

## **“How to Find the Time”**

Genesis 1:26-2:3

*Series: Soul Care Week 7 Time for Your Soul*

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Phil decides to finally get serious about a Morning Prayer time with God. Setting his alarm for 5:30 a.m., he is determined to change his routine and start the day off on the right foot. When he finally wakes to his wife’s prodding at 6:58, he kicks himself for sleeping in again. Slurping down a cup of coffee, he kisses his wife and kids and rapidly merges out into stop and go traffic, trading insults and dirty looks with other drivers. At work Phil is greeted by piles of papers, a full inbox of emails and a stuffed voicemail box. He swears an oath to get better organized in the future. Every attempt to dig into the pile, though, is halted by a phone call or a visit from a colleague. Some of these conversations are purposeful and others only want to shoot the breeze which Phil does a lot. In the middle of one such coffee klatch he discovers he has 10 minutes to be at a meeting. Rushing to the table, Phil explains, somewhat dishonestly, he is done with the project but he still needs to put the finishing touches on it. Racing home an hour later than expected, Phil eats a cold dinner alone and plops down in front of the TV. At 11:30 p.m. he goes up to bed and, of course, with all the best intentions in the world, sets his alarm to wake up at 5:30 a.m. for prayer.

Ann feels good about her decision to return to her career after taking time off to be at home when her children were small. Yet sometimes she feels like a carnival juggler spinning a multitude of plates. She would like to be at more of Emma and Aiden’s school or sports events. The bills, mail and papers keep growing in piles around her bed and desk. John, her husband, complains she is always tired. He suggests they try getting away together but their full schedules rarely allow them a moment alone. Ann also misses the friends she made in the weekday Bible study at church where she could express her feelings and receive support. Most of all, Ann feels lost underneath all the competing demands of her life. “Where is there time for me?” she wonders. There was really no option. You need two paychecks to get by today and she wanted to get back to her career. But it all makes her doubt her decision.

Josh feels like he is moving at hyperspeed. He worries about his finals and whether he has the grades and SAT scores to get into the schools on his list. He tries to keep up with his friends on social media. He also loves coming to Senior High Youth Group on Thursday evenings. It’s the place where he feels most connected to God. As the only believer in his family and the only active Christian among his friends, youth group is his life-line to God. It keeps him strong enough to resist the temptations. But fall means sports are starting for two different teams. Games and practices are on Thursdays and Sundays. Josh won’t quit the team but he feels he’s losing his relationship with God. There’s just not the time for both.

Phil, Ann and Josh are nobody ... and everybody. They are composite drawings of situations I hear and see in this community. As with all of us, Josh, Ann and Phil are trying to “find time.” There are more stories – the single parent who is both mother and

father, the homemaker who is always playing catch up, the empty nesters who find their busy careers are creating a space between them, the person looking for work before the severance runs out, the retired persons who are busier now than when they were working.

Are you trying to find the time? As we've seen in this summer series, when it comes to caring for your soul a great obstacle is being "Busy." Everyone is busy. Some even brag about being busy like it's a badge of honor. It's actually more like a disease. Are you too busy to listen to your spouse talk about his or her day? Too busy to play catch with the kids? Too busy to rest or read a book? Too busy to help a neighbor with a problem or listen to a friend's pain? Too busy to read God's Word or pray to your Heavenly Father? Are you caught in crisis mode? Christian author Doug Sherman writes a person in crisis mode is someone

whose goal is simply to get past the crisis of the moment, who feels victimized by the tyranny of the urgent, who dashes from deadline to deadline, appointment to appointment, expectation to expectation and – often – apology to apology."<sup>1</sup>

Is there an exit ramp from crisis mode? We can't "make the time." We all have the same 24 hours. As with money, we need a plan for how we spend our time. Spending time in a wise and godly way is essential if we want to be more like Jesus. Doug Sherman says,

It's about how to put your work in its proper perspective with the rest of your life. In fact it's about how to honor Christ with your whole life, pursuing biblical balance in every area of your life.<sup>2</sup>

Our lives are out of balance and too busy. First, we allow one area, usually our careers, to consume the largest share of our limited time. Some of us may be obsessed with work, even worship our work. Others may be bored by our jobs to the point of hating it. Or maybe you enjoy your career and find it satisfying. How you feel about work is not the problem. Trouble arises when you give your work the lion's share of your time and let the other areas of your life fight for the leftovers.

