

DEVOTIONAL

GOD'S TIMING // DECEMBER 27, 2020

GRACE
FELLOWSHIP

Discussion Starter: How would you encourage a new Christian to make the best use of their time?

Key Passage: *"In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach,² until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.³ He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.⁴ And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, 'you heard from me;⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.'⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, 'Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?'⁷ He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. (Acts 1:1-7)*

God's Relationship to Time

When Jesus told His disciples, *"It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by His own authority"* (v.7), He was clarifying for them that God is the author and originator of time, and thus we can trust Him to bring all things to pass at the perfect time. God transcends time—He is above and outside the sphere of time as we know it—so His perspective on time is different from ours. God does not count time as we do: *"A thousand years in Your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night"* (Psalm 90:4).

And yet, we who follow the Lord have a deep sense of comfort knowing that even though God is timeless and eternal, He is with us right now at this time, in this moment. And because God is present, He is able to respond to our needs and prayers.

Discuss: What thoughts come to your mind about God when you think of Him living above and beyond time, and yet He is with you right now in this moment?

Number Your Days

When the psalmist prayed, *"Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom"* (Psalm 90:12), he was asking God to remind him of the shortness of life. When the reality sinks in that our days are limited, we gain a *"heart of wisdom"* (v.12). In contrast, the person who refuses to acknowledge that his stay on earth is relatively brief lacks wisdom.

Discuss: Why would recognizing the brevity of life result in wisdom?

Discuss: What does *"There is a proper time for everything"* (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8) mean?

Special Times, Strategic Opportunities

Ephesians 5:15-16 says, “*Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise,¹⁶ making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.*” The word “time” (v.16) does not refer to time as it passes; rather, it refers to special times and strategic opportunities. Every day special opportunities come our way: opportunities to make a difference for Christ, to grow in our faith, to meet someone else’s need, and to start or strengthen a relationship. Paul instructs us to make “*the best use of the time.*”

Discuss: Why do you think many people miss special times and strategic opportunities that God brings their way?

Discuss: As you reflect on the previous year, what were some special times and strategic opportunities God brought your way?

Notice that Paul says we should make the best use of time “*because the days are evil*” (v.16). The word “evil” refers to active opposition to the things of God. When special times and strategic opportunities come our way, Satan is actively at work trying to turn those opportunities into something that will discredit God.

Discuss: How does the fact that Satan is in tune with special times and strategic opportunities motivate us to be more assertive in making the best use of time?

Ready for God’s Timing

God is never early and never late—His timing is always perfect. Our job is to walk closely with God and pay attention to how He is at work so we can be ready when His timing arrives. Psalm 37:7 says, “*Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for Him*” (Psalm 37:7), and Lamentations 3:25 says, “*God is good to those who wait for Him*” (Lamentations 3:25). Isaiah 40:31 promises that we will receive divine strength and energy when we wait on God: “*But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.*” Psalm 27:14 says, “*Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the LORD!*”

Discuss: How is our degree of patience and our degree of trust in God related?

Discuss: What challenges do you face in waiting on the Lord’s perfect timing for an answer to a prayer, an open door, wisdom for a decision you’re facing, etc.?

Discuss: According to James 1:3-4, how does God use trials in our lives to strengthen our patience?

Resources:

Cure for the Common Life: Living in Your Sweet Spot by Max Lucado

Time Management for the Christian Leader by Ken Willard

“How Do We Redeem the Time?” article at www.biblestudy.org