

# Redeeming Your *Time*

## A 4-Week Study

*with Sarah Hamaker*



# God's View of Time



*Remember how short my time is!  
Psalm 89:47*

*For everything there is a season and a purpose for every matter under heaven.  
Ecclesiastes 3:1*

*But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.  
2 Peter 3:8*

*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.  
Matthew 11:28*

Would it surprise you to know God views time differently than we do? It shouldn't, given how the Bible is chockful of examples of God having his own sense of timing—and how humans have tried to hurry him along. While we're often impatient or late, God has perfect timing. He never arrives late. He's never in a hurry. He's always on time.

Throughout the Old and New Testaments, his chosen people often forgot God's view of time. For example, Sarah and Abraham attempt to fulfill the promise of offspring through Hagar rather than waiting just a little bit longer for God to bring them a child. God sent the ram to Abraham in the nick of time to save Isaac's life. Joseph be-

came a ruler in Egypt at the right time to save his brothers—and Israel—from starvation. Esther was placed in the palace "for such a time as this" to save her people from destruction.

In the New Testament, Jesus's birth came in the fullness of time. He refused to be rushed into starting his ministry before the time appointed by his Father. His disciples constantly harped on him to hurry up and get on with overcoming the world and ushering in his kingdom. His followers rarely understood Jesus's acceptance of waiting on his Father's timing.

But Jesus is the antithesis of hurry, isn't he? You often saw him slowing things down,

stopping to minister, heal, or love those along the way whom his disciples often saw as impediments to how the Messiah should be spending his time. Instead, Jesus provides us with the ultimate example of rest. When do we see Jesus running? When do we see Jesus in a hurry? When do we see Jesus checking his planner? When do we see Jesus telling people to make an appointment? When do we see Jesus out of breath? We simply don't.

Jesus' invitation in Matthew 11:28—"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"—is such a text for any age, but if it ever had resonance, poignancy, and pointedness, it is our age because heaviness and weariness defines most people today. It's when we take our eyes off God and onto our own agendas that our time gets messed up and "lost." We think we know best on how to order our days, fill our hours and minutes, and check things off our to-do lists. While we should think about how to manage our time each day, week, month and year, we get off base when we impose our timetable onto God rather than viewing time through his eyes.

For the right perspective of time, let's look at three important things God says about our time. First, our time is not ours. Just

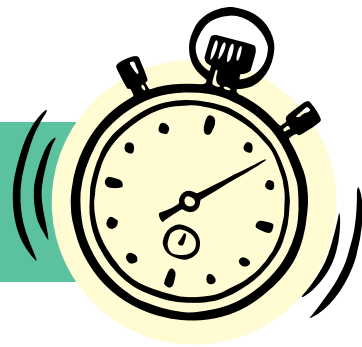
as we should think of our possessions and money as on loan to us from God, so is our time. Time is a gift from God. As Proverbs 27:1 reminds us, "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring."

Second, our time is limited. We have been given a certain amount of time here on earth for our lifetime. We have no way of knowing how long or short our lives will be. As the Psalmist says in 89:47: "Remember how short my time is!" We will be held accountable for all we do in the time he's given us.

Third, there is a time for everything. The Creator of the universe also created a time for everything. As it says in Ecclesiastes 3:1, "For everything there is a season and a purpose for every matter under heaven." For us, this means he has given us time and seasons to accomplish our callings and to further his kingdom.

It's by rightly viewing all time as belonging to God that we can begin the process of redeeming our time. As believers, our desire should be to fill our time in ways that honors God and fulfills our callings. But first, we must resist "The Allure of Busyness," which is the topic of our next lesson.

# The Allure of Busyness



*Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth!*  
*Psalm 46:10*

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with  
thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which sur-  
passes all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*  
*Philippians 4:6-7*

*Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great  
shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything  
good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through  
Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.*  
*Hebrews 13:20-21*

Now that you know God's view of time is different than ours, let's talk about how we use our time. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics American Time Use Survey (ATUS) for 2022, employed men worked 32 more minutes per workday than employed women. On workdays, more employed women (41 percent) than employed men (28 percent) did some or all of their work at home.

Switching to household activities, in 2022, on an average day, 85 percent of women and 70 percent of men spent some time tackling housework, cooking, lawn care or household management, with women

spending slightly more hours than men (2.7 hours versus 2.2 hours), according to ATUS. For leisure and sports activities, on an average day, 95 percent of those age 15 and older watched TV, socialized or exercised, with men spending more time doing these activities than women (5.6 hours versus 4.8 hours).

