

FOOTNOTES

¹Network Time Protocol is an Internet protocol used to synchronize the clocks of computers to some time reference.

Numerous websites define and discuss it.

²Mesothelioma is an aggressive cancer that affects the lining of the lungs, heart, or abdomen. It is caused by the inhalation of asbestos fibers.

Ecclesiastes 3). When we recognize this fact, it can encourage us to embrace the time that we are in, knowing that another season will soon be on the horizon.

My father discovered after he retired from working in the Newport News Shipbuilding company for more than 44 years that he had mesothelioma.² It was a slow, painful disease. In the last year of his life, he could hardly breathe or sleep. When someone asked him if he had ever asked the question, “why me?” his humble response was, “why not me?” He lived his last moments in time not in resentment, but in acceptance of what life brought.

Enjoy the fruit of our labor. “A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God,” (Eccl. 2:24, 25, *NIV*. See also 3:13, 22; 5:19; 9:7.) So often as we work to get more and more, we don’t have time to enjoy the blessings that God has given us through our work. This message has helped me to enjoy the “simple” things in life—for they are life: a sunrise or sunset, fresh berries in spring and summer, crisp apples in fall, the smell of freshly washed bed sheets, the warmth of a fire in winter.

Remember your Creator. After King Solomon grappled with the meaning of life, he came to the conclusion of the matter: “Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man” (Eccl. 12:13, *NIV*). Is this not the crux of it all? It doesn’t matter what we accomplish; it doesn’t matter what we do; if we are not being transformed into the image of God, in eternity’s view it is all meaningless.

My mother lived in an assisted living home in the year preceding her death. She had suffered a massive stroke and could no longer walk, talk, read, or write. She was trapped in her body. During her last year, I was with her at the home’s Christmas party. One of the resident’s daughters came up to me and said, “When I see your mother’s face, I feel as if I’m looking into the face of Jesus.”

No striving. No mad frenzy. No words. Just time.

“Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man” (Eccl. 12:13, *NIV*).

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The STEWPOT

A POTPOURRI OF PRACTICAL IDEAS to help you become a better steward

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A MOMENT IN TIME

BY BONITA JOYNER SHIELDS

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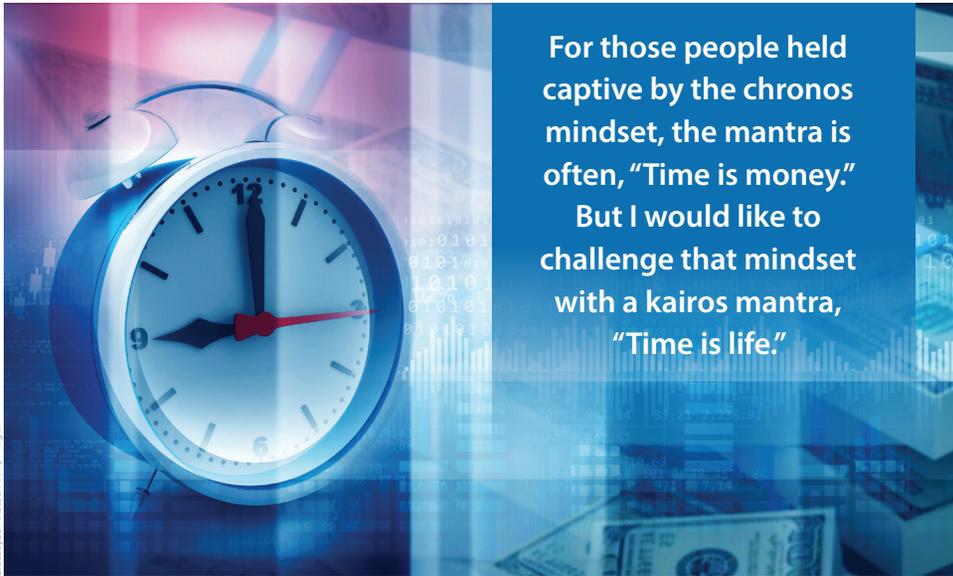
It was a frustrating experience—at least for my husband and me. Roy and I had gone with our church on a mission trip to St. Vincent in the Grenadine Islands. We stayed with a lovely couple whose house had no hot water—which made showers a bit challenging—but we were awakened each morning to the sounds of guitar music and the aroma of homemade hot chocolate.

