

INTRODUCTION

One of my favorite stories is about the man who worked at a factory. One of his main jobs was to blow the factory whistle at 5:00 to indicate the workday was over. He walked to work each day and passed a jewelry store where a beautiful grandfather clock was displayed in the window. Every morning, he stopped and set his pocket watch to match the time on the grandfather clock. One morning the storeowner was out front sweeping the sidewalk and the factory worker asked him how he kept such accurate time on the grandfather clock. The jeweler said, "Oh, I set it every afternoon when the factory whistle blows at 5:00." That could lead to trouble!

People live by the clock, because time is important to all of us. Benjamin Franklin said, "Do not squander time, for it is the stuff life is made of." As I complete this series on the Family, I want us to talk about the importance of spending time with your family.

Many frustrated people seem to always fight the clock. They stay up late, then they sleep as late as they can and then rush frantically to school or work, gulping down an unhealthy breakfast in the car, applying their make-up (or using a razor) at the stoplight, talking on their cell phone at the same time. They think they are so busy they have to rush, rush, rush everywhere. They work 60 hours a week and complain that they don't have enough time to worship or to spend time with their family.

As I study Jesus' life I am amazed that He never seemed to be in a hurry. Although He was doing the most important job in history (redeeming the world), and although He knew He only had a few years to do it, He never ran. He made time to consider the flowers and the birds of the air. He had time to put his hands on the little children and bless them. Time was His friend.

The Bible gives us some great insight into how time can become your friend rather than your enemy. Basically, God exists in a realm that is not bound by time or space. God doesn't wear a Rolex or even a Timex. He doesn't have a Day-Timer or a Palm Pilot. He is the Creator of time, and He is greater than time. So, the first step in making time your friend is to totally immerse your life in God. In Psalm 90, we read:

"Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God... (verse 4): For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night... (verse 10): The length of our days is seventy years - or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away... (verse 12): teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."

I'll use the four letters in the word TIME to help us learn about the importance of family TIME.

TREASURE!

God says we should treasure time as a valuable commodity. You number your years (or at least some of you do), but God says every day is so precious, we should treasure it and number it.

How valuable is an hour? Ask the businessman whose flight was delayed an hour and he missed an important business deal. How valuable is one minute? Ask the man who had the heart attack in the restaurant and an EMT happened to be sitting at the next table and CPR saved his life. How valuable is a second? Ask the person who hesitated for a second before swerving to avoid the oncoming car. How valuable is a fraction of a second? Ask the Olympic swimmer who missed qualifying by six-tenths of a second. Time really is valuable. So learn a couple of things about what this means for your family:

1. The most valuable asset to share with your family is your time

Parents, do you love your children? Give them the gift of your time. Husbands and wives, give each other the precious blessing of time. Sadly, many parents spell love "T.H.I.N.G.S" but children spell love "T.I.M.E."

Last week I read quotes from some of our members about what makes a strong family. One guy wrote: Dads—Your wife and kids want *you* and not your *money*. Good advice.

I can honestly say I can't remember a single thing my dad ever bought me when I was a kid. But I remember our fishing trips and the time my dad spent coaching my little league team. Parents: give the gift to your children that really *does* keep on giving—give them your time. Husbands and wives, give each other your time; it's the perfect gift for every occasion!

I read the heartbreaking story of a little boy whose dad was always busy working. One day the boy asked, "Dad, how much money do you earn in an hour?" The impatient dad said, "I don't know, I guess I make about \$50 an hour when I'm working, now don't bother me." After a couple of weeks of doing odd jobs around his neighborhood, the little boy approached his dad one evening and said, "Dad, here's \$25. Can I buy 30 minutes of your time so we can play together?" Ouch.

2. You can make more money but you can't make more time

Have you ever heard the expression, "time is money?" It's not true. Time is much more valuable than money. It may be hard to make more money, but it can be done. But it is totally impossible to make more time. TIME is more valuable than money. A.W. Tozer wrote:

"Time is a resource that is nonrenewable and nontransferable. You cannot store it, slow it up, hold it up, divide it up or give it up. You can't hoard it up or save it for a rainy day—when it's lost it's unrecoverable. When you kill time, remember that it has no resurrection."