The younger the children, the more time parents spent caring for them. For households with kids under the age of 6, adults spent an average of 2.1 hours per day taking care of kids. For children between the ages of 6 and 17, the average amount of time spent caring for them dropped to 49

minutes per day. Women still do the lion's share of childcare, with moms spending 1.1 hours providing physical care to kids under the age of 6, compared to dads spending 31 minutes in bathing or feeding a child.

What this time-use study shows is we have time for leisure, yet many of us feel like we don't. How can this be? Perhaps it's because many of us have bought into the notion that to be idle is to be unproductive. So we over-pack our schedules and we stress ourselves to the max by constantly doing, doing, doing.

And in the midst of our extreme busyness, we can forget that being too busy can be a sin too. In the Middle Ages, the sin of sloth had two forms:

- Paralysis, not being able to do anything
- Busyness, running around frantically all the time

We all feel so busy and overwhelmed by our lengthy and never-ending to-do lists. Busyness has become a status symbol as we're always rushing from one task to another 24/7. As Americans, we're busier than ever, filling our lives with constant motion and tasks to be accomplished. Even we Christians fall into the trap of over-scheduling, over-doing and over-committing our time and resources.

What can we do to extract ourselves from

the allure of busyness? First, recognize the why beyond your need to be busy. Some questions to ask yourself:

- Am I overly busy to avoid thinking about my life?
- To fill an otherwise empty day?
- To feel needed?
- To feel important?

By honestly asking these and other questions about why your days are jam-packed, you can figure out what's driving you to be so busy.

Second, conduct a time journal, which is essentially noting how you fill your time in 15- to 30-minute increments. Just like you use a money journal to record your spending, a time journal will show you where you're spending your time. I've done this several times and am always amazed by the things I think take too much time, like unloading the dishwasher, don't take very long at all, while the things I think take no time at all, like checking email or scrolling through social media, take longer than I realized.

Third, prayerfully consider your busy schedule and if it needs to be as busy as you have it. We should make prayer about our time a regular habit, asking God if our plans meet with his divine approval. Praying about your time will prepare you for our next lesson on how to make the best use of your time.

# Making the Best Use of Your Time



*Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established. Proverbs 16:3, ESV  
Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that  
appears for a little time and then vanishes.*

*James 4:14,*

*Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.*

*Romans 12:11*

*Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the  
time, because the days are evil.*

*Ephesians 5:15-16*

In Matthew 25, Jesus tells the Parable of the Talents, which talks about the good and faithful servants who judiciously invested the talents given to them rather than hide them away like the servant who the master chastised. What does this parable have to do with making the best use of our time? I believe it's a warning to us that we need to be careful we're not squandering the time God has given us.

This isn't to say we can never rest or have fun, but it should caution us to not live frivolous lives or overly busy lives. We need to find a happy medium, balancing work with play, rest with productivity. While the purpose of this study isn't to give you an outline of how to fill your day, it is designed to guide you in making those decisions.

Part of the challenge is to figure out how to boost our productivity to help us use our time better. Whether you're one who likes to plan or not, here are some of my favorite ways to do more in less time.

Plan your week. On Saturday or Sunday, take a few minutes to jot down what you need to accomplish each day of the coming week. Incorporate housework, shopping, children's activities, appointments, and job-related tasks. But be realistic—if you continually miss your daily goals, you could become more stressed.

Organize your day the night before. One of the easiest ways to lower daily stress is to get ready for the next day the evening before. For example, make the next day's

lunches after dinner and have the children put their homework and other back-to-school items in the appropriate backpacks. Your day will go much smoother if you avoid the morning rushing about that happens in most households.

**Prioritize tasks.** When you have a particularly busy week, separate your to-do list into what's absolutely necessary from what can be put off until another day. Keep your mind focused on the important tasks and temporarily ignore the other things.

**Multitask with purpose.** Be wary of trying to do too much at one time. Sometimes, we can accomplish more if we only focus on one thing at a time. With all the available technology, the ability to multitask all the time is greater than ever—but that doesn't mean we should constantly do two or more things at one time. It's okay to turn off the cell phone or log out of your email for a set time.

**Hunt for shortcuts.** Find ways to do some tasks in less time. For instance, throwing dinner in a slow cooker before leaving for work in the mornings can make after work time less harried. Another time-saver that works for me is using the timer on my

washing machine—I sort the clothes the night before, put a load in the washer and add soap, then set the timer for six hours. That way, the load has finished washing by the time I'm up in the morning, and I have a jumpstart on the laundry.

**Readjust your expectations.** We all have expectations of how we should do X or Y, but often, we take on how others do X or Y and think that's how we should do X or Y as well. If we let expectations run over us, we end up busier than ever doing things that are not fulfilling or maybe even necessary. Realize that you are you with your own set of skills, abilities, talents—and limitations.

