

NATIONAL COMMUNITY CHURCH

January 24 17, 2021

Win the Day – Wind the Clock

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Many years ago, Dr. Tony Campolo was teaching a class at the University of Pennsylvania when he turned an ordinary lecture into an unforgettable lesson. He asked the students sitting on the front row, "Young man, how long have you lived?" Well, the unsuspecting student answered his age. "No, no, no, no", said Tony Campolo, "that's how long your heart has been pumping blood. That's not how long you've lived." That's when Tony Campolo told the class a story about one of the most memorable moments of his life. In 1944, his fourth grade class took a field trip to the top of the Empire State Building, tallest building in the world at the time. When nine year old Tony got off the elevator, walked out onto the observation deck overlooking New York City time stood still. "If I live a million years", said Tony Campolo "that moment will still be part of my consciousness because I was fully alive when I lived it." Tony turned back to the same student and said, "Now let me ask the question again. How long have you lived?" "When you say it that way," the students said, "maybe an hour, maybe a minute, maybe two minutes."

Let me ask you two questions. One, how old are you? And two, how long have you lived? It's easy calculating age, much more difficult quantifying life. Why? Time is measured in minutes, but life is measured in moments. What are those Empire State Building moments for you? When was the last time that time stood still? And if you turn those moments into minutes, how long have you lived?

We're in a series based on the book 'Win the Day'. I talked about five habits; flip the script, kiss the wave, eat the frog, fly the kite, cut the rope, it is time to wind the clock, habit number six.

If you have a Bible, you can meet me in Ephesians 5:16. Before we talk about minutes and moments, three thoughts... The goal this weekend is really a right relationship with time. Lots of people living in the wrong time zone stuck in past tense - guilt; paralyzed by future tense - fear. Either way, they're half present half the time, which means they're half alive. My goal this weekend is to close that gap between those two questions. How old are you and how long have you lived?

I want to help you make the most minutes and moments. But time management is not just practical, it's theological and so three thoughts before we wind the clock...

One time is a human construct. "*With the Lord a day is like 1,000 years,*" 2 Peter 3:8, and "*1,000 years are like a day.*" Okay, that makes no sense in four dimensions of space time. Newsflash, God does not exist within the space, time, dimensions that he created. There is no past, present, or future. The challenge we face is that four dimensions is all we have ever known. So in the beginning, God created

us in His image we have been creating God in our image ever since and so what do we do? We timestamp God. No, he's the same yesterday, today and forever. He is Alpha and Omega, beginning and end; he is the Ancient of Days. In the words of theologian Paul Tillich, he is the eternal now. All of that to say this - creation was God's way of starting the clock. We've been on the clock since God said, "*Let there be light.*" That said, day is coming when we will cross that space-time continuum, we will enter a dimension that the Bible calls heaven. And we think of heaven as a future destination and it is, it is. But Heaven is invading Earth; eternity is invading time, right here, right now. One time is a human construct.

Two - we live forward, but God is working backward. We are God's workmanship, Ephesians 2:10 created in Christ Jesus to do good works prepared for us in advance. This is where our holy confidence comes from. God is setting you up. God wants you to get where God wants to go more than you want to get where God wants you to go and he's really good at getting you there. He is ordering your footsteps. He is working all things together for good. Now, let's not just kind of use that as a platitude doesn't mean all things are good. Listen, bad things happen to good people. Why? Because we live in a fallen world with free will. But there is a God who can redeem and recycle even the pain and suffering and work it together. And the same God who began a good work is the God who is carrying it to completion in your life. There is a fancy word in philosophy - teleology, it's beginning with the end in mind, that's who God is, that's what God does. For us the arrow of time points in one direction past, present, future. Then Jesus shows up and says, "Before Abraham was I am. Wait, wait, what? Like what is that about? No, that that is the Eternal One invading our space-time reality. It's called the incarnation. Now I think Joshua's 6:2 is another example. I love this. It says, "*I will deliver Jericho into your hands.*" Now you got check your pastor that's not what it says. That's what it should say in my book because it hasn't happened yet. It should be future tense. But God says, "*I have delivered Jericho into your hands*", past tense, but it hasn't happened yet.