So, understand that you should treasure time as the most valuable asset you are given in this world. The next letter in TIME is:

INVEST!

We use a lot of phrases with time that aren't really possible. You can't buy more time and you can't really find more time. We speak of making time, but that's impossible, too.

1. You can't save time - you only invest it

Time is more valuable than money, but it's like money in that it can be spent and invested. It's different from money though, because while money can be saved, time can't. If you don't use it, you lose it. Forever. In the early 1970s Jim Croce wrote a song that said, "If I could save time in a bottle, the first thing that I'd like to do, is to save every day 'till eternity passes away—just to spend them with you." Those are great lyrics, and it would be nice if we could save time, but you can't. In fact, a few months after he wrote that song, he was tragically killed in a plane crash in Natchitoches, Louisiana at the age of 30. You can't save time.

We have all kinds of time saving appliances like microwave ovens. Guys love to take short cuts in order to "save time." Show me some of the time you've saved—where is it? You can't save it you can only spend it and invest it. At a graduation commencement at his alma mater, Wheaton College, Billy Graham said: "Time is the capital that God has given us to invest. People are the stocks in which we are to invest our time, whether they're blue chips or penny stocks or even junk bonds."

The difference with money is we all have different amounts of it (perhaps because some have been wiser in spending and investing it), but we all have exactly the same amount of time. Every day, God gives each of us 86,400 seconds. It's as if someone gave you \$86,400 and told you you had to spend it all that day, and any money left over had to be surrendered. You'd shop 'till you dropped! You'd invest it wisely, because there is no promise of more money tomorrow.

It's the same with time. You and I aren't promised a fresh supply tomorrow, so we must invest it wisely while we have it. Where are you investing most of your time?

2. Where you invest your time reveals what is most important to you

There are 168 golden hours in each week. The average person will spend about 56 of those hours sleeping, about 24 of those hours in eating and personal hygiene, and about 50 of those hours working or traveling to work. That means there are only about 35 hours a week of "discretionary" time left over. That's about 5 hours per day. Where are investing those hours?

If I were to follow you around and observe you for those 5 hours, after about 10 days, I could tell you what is most important in your life. You might not like it, or agree with it, but for some of you, surfing the Internet is most important to you. For others of you, watching television, or reading magazines is what's most important.

How much of that discretionary time are you devoting to your Lord? How much are you devoting to your family? A study of 1,500 households at the University of Michigan found mothers working outside the home spend an average of 11 minutes a day on weekdays, and thirty minutes a day on weekends with the children (not including mealtime). Fathers spend an average

of 8 minutes a day on weekdays and 14 minutes a day on weekends in different activities with their children.

Have you ever heard this excuse? Some dad or mom will say, "I don't spend much time with my family, but the little time I do spend is 'quality time.'" I don't really like that phrase, because it is most often used as an excuse for not spending much time together. "Quality time" is really a misnomer, because all time has the same quality. Consider this second...was it of higher quality than the previous second...or of this second right now? It's like talking about "quality money." If I offered you a hundred dollar bill, would you say, "No, it's wrinkled." I'd rather have that new, crisp \$5 because it's of better quality." Hello.

I prefer the phrase "fun family time" or "meaningful family time" but there is no substitute for investing a large quantity of time with your family. If they are important, you'll indicate it by the amount of discretionary time you give them. The next letter in family TIME is:

MANAGE!

I reminded you a few weeks ago, that all the money we receive comes from God and we only manage it. The same can be true of time. God is the creator of time, and He alone controls it.

Once a time management expert was teaching a seminar for executives. He placed a large, clear open-mouthed jar in front of the group. Next, he put seven or eight large rocks into the jar until it was full. "Is the jar full?" He asked. Everyone nodded. Then he took pebbles and filled up the jar with the small rocks until they reached the rim. "Is the jar full?" By now, they didn't answer. So, he poured fine sand in. "Is the jar full?" Some nodded. He proceeded to take a pitcher of water and filled up the jar again. "What's the lesson about time management?" he asked. Hands shot up, and everyone agreed "No matter how busy you are you can always fit more things into your schedule." "Wrong." he replied. "The lesson is: unless you put the big rocks in first, they never will fit in. You must figure out what the big rocks are for you." What are the big rocks in your life? Giving time to God? Giving time to your marriage and to your children? If you don't put those big rocks in first, someone else will fill up your jar. Understand:

1. Every moment is a gift from God that must be managed wisely

There is an entire field of study called "time management." In almost every business in America, consultants are hired to teach busy executives how to better manage their time. When I meet with young pastors each year at our Barnabas Conference, the number one question is always, "How do you manage your time between your family and the church?" Time management is a hot topic. In his book, *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey writes: "Time management is a misleading concept. You can't really manage time. You can't delay it, speed it up, save it or lose it. No matter what you do time keeps moving forward at the same rate. The challenge is not to manage time, but to manage ourselves."

The Bible uses another word. Instead of managing your time, it speaks of redeeming the time, which is an even better idea. Paul writes: "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil." (Ephesians 5:14- 15)

The phrase "walk circumspectly," means to be constantly looking around to make the most of every opportunity. Emmitt Smith is a great football running back, but he's not the biggest or the fastest, or the strongest. What he excels at is running with his eyes open, and he is one of the best at seeing holes as they open and then running through them. That's the way we should live, looking for every opportunity to invest time wisely, then darting through them. When an opportunity passes, it can't be reclaimed—it is gone forever. That's what it means to redeem the time.

2. If you don't manage your time - someone else will manage it for you

You can't save time, or even waste time—you *are* going to spend it *somewhere* and invest it in *someone*. If you don't control your schedule, someone will always be happy to do it for you. Some people complain they just don't have enough time to spend with their family. You've got exactly the same amount of time as everyone else; you just aren't managing your time wisely or managing yourself wisely.

The most important time you will invest will be in your family. Many of you remember the song, "The Cat's in the Cradle" by Harry Chapin. Part of it says,

"My child arrived just the other day.
He came to the world in the usual way.
But there were planes to catch and bills to pay.
He learned to walk while I was away.
He was talking before I knew it, and as he grew
He said, "I'm going to be like you, Dad.
You know I'm going to be like you."

My son turned ten just the other day.
He said, "Thanks for the ball, now come on let's play.
Can you teach me to throw?" I said, "Not today,
I've got a lot to do." He said, "That's OK."
And he walked away and he smiled and he said
"You know I'm going to be like you, Dad,
You know I'm going to be like you."

The final verse says:

I've long since retired and my son's moved away.
I called him up just the other day.
I said, "I'd like to see you, if you don't mind."
He said, "I'd love to, Dad, if I could find the time.
You see, my new job's a hassle and the kids have the flu,
But it's sure nice talking to you, Dad.
It's been real nice talking to you."
And as I hung up the phone it occurred to me,

He'd grown up just like me.
My boy was just like me.

Maybe you've heard the song, but here's the rest of the story: Harry Chapin's wife, Sandy, actually wrote the words to that song after their son Josh was born. It became a self-fulfilling prophecy. When their son was 7, Harry was performing 200 concerts a year, and Sandy asked him when he was going to take some time to be with his son. Harry promised to make some time at the end of the summer. He never made it. That summer, a truck hit Harry's Volkswagen bug and he was killed.

The final letter in TIME is:

ENJOY!

The time you spend with your family should be enjoyable. It should be the best time of your life. Here is a couple of ways to enjoy your family time.

1. Say NO to family time-robbers

There will always be something else to do. There will always be somewhere else you can be, but if you are going to make spending time with your family a priority you are going to have to learn the power of that little two lettered word, "NO."

You need to understand that when you say, "YES" to family time, then you have already said, "NO" to everything else. But many dads and moms allow interruptions and other demands detract from their family time. A thousand years from now, what is going to be more important, spending time with your family, or watching some stupid television show, or going bowling with the boys?

Nobody on their deathbed ever said, "I wish I had spent more time at work."

Several years ago, Ken Griffey, Jr. was invited to the "Players Choice Awards" where he was to be awarded the player of the decade award. That's a big deal, it's even on national television. He beat out players like Barry Bonds and Mark McGwire. But when he found out when the award was to be given, he declined to attend. He had something more important to do. His five-year-old son, Trey, was playing in his first baseball game, and Ken wasn't going to miss it. Good for him!

