



Time is a strange thing. I have a missionary friend, who on his first term overseas found his stomach in knots because he was running 15 minutes late for a meeting, only to find out that according to *Brazilian time*, he was 40 minutes early! A standing joke in our household as kids was that at my mother's funeral. Just as we are about to lower her casket into the ground, we will hear a knocking on the lid and as we open the lid, she will sit up and say, "*Just give me 5 more minutes and I will be ready to go.*"

Les Weas, President of Procrastinators Club of America says, "*People who rush around and never relax and get all worried about being on time are people who die early. Then they are referred to as the 'late Mr. So-and-So.'* Why not be late while your alive and live longer." The group's slogan is "*Procrastinate Now.*"

Time is such a strange thing because we say it flies, drags, stands still, rushes on, and waits for no man yet we try to stretch it, ignore it, turn it back, get stuck in it and we even try to manage it even though it can't be sold, bought, traded, made to stand still. The scriptures say, "*Who can add even a moment to their life?*" The answer to that is: NO one can. Every one of us gets the same 365 1/4 days a year or 12 months, 24 hours a day, 1440 minutes a day or 86,400 seconds a day. No more, no less.

While talking to one of our men the other day, he said that in his case, it is harder to *tithe his time than his money* because of how busy his schedule is and the many pressures and demands of his time. I think many of us feel like that. I bring this up because while some people stop to make New Year's resolutions on January 1st of every year, I think many of you are like I am. After the long push of the last 3 or 4 months, often, it is when I am sitting staring into the camp fire, sitting on a hillside or tinkering in the garage that I take my emotional, physical and spiritual pulse and ask how I am doing. It is during the long weekend away or while sitting quietly that I ask how I have been spending the precious non-refundable time of my life.

I need a little distance from the office where there is always another sermon to preach, issue to try and fix or a person in crisis to walk with. I need some distance because the issue isn't just reading another time management book so I can cram more activities into my schedule; it is asking how to walk with more joy, more balance and with more intentionality where work and personal care can both happen. And I have found that I need to do this regularly because it is so easy to get caught up, swept away in what is happening around me. I need to do biblically because only then can I push aside all the voices around me that tell me how to live my life (and then I need to hear God's whisper). I say this because I believe often we have attempted to set our Schedules before we have gone to the Bible so we could set our Priorities.

I. Gaining a Biblical Perspective On Time

1. How Time came to rule us:

How did we get so busy and so controlled by our schedules? I ask that because if we go back to the Bible, we will see that we have come a long way from how it all began. If we go back to Genesis 2, we will find this beautiful picture of Adam and Eve who, (don't miss this) have a large job to do. Their job is being the guardians and caretakers of this newly created world and all that was in it. Yet, we find them having the time to walk in the garden in the cool of the evening, together with God, rested,

relaxed and fulfilled with their lives and priorities in order. Put that beside a comment by Robert Schuller, who speaks for many of us when he said, *"I began my life's work on the assumption that I might not live long enough to accomplish everything I'd like to do. If I wanted to do anything worthwhile in my life I'd have to hurry up ... and I have been in a hurry ever since."*

How have we moved so far from our beginnings? One author explained it this way in Genesis - It talks only in time frames of a day. In Psalms 63:6 we find that the day is said to be divided into 7 watches, then by II Kings 20:10, 11 we find that Hezekiah has a Sundial keeping time. By the 8th Century, Pope Paul 1 gave Pippin the Short, King of the Franks a water clock which had a built in alarm system. The Reformers came along with the idea that man needed to fill his time with work. Luther said, *"Man was created not for leisure but for work."* Calvin said, *"Each man must bear and swallow the discomforts, vexations, weariness, and anxieties in his way of life, when he is persuaded that the burden was laid upon him in God."*

In the Industrial Revolution we began punching the time clock. Then with the invention of the electric light bulb, the days stopped ending at sunset and we now had 24 hours of light in which to work. Then add our portable laptops, email, Facebook and the latest cell phones and you can *run but you can't hide from work or being instantaneously accessible to others*. Now, while that may be an over simplification of the events of time, we would all agree that where we are is a long way from a walk in the Garden in the cool of the evening.

2. What the Bible says about time:

i) God created time.

In Genesis 1, God created the Universe and this world and in doing this, He placed us all in the midst of time. He created the morning and the night, the seasons and the passing of time. Ecclesiastes 3 says there is a time to sow, a time to reap, a time to be born and a time to die. God placed you and I in the midst of time.

ii) Time is going somewhere.