Well, that brings us to the third thought. Everything is created twice, breakthroughs, miracles they happen twice. Everything was once a thought. There is an internal creation - first mental, spiritual, then and only then there is a physical manifestation. That's what imagining unborn tomorrows is all about.

Have a little bit of fun with this. The layout of the city where we live many of us live and work Washington, DC first existed in the imagination of a Frenchman named Pierre Charles L'Enfant, the military engineer turned urban planner transferred those ideas onto a 20 ounce piece of paper, which now sits in a plexiglass case, breathing pressurized argon gas at the Library of Congress. When we navigate Pennsylvania Avenue, when you run around the National Mall, we are navigating places and spaces that were once thoughts and ideas. Our physical reality was nothing more than an idea that existed in the mind of Pierre Charles L'Enfant. This is part of the image of God. That image is the ability to imagine and we'll talk more about that when we get to habit seven, seeding the clouds.

According to the Talmud, along with everything God spoke into existence during those six days of creation God made provision for some miraculous moments that would happen throughout human history. I really like this and it illustrates the idea that I'm trying to make. Now this is rabbinic tradition, but it's in keeping with God's character. During those first six days, according to rabbinic tradition, God commanded the Red Sea to split apart, the sun and moon to stand still for Joshua, the ravens to feed Elijah, the fish to spit out Jonah, the fire not to burn Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and the lions not to harm Daniel. Simply put, when God gives a vision he makes provision. We have experienced this 101 times as a church.

Here's what I know for sure. We live at the intersection of two theologies, two realities, the faithfulness of God is pursuing us from the past, the sovereignty of God is setting us up for the future. And we live where those two theologies and realities intersect, so far so God, the best is yet to come. I think what I'm getting at is this you are here for such a time as this; you are here for such a place as this.

Here's the bottom line and the big idea. God can do more in one day than you can accomplish in 1000 lifetimes that said, gotta wind the clock. And so ready or not, here we go. Ephesians 5:16, <sup>15</sup> *Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise,* <sup>16</sup> *making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.*” The King James Version, that little phrase make the most of every opportunity translates it as redeem the time and I'll come back to that. Let me talk about minutes and then we'll talk about moments.

In 1977 the Russian comedian Yakov Smirnoff immigrated to the United States. He was asked what do you love most about this country. He said, "American grocery stores." He said, "I'll never forget walking in grocery store, walked down an aisle; powdered milk, just add water get milk, right next to it powdered orange juice, just add water get orange juice, then I saw baby powder and I thought to myself, what a country?" Yeah, no, that isn't exactly the way it works but the reality is we live in a quick fix, get rich quick, 15 minutes of fame, instant gratification culture. We got to wind the clock a little bit more than that.

So let's talk about managing minutes. And then we'll talk about managing moments. Here's a critical thought; you do not find time, you make time. {Singing} 525,600 minutes 525,000 moments so dear. 525,600 minutes. How do you measure, measure a year? {End singing} Now every time I do that, I regret it. I'm not headed to Broadway anytime soon. But I like having a little bit of fun too. All of us are allotted the same amount of seconds every minute, same amount of minutes every hour, same amount of hours every day. Time is this great equalizer.

I'll let you in on a little secret. You don't find time to write books you make time. You don't find time to train for a marathon, you make time. You don't find time for your family, you make time. How? Let's talk about two things. One, you got to curse the barren fig tree. Two, do the math. Now, in the gospels there's this miracle that I find fascinating and it's a category all by itself because all the other miracles

are life giving. This one is the exact opposite Jesus curses, a barren fig tree. Why? Pretty simple, it's not producing fruit. It's just taking up space. That's not good stewardship. Listen, faithfulness, is fruitfulness. All of us have barren fig trees in our lives, things that are not producing fruit. To be blunt, they're a waste of time, and a waste of energy.

