

Key Scripture:

Proverbs 22:6 (NLT)

6 Direct your children onto the right path,

and when they are older, they will not leave it.

2 Timothy 1:5 (NLT)

5 I remember your genuine faith, for you share the faith that first filled your grandmother Lois and your mother, Eunice. And I know that same faith continues strong in you.

Luke 10:38–42 (NLT)

38 As Jesus and the disciples continued on their way to Jerusalem, they came to a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. 39 Her sister, Mary, sat at the Lord's feet, listening to what he taught. 40 But Martha was distracted by the big dinner she was preparing. She came to Jesus and said, "Lord, doesn't it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me." 41 But the Lord said to her, "My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! 42 There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her."

Ephesians 5:15–16 (NLT)

15 So be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise. 16 Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days.

Start **talking**. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- Share a moment in your life when you felt a sense of urgency, that "Time Matters." How did that experience impact you?

Start **sharing**. These questions are to help get your group thinking and to create openness.

- The message emphasized the importance of time. Can you think of a time in your life when you wished you had more time to do something important? What was it?
- How does the "jar of marbles" illustration make you feel about the time we have with the next generation? Does it change your perspective on how you use your time?
- Clay said "Satan is Playing for Keeps." What do you think this means, and how can we actively counteract Satan's influence on the next generation?
- **Proverbs 22:6** advises us to start children off on the right path. What are some practical ways we can help children and youth walk in the way they should go?
- **Read 2 Timothy 1:5**. Share a story about someone who had a significant, positive influence on your faith journey.
- **Read Luke 10:38-42**. In the story of Martha and Mary, Jesus wanted to spend time with them because he was "PLAYING FOR KEEPS." How can we prioritize spending time with God and with the next generation in our busy lives?
- **Ephesians 5:15-16** encourages us to make the best use of our time. What are some practical steps you can take to make the most of your time, especially regarding raising up children and youth?

Start **doing**. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- Identify one specific way you can invest time or mentor a child or another young person in your life over the next week.

Start **praying**. Be bold and pray with power.

- Thank God for the time you've spent together discussing the importance of investing in the next generation. Pray that He gives you the wisdom and patience to seize the opportunities to make a positive impact on the young people in our lives. Ask His help in redeeming our time as we play for keeps in His kingdom.

Question: "What is the meaning of "redeeming the time" in Ephesians 5:16?"

Answer: Ephesians 5:15–16 in the King James Version says, “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” The phrase *redeeming the time* is also found in Colossians 4:5: “Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time” (KJV). In both passages, redeeming the time is related to wisdom in how we “walk,” that is, in how we live.

To redeem something means to buy it back, to regain possession of it. Time is a gift from God, and none of us know how much of it we are allotted. Only God knows how much time each of us has on this earth to make decisions that will impact eternity (Psalm 139:16). When God says we should be “redeeming the time,” He wants us to live in constant awareness of that ticking clock and make the most of the time we have. In fact, the NIV’s translation of Ephesians 5:16 uses the phrase *making the most of every opportunity* instead of *redeeming the time*. Rather than waste our days on frivolous pursuits that leave no lasting imprint, Scripture instructs us to be diligent about doing good (Titus 3:8).

The context of the command to redeem the time helps us understand what redeeming the time looks like and why it’s important: “Be careful how you live. Don’t live like fools, but like those who are wise. Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days. Don’t act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do. Don’t be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life” (Ephesians 5:15–18, NLT). Redeeming the time means that we are careful in how we live. We seek out and employ wisdom (see Proverbs 2:1–15). We seize every opportunity and use it for God’s glory. We think through our plans and make sure they align with God’s will. And we avoid empty, harmful activities such as getting drunk. Why are we to live this way? “Because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:16). We must overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21).

Jesus taught His disciples the necessity of redeeming the time: “We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work” (John 9:4). Jesus was diligent about keeping to His mission. Distractions were as prevalent then as they are now, but He let none of them deter Him from preaching and teaching God’s Word. That was why He had come (Luke 4:43). Though He spent only 33 years on this earth, Jesus changed the world forever because He redeemed the time.

We can learn to redeem the time by becoming conscious of the fact that we may not have another day. The song “Live Like You Were Dying” by Tim McGraw is about redeeming the time. While its focus is on pursuing earthly passions in the time we have left, the lyrics make an important point. They conclude with this thought: “Someday I hope you get the chance, to live like you were dying.” As Christians, we should live like we were dying and pursue all God has given us to do while we have time. Everything done for Christ on earth earns eternal rewards (Mark 9:41). That which was done for selfish, carnal reasons will burn up and blow away (1 Corinthians 3:12–15).

Another way we can learn to redeem the time is by asking God to help us. We should start every morning by committing our day to the Lord and asking Him to help us do something that day that has eternal significance. By beginning our day with eternity in mind, we become more aware of spiritual nudges in our hearts. We look for ways we can honor the Lord, help someone else, or utilize our time in productive ways. Sitting at a red light, we can pray for our neighbor. Mopping the floor, we can worship in song. At a restaurant, we can leave an extra big tip along with a gospel tract or a card inviting the waiter to church. We can evaluate our gifts and interests and find ways to invest them for God’s kingdom. Volunteering, serving at church, leading a ministry, taking Bible studies to the jails and prisons, and studying to show ourselves “approved unto God” are all ways we can redeem the time (2 Timothy 2:15, KJV).

James 4:14 reminds us that our earthly lives are no more than a fog that appears and then quickly evaporates. Our money and possessions will be given to someone else. Our jobs will be filled by others. Our families may remember us with fondness but will move on with lives that don’t include us. All that remains of our lives on earth is that which was invested in eternity. In the end, all that matters is what we did or did not do to redeem the time (Psalm 102:3; 144:4).