

# YORKMINSTER PARK REFLECTS

**Friday, September 25, 2015**  
**A Reflection from Michael J. Wills**

Nick Kyrgios, the current enfant terrible of the tennis world, has a tattoo on the length of one arm which reads: "time is running out". Commentators, growing weary of his behaviour on-court, interpret it to mean that he is running out of time to become a great player, suggesting that he might never make it. Kyrgios probably means it as a reminder to himself to live life to the fullest since life is short. Become the best you can be in your chosen profession or calling, or have the most fun? Or can we do both?

I can relate to this issue as I have enjoyed a leisurely summer, playing tennis, cycling and enjoying the company of friends and family. Not exactly riotous living by Kyrgios' standards but definitely more towards the fun end of the spectrum. Then in mid-August I started a one-year full-time contract that involves a long commute. All of a sudden my life was turned up-side-down. Two hours commuting, an 8-hour day 5 days per week, organizing for shopping and meals...welcome to the real world! And I don't even have kids to bring up! How do working couples manage to do it all?

Obviously I have to become much more efficient, but I'll also have to give up some things. James (chapter 4 verses 13-17) has a few things to say on the subject:

*Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money. "Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.*

I understand this to say that much of what pre-occupies us is trivial, and lasts no longer than an early morning mist that vanishes with the rising sun. I need downtime, but do I really have to watch so much tennis? And follow each day of the Tour de France? Probably not! Instead I should try to discern the Lord's will for my life and follow it. Where do I find meaning? What nurtures my soul? What doors have opened for me recently and what happened when I ignored them? What happened when I went through them?

For me, the real zinger in James 4 is the last sentence: *Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins. In a similar vein, the ethicist Peter Singer writes in Writings on an Ethical Life: We are responsible not only for what we do but also for what we could have prevented. We would never kill a stranger but we may know that our intervention will save the lives of many strangers in a distant country and yet do nothing. We do not then think ourselves in any way responsible for the deaths of these strangers. This is a mistake. We should consider the consequences both of what we do and of what we decide not to do.*

I'll let Paul have the last word: *Finally brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received from me, or seen in me - put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. (Philippians 3, v8)*