Now, I want to be careful here. The difference between consuming and creating but the average person spends 142 minutes on social media. Is that the way that you want to spend 15% of your waking hours? Cursing the barren fig tree? I think it's saving time the same way that you might save money. Let me come right out and say this, I think setting your alarm clock is one of the most spiritual decisions that you make. Now, before sending anybody on a guilt trip, hear me out. All of us have different personality types and we have different chronotypes. There are larks early morning people, there are owls, late night people and listen to each his own. If you're a lark, you got to guard those early morning hours. If you're an owl, you need to leverage those late nights.

During a writing season I set my alarm clock a little bit earlier. It gives me the creative margin that I need to write. Now I still listen to the NCC daily, I climb the stairs to the upper zoom; I still get my latte two shots, and drink it while I do my daily Bible reading plan. Those things are part of my morning rhythm, my morning routine. But here's what I've learned as a lark 90% of my creativity happens before noon. And so I try not to check email first thing in the morning. Why? Because winding the clock is spending your best time, your best energy on the most important things. This isn't just time management, this is stewardship.

I'll add one thing to the mix. A NASA study found that a 26 minute nap increases productivity 34%. And so if I get a 26 minute nap, you know what I found, I actually get two windows of productivity, two windows of creativity. All of that to say this, you've got to figure out what works for you. One way, though, is to curse that barren fig tree. And one way to do it is habit stacking and so stick with me just a couple of practical ideas.

Put a book in your bathroom, and you can read a book a month, some of you, you got more potential than that. Now, don't just listen to the news. Pray the news, turn it into an exercise. I bet a few of us blood pressure gone up a little bit, a little bit of adrenaline. Listen, leverage it, don't be anxious about anything, in everything by prayer and petition. What a great way to redeem the time. Listen to a podcast while you exercise. Listen to an audio book while you commute. Now I know that those seem very common sensical but the reality is a lot of us waste a lot of our downtime, doing things that really don't contribute to our growth.

Now, finally, I think you can curse the barren fig tree by establishing boundaries and establishing priorities. You know, for Lora and me, it's sometimes really hard to guard a day off. And so recently we've been doing day off - phone off. Why? You know why. Because we have these devices that are constant interruptions, especially if you leave your notifications on, right? It's pinging you all the time. I

think it's interesting to me that the Sabbath is the longest commandment most number of words to describe it. And I think it's because it's honestly one of the hardest commandments for us to obey. Why? It's just really hard to believe that we don't keep the planets in orbit. Right? And so we play God, we feel like if we aren't constantly on the move, like the world's gonna pass us by. You have to establish boundaries and in a sense, they're pre-decisions.

A number of years ago, you've heard me share this, made a decision that I wouldn't do more than 12 overnight speaking trips a year. A couple of years ago, I dialed that back to seven. Why? Because I know myself if I don't make some pre-decisions. I'm gonna overextend myself, and they're gonna be some barren fig trees. And you know what those boundaries not only save time and energy; they might even save your marriage.

So curse the barren fig tree two do the math. During a writing season, I set my alarm clock a little bit earlier and I don't take outside NCC appointments. And that's hard for me because my default setting is yes; I kind of want to meet with anybody and everybody I can. But here's how I think about writing and this is really me kind of letting you into my world and the way I wind the clock. To me, a book is my way of saying I'll spend six or seven hours with anyone, anywhere, you can take me wherever. In fact, if you're a slow reader, we can spend more time together than that. A book is my way of giving people the best six or seven hours that they have. Now, that doesn't mean I don't take other appointments, of course I do. But during a writing season, the only way I'm going to write that book is if I put some of those boundaries in place.

And so as a people pleaser, my default setting is yes, it's really hard to say no. And so one of the ways that I Jedi mind trick myself is I do the math and so stick with me. When we averaged 20 people to church a half hour message, total 10 hours of collective time, does that make sense? You know, 20 people times 30 minutes, there you go. Now I can honestly say, I really feel like I have preached almost every sermon like it's the last sermon I will ever preach. That goes all the way back to college when I preached a message to about 12 people. I remember staying up until 3am, in the prayer room saying God, I need a word from you. And so that's how I go at it. I'm also cognizant that as NCC is growing, the stakes get a little bit higher, 100 people that's 50 hours, like that's a work week. 1000 people, that's 500 hours, that's 20 days of collective time. The last time I checked one sermon now, but 208 days, that's more than seven months. And that's my mindset as I prepare a message. Why? It helps me manage the minutes. It's the way I establish priorities and establish boundaries. Same goes for writing, multiply the number of copies, The Circle Maker by average reading time, 1678 years, I remind myself of that every once in a while, because I have a hard time managing the minutes. But I want to make sure that I am giving God my utmost for his highest.