A fixation on career success, whether that success is measured in dollars, power, applause, fame, votes, whatever – is a sure way to get life out of balance. That's because God never intended life to be devoted primarily to work.<sup>3</sup>

In our culture, you are measured by what you do, what you make, what you own. By contrast, Biblical success means pleasing God with your whole life, including your work. God is not against work. Far from it. Your work matters to God. Work is a gift from God. The primary purpose of work is not to serve yourself but to serve God and those around you. God wants you to get your career back into balance with the other areas of your life.

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<sup>1</sup> Doug Sherman and William Hendricks, How to Balance Competing Time Demands, (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1989) p. 13-14.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 41.

“Okay,” someone might respond, “then I’m going to put God first, my family second, and my work third. If I can just maintain this hierarchy, everything will fall into place.” This sounds good. But such a hierarchy, according to Doug Sherman, is the other reason we fail to balance all our commitments. It sets up a conflict between family and career, between career and God, between God and family and so on. Jesus does not want you to choose between God, family, work and the other areas. The Bible teaches us to serve God in our family, to serve God at work, to serve God in our personal life, to serve God in our community and to serve God in our church. Moses in the Old Testament and Jesus in the New say the greatest commandment is to

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind,” and “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22: 34-40).

God is not simply the top on a list of priorities. He is the Lord of all areas of life.

Instead of the God, family, work hierarchy, Doug Sherman proposes another solution. From a survey of Scripture, he identifies five areas that are **equally** important to God: Personal Life, Family, Work, Church and Community. In the first chapter of the Bible, God issues instructions for these five dimensions of life.

God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it” (Genesis 1:28)

After creating man and woman in His image, He blesses them and commands them 1) to be fruitful – start families, 2) increase in number and fill the earth – create communities, 3) tend and rule the earth – go to work. When creation is finished it says,

By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done. (Genesis 2:2-3)

In these verses God establishes the Sabbath for 4) worship and for 5) personal rest and refreshment. From the dawn of creation, God intends these five areas of life to exist in balance. No one takes priority over the others, all are under the Lordship of Christ, each is a way to serve and honor Christ.

Doug Sherman call these five areas “The Pentathlon.” Maybe during the recent Tokyo Olympics you watched The Pentathlon in which athletes compete in fencing, swimming, horse riding, running and pistol shooting. To win, a Pentathlete must do well in all five sports. You cannot practice one or two and ignore the others or you will be disqualified. You must train for each of the competitions. And though no athlete is perfect in all events, he or she continually works at improving all five.

In the same way, a Christian must spend time on all five areas. You can’t major in one or two and neglect the others. Each area takes practice and effort. Being a parent requires different skills than those called for at work, church or in the community. And

while no one ever reaches perfection, the goal is steady improvement and growth in all five. Is it difficult? Only if you expect to win a gold medal on your first try. But little steps of growth in each area eventually pay off.

The image in your bulletin reminds me of a Trivial Pursuit game piece with some important differences. That had six pie pieces, this has five. That was trivial. This is not. This is where all the practices we've talked about in soul care work together. Take some time this week and evaluate yourself. Where did you invest your time? What received the lion's share? What was ignored? What changes can you make in the coming week or month to bring more balance to your life? Work out the plan that's right for you. If you struggle with one or more areas of life – for example work, church or the community – it may be you are not following your unique God-given purpose. When you do what you are made to do it saves you stress, time and energy. This month, we want to help you chart a course to your purpose using GPS – your Gifts Passion and Story. Sign up for a Growth Group now and join us for the launch of GPS on Sunday, Sept. 26.

As you work to balance the slices of your week, you'll discover how to love God with all your time, all the time. Don't waste time, it may cost you. Doug Sherman shares this story of a man involved in one of his seminars who let his work eat up more and more of his life. He started staying at work later and later, neglecting his wife and children. He told them it was just a temporary thing – just six or eight months. After all, his business was booming and he wanted to ride the rocket all the way to the moon. In fact, he told them it was for *their* benefit. After he made a killing, he explained, he would be able to cut back and give them the attention they deserved. Soon it became weekends at work too. In fact, this man's entire life boiled down to his job and a Sunday school class he taught. For months this dragged on as his industry broke all-time records.

One Friday night his wife asked him to go out to dinner with another couple. Reluctantly, he went, and they had a great evening. In fact, as he and his wife retired for the night, he thought about how his life couldn't be better.

At 7 a.m. the next morning, this man awoke to find movers in his bedroom. Uniformed guys were packing up boxes, hauling furniture, and rolling up carpets. In fact, they asked him to get out of bed so they could dismantle it. Startled, he scrambled out of bed and staggered down the hall where his wife was directing traffic. He demanded to know what was going on, at which point she handed him a sheaf of divorce papers. She was leaving him, taking the children and the furniture. He could have the house.

Start spending time wisely now, before it's too late.