We live in a world where a number of religions teach that time is circular; if you don't get it right the first time you will have a chance to try it again. That is where the old ideas like, *"What goes around comes around"* OR *"We have had 2 things go wrong, the 3 is sure to follow"* come from. These are not a biblical concepts. Instead the Bible teaches us that time is linear; it has a *beginning* (at creation) and an *end*. WHY? Because time is leading to a moment in history when the trumpet shall blast and Christ shall come in power to take us to be with Him in heaven and then *"time shall be no more."* Time will no longer be as we now know it or experience it as we will be with the Lord forever, beginning to live in 'His forever.' If you look at how God used the Old Testament times to prepare people for the coming of Jesus in the New Testament, so H could provide a way to be with Him in Heaven, you will see that according to Jesus, *"Time is going somewhere - somewhere important."*

iii) Time needs to be Redeemed.

Ephesians 5:15, 16 (Colossians 4:5) Message says, "Don't live unthinkingly or carelessly." If you look at these verses in the Old Kings James version, they read, "*Redeem the time.*" Literally that means that our time needs to fall back under the redeeming work of God. This is important. What Paul is saying here is that because Satan is the prince of the power of the world, he conspires to take control of our time - to play with it, fill it up with all kinds of things that are either ungodly or at least will keep us so busy, so preoccupied with other things that we do not have time to do what is in God plan for us. Because of that, we need to redeem time, take it back, take control of it, stop letting it slip through our hands so that we are using it in the way that God intended it to be used.

iv) We need to see Our Place in Time.

Do you remember the story of Esther in the Old Testament? It was the original 'Bachelor' TV series. A young girl is forced to enter a beauty pageant, in which the winner would become the queen of the land and married to the King. In the midst of the contest, she finds out that her king is being advised to kill all the Jewish people in his Kingdom. That is when we read Esther 4:14, where her uncle makes this comment, "*Who knows if you have come to this place for such a time as this?*" He was saying to Esther, you don't stand in this place, at this time by accident so seize the moment, Redeem this opportunity and make a difference. WHY? Because we have the calling and the ability to take hold of our time and seize the opportunities that lie there. God places us at specific times in history and then gives us the responsibility and privilege to make a difference to fulfill the will of God in our generation.

v) We need to be Refreshed by time.

But there is one more aspect of time that we often miss as North American Christians and that is, God wants to use time to refresh us. Do you remember after Elijah had his Mount Carmel experience when he prayed down fire from heaven, stood in the middle of a great revival, which was followed by a great disappointment as Jezebel put a price tag on his head? We find him running for his life, ending up miles away in the desert hiding and in the midst of deep depression. After listening to him complain for a while, God wowed him with the wonders of nature (a whirl wind and earthquake) and then God came in the quietness of the desert in a quiet voice and said, "*Have something to eat, take couple of aspirins, sleep for a while and then we will talk in the morning.*" (1 Kings 19) God understood the therapeutic power of silence, being alone, eating right, a good night sleep and the healing properties of time. What He was saying was, "*A good night's sleep, a good meal is a godly activity for a hungry and tired person.*" That is why we find Jesus sneaking away early in the morning to be alone in nature so He could, in the silence, beauty and communication with his Father God, be refreshed.

It is interesting, the older I get, maybe the more the responsibilities of my job or calling weigh on me, the more I crave silence. There is this

place 45 minutes south of here, (close to Chain Lakes) where I have permission to hike on a Ranchers land. It is 1000 meters climb from the highway over the first mountains saddle to a little valley where silence rules. It is a place where I can get quiet enough to hear God's whisper and feel His refreshment as I step out of my rushed schedule into His time of refreshing. For some of you, that is what running does with music blaring in your ear buds, quiet devotions on the back deck or sitting by a camp fire in the middle of nowhere does. Know that stepping out of daily schedule into a time with God is as important a use of time as ministering at full throttle in the place God asked you to be called *for such a time as this*. That is why in the rhythms of life God places holidays (holy days and sabbatical days) for us and for our families. It is because He has designed us to need the healing caress of time on our souls and bodies.

II. Setting Priorities

The problem is that if the Bible says we are to redeem our time, that we believe each of us, (like Esther,) have been placed in this specific time in history "*for such a time as this*." Yet we need to be refreshed by time. How can we do all of that at the same time? If you study the ministry of Jesus, you will soon see that He had a tremendous task to complete in 3 short years before His crucifixion. He had to teach the Word of God so people would be able to understand His Father in heaven, He had to pick disciples, train them and re-train them, plus He was constantly traveling, healing, casting out demons, feeding the 5000 and the crowds kept following, hounding Him even in remote parts of the desert. And YET as you watch His walk, you will never see Him becoming hared or overwhelmed; instead, you will be struck with His even, well ordered pace. How was it possible? It was only possible because His steps flowed from a pre-set agenda that found its basis in fixed priorities. He understood His top few goals and let them lead him.