All right, let me switch gears. If managing minutes is a science, then managing moments is an art, it's a soft skill, it's a sixth sense. Now the ancient Greeks had two words for time, both of them appearing in Scripture - chrónos, kairos, two sides of the same coin, but as different as heads and tails. Chrónos is

clock time, it's where we get our word, chronology. It's sequential, past, present future, its quantitative seconds, minutes and hours. Managing chrónos time is incredibly important. If you don't control your calendar, your calendar will control you. I believe in Lombardi time if you aren't 15 minutes early, you're late. That said, the word used in Ephesians 5:16 that gets translated make the most of every opportunity or redeem the time is this word kairos. I think it refers to those top of the Empire State Building moments.

And let me talk about how you manage it. In a sense, it's counting the cost but not just the actual cost. It's counting the opportunity cost. Two ways to manage or wind the kairos clock...

- One, you have to steward teachable moments
- And two, you have to accumulate experiences.

Let me break this down. One of my earliest memories could have been a traumatic memory. I was at my grandparents house. They lived on the Mississippi River, Fridley, Minnesota. We'd go over there all the time. I loved them, they love me and we could do about anything we wanted to. But my grandfather taught history at the University of Minnesota, and one of his prized possessions was a collection of fossils. And there was one simple rule, 'Don't play with grandpa's fossils.' It's the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you can call me Adam. I pick up the fossil five year old hands I can still feel it, just slipped through my hands, hit the ground crack in two. Whoooo! Listen, my little five year old heart, I could feel it, no idea how my grandpa was gonna respond, died 1000 deaths. He walks in, and I'll never forget this moment, it's one of those early, early memories, doesn't say a word just kind of assesses the situation. Then without saying a word picks me up, gives me one of these, holds me tight, not a word spoken. Oh, I heard what he said. Mark, you're far more valuable to me than a fossil. There's a moment I'll never forget. It was a lesson in grace. I don't know what was going through my grandfather's mind. There would have been nothing wrong I suppose with him maybe disciplining me for not obeying what was the house rule but I think he saw a teachable moment.

As parents, this is huge, because it's so easy for us to just react and listen, parents, just to let you in on a little secret, all of us, okay, have reacted more times than we wish or care to admit and this is true in the workplace, I think it's true in politics. I think there are moments that are teachable moments and if we could not react but pro act, if we could exercise a little bit of this kairos sensitivity, we would see those moments as opportunities to make a tremendous difference. You see opportunities instead of issues and no one was better at this than Jesus, right? The religious leaders want to stone this woman to death a woman caught in the act of adultery and Jesus steps in and steps up, pretty much says, "Over my dead body". And then there's this woman who breaks open an alabaster jar, and pours it on his feet, anoints Jesus and everybody's given her a hard time. Judas is like, "Hey, we could have used that to, to give to the poor". Yeah, right, you would have stolen it, right, and so another sermon for another day, Jesus says, "The whole world is gonna hear about what you did for me." The disciples, I love this moment,

they're playing, gatekeeper, right? They're kind of secret service, like we need to keep the families and children away. We have places to go things to do. And Jesus says, "Are you kidding me? Come on; let the little children come on to me." Imagine these moments where he would place a hand on a head and pronounce blessing on children's lives and then even on the cross. I think sometimes we lose the human dynamic.

What's incredible to me is Jesus is thinking about everybody else. What do you mean? He says, "*Father forgive them,*" talking about the soldiers, "*for they know not what they do.*" Seriously? Like you're thinking about the soldiers who put nails through your hands. Oh, and John, would you take care of my mother? Wow. Like he's making arrangements while he's suffering on a cross. Oh, and then the guy next to him, "*Today, you'll be with me in paradise.*" Like what? Who, who has the emotional capacity hanging on a cross? I'll tell you someone, someone who understood moments, and the difference that they can make in people's lives. There are people all around us all the time that need us to be peacemakers, grace givers, tone setters and so we wind the kairos clock by stewarding those teachable moments. And two, we wind that kairos clock by accumulating experiences.