**Develop a relaxing bedtime routine.** Experts say going to sleep at the same time each night and waking at the same time each morning is the best for your body. Resist the urge to stay up late working or being online. Set aside 20 to 30 minutes of "downtime" before you crawl under the covers.

Now that you have a good foundation for recovering your time, next week's lesson will focus on how to build margin into our lives for those unexpected detours.



# Building Margin into Our Lives



*Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?*

*Matthew 6:25*

*The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, while the soul of the diligent is richly supplied.*

*Proverbs 13:4*

*O Lord, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am!*

*Psalms 39:4*

One of my favorite stories about Martin Luther centers around a conversation Luther had with Philip Melancthon. One day, Melancthon said to Luther, “This day you and I will discuss the governance of the universe.” To which Luther responded: “This day you and I will go fishing and leave the governance of the universe to God.”

What I love about this story is the freedom it gives us. If these two mighty men of God could put aside weighty discussions to do something as frivolous as fishing for a day, then maybe—just maybe—we can regularly do the same in our own lives.

This brings us to the question of margin and why we so desperately need it in our

daily lives. Do you have margin in your life? Few of us actually actively seek to add margin to our daily, weekly, or monthly schedules.

Christian physician Richard Swenson has the right concept about margin—something most believers ignore to their own peril. Swenson described it like this: “Margin is the space between our load and our limits.”

Let’s ponder that for a moment. What’s your load? A basic definition is what you can bear up under or reasonably accomplish within a particular time frame. What about limit? That’s our particular brick wall, what we hit when we’ve reached



that boundary.

When we plan for margin, we're actually planning for what Kevin DeYoung in *Crazy Busy* called "the unplannable. It means we understand what's possible for us as finite creatures and then we schedule for less than that."

By not overstuffing our calendars with things that Have To Be Done, we give ourselves the freedom to go fishing when the weather's fine, take a nap, read a book, or participate in a hobby. Without time to recharge our batteries, we will not be able to fulfill our callings and serve our Savior.

Building margin gives us the time to squeeze in time for ourselves, which keeps us in tiptop shape for what God has given us to do. Here are some ideas on how to spend time alone.

**Rejuvenate with God.** As believers, keeping our spiritual bodies healthy is very important to our overall health, too. Make spending time with God through prayer and devotions a priority every day.

**Rejuvenate with others.** Fellowship with friends and family on a regular basis can help spur you on to keep fighting the good fight. Consider joining a small group or weekly Bible study.

**Rejuvenate your body.** Don't forget to pay attention to your body and its needs. Eat

healthy meals and avoid too much junk food. Establish a good sleep habit. Get regular exercise to invigorate your mental and physical well-being.

**Rejuvenate your mind.** Read or listen to books. Listen to music or podcasts. Watch movies. Indulge in a new or old hobby, like knitting, sewing, woodworking, or clogging. Pick something that refreshes you mentally and carve out time to do those things on a regular basis.

**Rejuvenate at home.** Take a few minutes each day to just be by yourself. Sitting on the front porch for 15 minutes before the children come home from school, taking a bath a night after everyone's in bed, or walking around the block during your lunch hour can create a little oasis within your day.

Finally, keep in mind the story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10, where Jesus admonishes Martha to be more like Mary, who sat listening to Jesus. As DeYoung put it in *Crazy Busy*, "Martha isn't doing anything bad. She's just being pulled away from what is better. ... We must make learning from him and taking time to be with him a priority. The priority, in fact."

Let's keep in mind that what Jesus really wants is time with us, and when we focus on making that our top priority, all our other worries and concerns about time and our schedules will be more manageable.

# Redeeming Your Time



Now that you've completed this Bible study about time, do you have more time? While none of us can add a "single hour to his span of life," as Luke puts it (12:25, ESV), we can become better stewards of the days, hours, and minutes God has given us.

The purpose of this study was to help you live the life you need to live by refocusing our priorities to the things of God, such as consistent time spent in his Word and prayer "because being with Jesus is the only thing strong enough to pull us away from busyness," Kevin DeYoung noted in *Crazy Busy*. And he's right—We can't and won't say no to more busyness unless and until we say yes to more of Jesus.

I think it's fitting to close this study with this thought from DeYoung in his book: "We will keep choosing dinner rolls over the bread of life. We will choose the fanfare of the world over the feet of Jesus.

We will choose busyness over blessing. It's not wrong to be tired. It's not wrong to be overwhelmed. It's not wrong to go through seasons of complete chaos. What is wrong—and heartbreakingly foolish and wonderfully avoidable—is to live a life with more craziness than we want because we have less Jesus than we need." Let's all choose more of Jesus this year and beyond, and let the mantle of busyness fall to the wayside.

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