We were in St. Vincent to assist in building a school. We worked hard each day, walking to the job site, carrying supplies, and painting walls and ceilings. (I *think* I got more paint on the walls and ceilings than myself. Not sure.) On our afternoon off, the group decided to go down the mountain and into town. We crowded into a van that held far more people than it should have, and we traveled with bated breath as we watched our driver maneuver the twists and turns of the windy road.

When we arrived in town, we split up so we could cover more territory. As Roy and I began to go our way, we looked at our hosts, down at our watches, and asked, “How about we meet back here at 2:30 p.m.?” One replied quite nonchalantly, waving his hand, “No worries. We’ll find you.”

Well, that just wasn’t good enough for us time-driven, clock-watching Americans. (This was before the proliferation of cell phones.) This time we asserted, “Let’s meet

STEWARDSHIP is a total lifestyle. It involves our health, time, talents, environment, relationships, spirituality, and finances.



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back here at 2:30 p.m.," pointing to our watches. No question. Just a statement. They responded, "We'll find you." No commitment. Just a statement.

After going at this for a few rounds, we realized we were not going to win this one. So, we went our way, fuming that these time-unconscious people were going to cost us precious time.

Sometime after 2:30 p.m., we noticed our hosts walking leisurely around the corner toward us, waving at us with upraised hands and wearing wide smiles. No worries or fretting for them. Roy and I worried and fretted enough for all of us.

What is it that creates such an internal frenzy for some people—individually and culturally? Why do they—we—feel a need to rush ourselves and others in an attempt to "save time," when, in the end, we save the seconds at the expense of the moments?

TWO TIMES, TOO

A large variety of devices have been invented to measure time. The sundial measured time by casting a shadow on a set of markings calibrated to the hour. The water clock, such as found in the tomb of Egyptian pharaoh Amenhotep I, could be used to measure time even at night, but required manual upkeep to replenish the flow of water. Today, the Global Positioning System (GPS) in coordination with the Network Time Protocol can be used to synchronize timekeeping systems across the globe.¹

The measure of sequential time is called *chronos* in Greek, from which we get the word "chronological." This measurement pertains to the *quantity* of time. However, there's another measurement of time that refers not to the second, minute or hour, but to the *quality* of time. It defines the moments, seasons, and opportunities. The Greeks call this *kairos*.

As Roy and I experienced, in our attempts to preserve our minutes, we

often miss out on our opportune moments. For those people held captive by the chronos mindset, the mantra is often, "Time is money." But I would like to challenge that mindset with a kairos mantra, "Time is life."

Like all "captivity," the captivity to chronos is often based on fear. In our fear-filled pursuit of not wasting precious chronos, we often lose more than we gain. Ask many parents. They will share their regrets of working so hard and trying to make the "best use of time" that they missed out on opportune moments with their children. Especially when we lose someone we love, we often realize how much we live in chronos time rather than kairos time.

LIVING KAIROS

If time is life, how do we plan to spend it?

- Are we going to be intentional about how we use it, or are we going to passively allow unimportant things to crowd out the important?
- Are we going to use it to benefit not only ourselves but others, or are we going to keep it to ourselves?
- Are we going to allow ourselves to be bound by chronos for the sake of wealth or power, or are we going to embrace kairos and be free to truly live?

The book of Ecclesiastes can be depressing, I must admit. King Solomon is grappling with the meaning of life. He starts out with the cognitive distortion of overgeneralization: Everything is meaningless. Wisdom is meaningless. Pleasure is meaningless. Folly is meaningless. But I encourage you to read it again if you haven't done so in a while. In his search, he drills down to some powerful messages for us to take away regarding what really matters in life:

There is a time for everything. Our lives contain seasons: a time to be born and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to uproot; a time to mourn and a time to dance; a time to get and a time to lose (see

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