The problem with us today is that we keep trying to redeem the time without stopping to set our priorities.

Quick exercise: Write down your top 5 priorities in order of importance.

Now, here is the question: If I was to check your/my datebook or follow us for a week, would I see time being given to what you have just said were the top passions of your life or would it be something else? In your list can you find, 1) Personal Life, 2) Family Life, 3) Work Life, 4) Spiritual/Church Life and 5) Community/friendship Life?

All 5 areas need to be part of my life. It struck me the other day that I need to balance these priorities much like a Tri-athlete balances the different segments within his sport. In order to do well in the race they need to be able to run, bike and swim and each event has an effect on how they do in the other segment. In my life, if I neglect my spiritual walk, it will affect my walk with my family. And if I don't care for my body, it will affect how long I can last at my job. In order to finish well, I need to see all these as having importance. I need to put things in place so I am improving in these areas and enjoying the run. And as I do that, I will run well and finish being proud of how I have run the race God has given me.

III. Practical Suggestions

How do I balance my priorities and keep focused on them?

1. Know how to find the Balance.

When my dad went to Bible School, he was taught that the top 4 priorities in your life must be: #1 God, #2 the Church (Job), #3 Family, and #4 Yourself. The result was that while in many ways he was great dad, because the pressure of the job was immediate, often his job ran his life and we were his second priority. The next generation of pastors came along and said my family is the greatest priority next to God and they decided to try and work 35 hour week. In the process, they forgot that they were upper management and upper management works more than that or the job doesn't get done and so the church suffered.

A few years ago, Jill Briscoe was speaking at a conference and said, *"There will be times as a pastor that because of the pressures of your church, your job will need to take more time and focus than your family but there should be other times when your family should take more time and focus than your job. The key is making sure you don't feel guilty when the balance shifts and make sure the shift isn't too long and is corrected."* Or you will fail at your greatest callings as a person of God, spouse and parent. I think that is good advice.

In the list of five priorities, the priority takes precedence may fluctuate but you had better keep striving and finding that balance. For example, if I was the best pastor you ever have and lose my kids - I am a failure.

2. If you are always Available, you won't always be Sufficient.

When I watched my dad work 7 days a week, never taking a day off and watched as he had to quit the ministry at age 52 due to illness, I determined that while I may work hard, I would at least take time to rejuvenate, have fun, walk with my wife and play with my kids. That is why, when our kids were young, I coached their soccer teams, we rode our bikes for miles together and why my Mondays were sacred. At times I have done well in this area and at other times I have failed. And that is why I keep repeating that mantra, *"If you are always available, you will not always be sufficient."* Keep fighting for balance in life was meant to give joy not just do business.

3. Use your Quiet time each morning to Set the Priorities of your day.

This is something I try to do. Each morning as I read the Word, spend time with the Lord, I open my day timer and pray over the day and ask the Lord to shift or change my priorities. And I ask God to be in the day; it helps me look for ways He would want me to act speak on his behalf.

4. Tithe your time.

That may sound strange because God wants to walk with you through all you do and through every experience of life. But I find people say I will work hard now and then when I get older and freer, I will serve Him. And I find that if we don't include God in our lives through a ministry now, we will never get to it. Others lose their giftedness through a lack of use and end up living a full busy life, in which they never get to doing much for Him. What one thing are you being called to do? Do it!! Be an Esther where you are called to minister.

5. Set Aside certain times as Sacred.

For me Sunday morning is sacred for unless I worship, get into the Word I am in trouble. Monday and Friday nights are for my kids no matter what is going on. Saturday morning and Sunday afternoon is for Kathy and I. They are non- negotiable - they are written my day timer. What needs to be put into your day timer in pen? You are home; you are together so you can create memories, sit close and grow together.

6. Use your Summer Holiday time to be refreshed and to set your priorities back in place.

Bob gave me this quote, *“Vacation is defined as a scheduled period during which activity is suspended. As you vacation this year, concentrate all your time and energies on safe travel, holding your spouse’s hand, laughing with your children and finding refreshment in all that you do.”* So, don’t check your email, don’t answer your cell phone, don’t take work with you and let those you love, your heavenly Father, activities that give you joy and silence refresh you in this special time this summer.

For information about Brentview Baptist Church and its ministries,
please contact the church office at:
3512 Charleswood Dr NW, Calgary, AB T2L 2C3
Phone: 403.284.4691 Fax: 403.284.0132 mail@brentviewbaptist.com
www.brentviewbaptist.com