I try to live by a little mantra 'don't accumulate possessions, accumulate experiences.' By the way, I met very few people possessed by a demon, met a lot of people who are possessed by their possessions. Don't accumulate possessions, accumulate experiences. Let me tell you where it comes from and we'll close with this. There are decades when nothing happens and there are days when decades happen and they come in all sizes and shapes. August 16, 1996 I prayed a 4.7 mile perimeter around Capitol Hill. It was the day when decades happened. July 23, 2000 intestines ruptured, emergency surgery, two days on a respirator, lose 25 it was a day when decades happened. August 12, 2001, five years into this church plan, not a whole lot of growth to show for it and wouldn't you know it we land on the front page of the Washington Post's Sunday edition. It was a day when decades happened.

Lots of sizes and shapes but let me share one more May 27, 2005. It's one of those top of the Empire State Building moments for me. I was on a mission team from this church to the church that we were planting in the capital city of Ethiopia, Addis Beza International Church. It was an incredible week; we were there for their inaugural service. I helped build a mud hut, which was amazing. And we get to the end of the week, and there's a free day. And so we decide to take a little trip to Awash National Park. And so we drive out of the city, few hours out of the city, and we stop for a picnic lunch, and there's some cows grazing nearby and listen, cows in other countries far more fascinating than American cows. And so we're taking pictures of the cows when I don't know where shepherds aren't shepherds carrying AK-47s come running at us, and basically hold us up at gunpoint. Like, well, evidently, their cows are cash cows, okay, so we pay them some cash and we're driving. You ever had one of those experiences where when you're in it, it is absolutely terrifying but I kid you not like the split second after it was awesome. It was awesome. You know, like, I'm driving away we just got held up in Ethiopia, you know, at gunpoint in Ethiopia. You know, I feel like I'm fully living my life right now.

And so we keep driving, and we get into the outback, and we go off road and there is a natural spring heated by a volcano. Our guides tell us its 114 degrees. Like that's barely humanly possible. But sure enough, about five minutes in one of the guys on our team faints. Now fortunately, there's someone on a team who had a camera and was actually filming while this happened, and I won't mention his initials, Pastor Joel. But listen, this guy goes under the water camera doesn't move, you may drown, but we are going to capture this for posterity. Fortunately, someone else on the team made the rescue attempt. We may have watched that video more than once. And so we finally get to Awash National Park it's already been a day. And we're on Range Rovers, African sun setting. I'm seeing animals I don't know their names. I've never seen these in a zoo. I mean, it's just absolutely breathtaking. We get to our campsite 80 baboons kind of hanging out in the trees. Like have you have you seen the backside of a baboons? Do not tell me God does not have a sense of humor. And one of my favorite moments, one of these baboons decides to kind of drop a little something, something and it lands on one person on our team. Now I'm not sure that for her it was the top of the Empire State Building moment, it was for me, yeah, it would probably be a lot of fun.

And then we're around the campfire that night we're singing worship choruses, one of those moments you can't not worship. And the guards, armed guards who guarded our campsite, said "Hey, be quiet." And sure enough, there is a lion roaring, we hope in the distance. And so put yourself in my shoes. I'm sitting in my pup tent like I'm just a guy from America, right? And I've never experienced any of this stuff. I don't even know what to do with it but that's the moment. This thought fires across my synapses and I write it in my journal, "don't accumulate possessions, accumulate experiences".

I want to tell you this, the greatest experiences are the experiences you accumulate, following in the footsteps of someone named Jesus, He will take you places you can't go, you will do things, they're impossible. You will experience love and joy and power and peace and grace and things that just aren't humanly possible. You will accumulate experiences that will change not only your life, but will change your eternity. I am out of time. Pun intended. You got to manage minutes, you got to manage moments. Only one life will soon be past only what's done for Christ will last.