't help anyone.

I dare say that we could all reevaluate how much time we give to these devices. The concerns are legitimate. They really can become our gods. However, I'm trying to be fair. I don't want to be hypocritical. I also don't want to blow things out of proportion. Is it wrong to have some downtime? Christians had downtime 2,000 years ago. Their lives and jobs, in fact, were many times slower paced than ours (farming, fishing, shepherding, etc.). They enjoyed life. They had celebrated. Solomon encourages one to enjoy life - to be joyful and merry. Zechariah gives a picture of old men and women with their staff's, sitting around as children play in the streets: *"Thus says the Lord of hosts: Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with staff in hand because of great age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets."* (**Zechariah 8:4–5**). Some of the greatest memories I have as a boy are playing with

my friends in the street. Or hanging out with my brothers. Yes, even playing a little Nintendo. Maybe not always a little Nintendo. Sometimes a lot. David would save his money from mowing and ask dad to buy games when he traveled to Lubbock. The goods would arrive and the boys would disappear, not to be seen for several hours. Sweet Saturdays. Did we do that all the time? No. There was a time and a place. We've got to use some common sense. We also have to realize that some people are more sensitive than others regarding this topic. We have to make sure that our personal standards are not confused with God's.

- I'd personally like to add that a fair concern is one of isolation: I knew how to play by myself and it seems good to know how to do that, but we seem to be isolating ourselves more and more. This has resulted in such practical concerns: our ability to communicate, social interactions and just over all depression. We don't look at a hermit and think, "yeah, that guy has it figured out." People seem to be feeling more and more alone and fight depression and anxiety. Wonder if that has to do with our culture? Not only can you get yourself in trouble because of the temptations out there, but be careful not to pull away too much from others. Jesus wants us in the world - being a light to others. Interaction is normal and expected.

So, having said all of that, it seems good to encourage one another by considering the time and talents given to us by God. Isn't that the real fear? Wasting of time? Putting too much emphasis on entertainment and not enough towards growing spiritually? We don't want to be wordy deep, but spiritually shallow. We shouldn't want to spend too much time on anything if it distracts us from God. That includes things that aren't wrong: watching a movie, playing a game, looking at YouTube, or even spending too much time at work . . . At the end of the day . . . what did I do with my life?

- Do we remember that our time, ultimately, is not our own?
- Do we remember that our main purpose is to serve God and our neighbor?
- Do we want to grow closer to Him? To know Him more deeply?

Not trying to say, "Look how much time gave to study and helping others!" He was a single man - chosen by God to be an apostle. Not saying, "Look at Jesus - three years purely dedicated to helping others . . . what are you doing?" Sometimes, even asking a great question like "what would Jesus do?" needs a little context. The apostles dropped what they were doing to follow Jesus - He's not asked you to quit your job, leave your wife and kiddos for a while to preach the gospel. We're talking about your life - what's going on in your neck of the wood. We're looking to Lydia for most of us, not Luke. Dorcas, not David. Priscilla, not Peter.

Priorities

- **John 9:1-5** As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. We must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."
 - There's a time to talk and ask questions. There's a time to work.
- **John 11:5-10** Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, He stayed two days longer in the place where He was. Then after this He said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." The disciples said to Him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You, and are You going there again?" Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him."
 - Mary and Martha believed Jesus would make time for them.
 - Jesus taught about priorities. He encouraged others to count the cost and figure out what matters most. Following Him and His will is always the answer.

Opportunities

Ephesians 5:1-2 "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

Ephesians 5:15-17 "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is."

- How do you know His will? "*I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*" **Romans 12:1-2**
- Make good use of technology. Great tools for adults and kids.
 - Spiritually themed movies. Short bible stories for your children. Not a replacement, but they can help!
- You'll never regret asking others over for some bible study.
 - Wednesday morning, when I get up, I'm already excited about our Wednesday night study at the house. Opening up God's word in your home with people who want to grow - you don't finish a night like that and think, "I regret it." Joel Fontenot recently gave me permission to mention this, but he was recently in a funk for a couple of days. Then he got together with some brethren from the area (they do dinner and study afterwards). He said it was so uplifting and completely changed his mood. He was recharged and out of the funk. This is what we're talking about.
- His will is to serve. Remember Jesus' parable of the talents in **Matthew 25**? He then goes on to discuss those who do good to His brothers and sister in need.
 - **James 2:14-17** What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.
 - **Hebrews 10:24-25** And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.
 - We don't need entertainment every night, do we? Is there someone in need? Could we make a visit? I know the majority of you have to wait until you're off work, but it's good now and then to make that sacrifice and visit those in need or encourage the fainthearted.
 - Even if there isn't a need, there's nothing better than giving us some television time to have brethren over to spend a meal. Give your home the gift of brethren. Listen, we're moving to be closer to a good chunk of you - that's how much it means to our family.
 - I really do believe that part of the challenge is that we're so private these days. We like our space, but there's some major cons that come with that mentality. Being around one another encourages us and reminds us what we're all about.
- So, just get busy?
 - Not saying that either. Sometimes we think that because we're busy we're growing. That's not necessarily true at all. In fact, you can be too busy - there's a time for rest. Jesus did that.
 - We're saying: look at your life and balance it out. Don't go too far either way. Use some good judgement and reach out to someone if you need some outside perspective.