

Intro. Wasted work or effort is discouraging. Realizing that you have given much and worked hard for the pointless, useless, unproductive or unnecessary can quickly motivate you to just live for fun and pleasure. In his introduction to his book 'Don't Waste Your Life,' John Piper writes:

In other words, it is better to lose your life than to waste it. If you live gladly to make others glad in God, your life will be hard, your risks will be high, and your joy will be full. This is not a book about how to avoid a wounded life, but how to avoid a *wasted* life. Some of you will die in the service of Christ. That will not be a tragedy. Treasuring life above Christ is a tragedy.

Of great concern to each one of us this morning is the issue of productivity. What's the point? What's the use? Why is anything necessary? Why not just 'eat and drink' knowing that 'tomorrow we die' and that is the end. The distinguishing difference between the wasted life and the unwasted life according to the scriptures is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ which connects us to our creator God. It is in magnifying God that we experience the unwasted life.

As the Corinthian believers became more and more distracted from the gospel that they had heard and received, their work to advance the gospel changed. They became more inward focused, easily sidetracked by quality of life issues and preoccupied with new ways of thinking. The strong closing appeal of chapter 15 by the Apostle calls us to new commitment and extravagance in the work of the Lord because the gospel is in fact true.

In other words, the wasted life is one lived for purposes not including the gospel. The unwasted life is assured that 'in the Lord your labor is not in vain.' Let's ask God to help us learn three essential pillars of the unwasted life from 1Corinthians 15:58 in such a way that our passion will grow to magnify him in eternally productive ways. Again from Piper . . .

God created us to live with a single passion to joyfully display his supreme excellence in all the spheres of life. The wasted life is the life without this passion. God calls us to pray and think and dream and plan and work not to be made much of, but to make much of him in every part of our lives.

The people that make a durable difference in the world are not the people who have mastered many things, but who have been mastered by one great thing. If you want your life to count, if you want the ripple effect of the pebbles you drop to become waves that reach the ends of the earth and roll on into eternity, you don't need to have a high IQ. You don't have to have good looks or riches or come from a fine family or a fine school. Instead you have to know a few great, majestic, unchanging, obvious, simple, glorious things—or one great all-embracing thing—and be set on fire by them.

Pray/Read 1Corinthians 15:58

This stirring challenge contains three essential truths that the unwasted life is built on. The only way your life will matter for eternity is to turn from your ways and values and shape your passion with these truths. Here's how you can live so that you know that your life is not in vain.

1. Actively and consistently remember the gospel.

Note that the entire challenge of verse 58 grows out of the first word ‘therefore, my beloved brothers’ and is summarized by ‘not in vain.’ It is an affectionate appeal built on 2 premises. First the explanation of the gospel and resurrection found in 15:1-57. Because the gospel produces resurrection bodies and life, then your efforts, faith and work have meaning. Second, the appeal grows out of the common bond of brotherhood in the gospel. These are people professing to be followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. These opening terms simply call to mind everything that has just been taught about the gospel.

The only way the appeal to live life hard for God can be made is because the gospel works . . . it produces life after the life after death in new, transformed bodies with God forever. We know that in the Lord, our efforts have meaning 58b. Life is not wasted because there is a resurrection from the dead. The gospel guarantees that.

It is when we move away from the core truths of the gospel, we lose sight of the value and joy of the unwasted life. Here’s what it means to remember the gospel in a way that produces meaning and productivity to your life:

Only in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ . . .

- Do you find victory over sin and death. 15:54-57
- Are you certain of an unshakeable kingdom. 15:24-26
- Is there life transforming power and grace. 15:10
- Will you be raised from the dead with a glorious body. 15:50-54

I call to your attention the gospel. Preached to you. Received by you. You currently trust in it. It is the grace of God active in your life. Stay connected to the life transforming gospel.

2. Let nothing move you from the gospel.

Note the commands to be ‘steadfast and immovable.’ They are contrasting terms describing the firm, unwavering loyalty to Christ required of one who lives the unwasted life. It is working hard to protect the single passion that is expressed in 1Cor 2:2 – ‘I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.’ It is recognizing that you are easily distracted and preoccupied with millions of other things that weigh you down and empty your soul. Prove yourself to be firm, not wavering.

Three specific sources that draw you from the gospel of grace and transformation . . .

- Your pride . . . love of self perspective . . . grace is not necessary. 3:16; 4:20; 8:11
- Good teaching . . . essential for felt needs . . . grace is not mentioned. Eph. 4:14
- Your load . . . need for relief, answers and help . . . grace is not sufficient. 2Cor.12:8-10

Cmp the calls to stand firm . . . Col. 1:23

Phil 3:20-4:1

1Thess 4:18

1. **Actively and consistently remember the gospel.**
2. **Let nothing move you from the gospel.**

3. Always give yourself fully to gospel work.

Note the comprehensive appeal to exceed or overflow a fixed measure/standard for work that advances the gospel. Enthusiastic and abounding work for the Lord is absent when there is confusion, unsettledness, lack of clarity and skepticism about what God is doing and will do in Christ Jesus. This is the secret to the unwasted life. Work hard for God!

The concept of ‘the work of the Lord’ simply refers to the ministry of leading people in a growing relationship with Christ. In 3:8 it refers to the work of planting and watering the gospel into people’s lives. In 3:13-15 work includes all service for the Lord that is built on the foundation of Jesus Christ. In 4:12, 2 words are used to describe the labor involved in gospel ministry. In 9:1, Paul refers to the Corinthians as his ‘workmanship in the Lord.’ Work for the Lord is anything that advances the good news of Christ into another life. It includes all types of service, hospitality, giving, sacrifice, speaking, praying, going, and effort. If it is about Christ, for Christ and on Christ . . . it is work that will last! It is not wasted! If it is work that is about, for or on anything else, it will not last. It is wasted.

Evaluate your gospel work according to these two nuances of abounding . . .

- **Abundance.** To overflow, excess, to be more than enough
 1Thess. 3:12; 4:1, 10
 How much of your work is directed toward advancing the gospel?
- **Extravagance** celebrate, abundance, lavish
 15:30-32 risk
 2Cor. 8:1-2 generosity
 2Thess. 3:8 sacrificial, prolonged effort

The unwasted life is one that intentionally stays connected to the gospel and gives themselves fully to advancing the gospel regardless of their vocation or location.

Conclusion

- Wasted living is due to a detachment from the living God and his work in our world. Your sense of aimlessness, lack of seriousness and preoccupation with the unimportant is a result of your disconnect with the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Unwasted living begins with hearing and receiving the gospel of God. Please repent and receive the gift of forgiveness that Christ died and was raised again to provide. Trust Christ today.
- Unwasted living is hard, risky and joyful. Renew your commitment to abounding in the work of advancing the gospel . . . your life into others lives.