You need to learn to say, "NO" to some of the things that take you away from your family. Here's another reason to work on enjoying your family time:

2. Your family time is short—so make some happy memories!

Your kids are only going to be with you for a few years, so make the most of it. I have joined many of you who look back and agree those years passed too quickly. Psalm 90 says God is from everlasting to everlasting. Even if you get to live 70 years, that's just a snap of the finger compared to God's eternity.

James writes: "What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes." (James 4:14)

Turn to the person next to you and say, "You don't have very long to live." Say, "Time is running out." Say, "You'd better live for God and live for your family."

It's obvious how much I love music because I want to use another music illustration. Wayne Watson is a Christian songwriter and artist. He wrote a song about how quickly our kids grow up and move away. I mentioned in the first message in this series that husbands and wives had better focus on loving each other because one day it will be just the two of you. The song speaks to that as well. The title of the song is, "Water colored ponies." It's one of my very favorites and I usually cry when I hear it.

The lyrics go:

There are watercolor ponies
On my refrigerator door.
And the shape of something I don't really recognize.
Brushed with careful little fingers
And put proudly on display –
A reminder to us all of how time flies.

Seems an endless mound of laundry,
And a stairway laced with toys
Gives a blow by blow reminder of the war
That we fight for their well-being –
For their greater understanding;
To impart a holy reverence for the Lord..."

There's another verse, but let's listen to Wayne sing the chorus:

Still I wonder, baby, what will we do
When it comes back to me and you?
They look a little less like little boys every day.
Oh the pleasure of watching the children growing
Is mixed with a bitter cup
Of knowing - the watercolor ponies
Will one day...ride away.

They do ride away and live their own lives, so that's why you need to invest lots of time with your family. Treasure your family time. Invest it wisely. Manage your time as a gift from God. Enjoy your family time.

CONCLUSION

Are you living for this time, or are you living for eternity? The third chapter of Ecclesiastes is all about time. It says, "To every season, there is a time. A time to be born, a time to die..." it goes on and on and was even a song recorded by the Byrds in the 1960s. But the most important verse in that chapter is Ecclesiastes 3:11: "He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end." God has placed eternity in our hearts. In other words, we have the ability to *know* there is an eternity—that this life is not all there is.

You should invest plenty of time in your family. But understand the very best thing you can do with your time is to invest in eternity. Psalm 90:12 says, "teach us to number our days aright." That means there is a right way to number your days and a wrong way to number your days. If you live to be 70 that means you'll have about 25,000 days. When we are born, we start numbering them, day 1, day 2, day 3 etc. God numbers them differently and so should we. When we are born, He numbers them, 25,000; 24,999, 24,998... The thing is, we don't ever know where the count down is at any moment. 10, 9, 8, 7, 6,... when we get to zero we expect something to happen. It's not the end, it's the beginning of the flight of the Space Shuttle, or it's the beginning of the New Year in Times Square. When your countdown gets to the end, what's going to happen to you? You are running out of time. Have you invested time to get to know your Creator? Is your life anchored in the One who created time and who is not bound by time? If you don't know Him, today is the perfect time to trust Him.

OUTLINE

TREASURE!

1. The most valuable asset to share with your family is your time.
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INVEST!

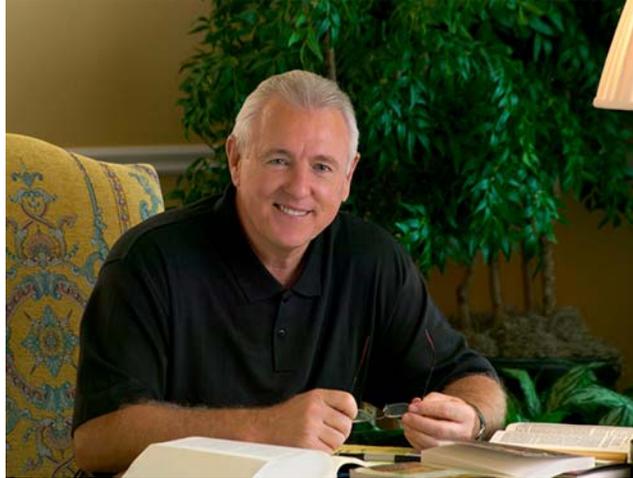
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"What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes." *James 4:14*



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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes