

SHARING LIFE AT FIRST ON SEPTEMBER 8, 2019 BY PASTOR BOB BENDER
“CHOOSING TO LIVE IN God’s Standard Time (GST)” FROM JOHN 7:1-13

Did you hear about the farmer from Hicksville when asked how he felt about daylight savings time? He responded, “I love it. DST adds an additional hour of sunlight each day for my crops.” So today I want to talk to you about GST or God’s Standard Time.¹

I’ve got a couple of questions for you as we begin. At what age should you finish college? At what age should you get married? At what age should you have your first child? At what age should you retire? So, we can conclude 1) that God’s timetable differs for each one of us. Ecclesiastes 3:1 says, “There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven.” 2) We can also assume that God’s timetable and man’s timetable are not only different but often contradictory. Proverbs 19:21 says, “Many plans are in a man’s heart, but the counsel of the Lord will stand.” 3) And God’s timetable is best for us. Ecclesiastes 3:11 says, “He has made everything beautiful in His time.”

And how should we respond to these things? Daily we make choices choosing either God’s ways or our own. These choices involve God’s timing as well. Today I want to talk to you about choosing Jesus’ timing from John 7:1-13 <read>.

This chapter centers on the Feast of the Tabernacles, or the Feast of Booths. At this feast, Israel would actually build booths in which to dwell during the seven day festival in Jerusalem commemorating the Lord’s protection of them during the wilderness wanderings. Here we learn that Mary and Joseph had several children naturally after Mary birthed Jesus supernaturally. At this time his brothers were unbelievers (though later they would believe) and suggested that Jesus go to Jerusalem and declare Himself publicly so they could gain notoriety from being with Jesus. Jesus’ brothers were encouraging Jesus to go where the action is out of rural Galilee into the big city. It would be like Justin Bieber’s brothers encouraging him to have a rock concert in NYC with them accompanying him on stage. Jesus told His brothers that they can go to the feast anytime they want to. So, after His brothers had gone to the feast, Jesus went up not publicly as his brothers had suggested but in secret because the Jews were seeking to kill Him. Instead of a food fight brewing, it was going to be a feast fight. However, the Father had a plan for His Son, and nothing could spoil that plan.

This is the second time Jesus told His family they had no control over His timing as He told His mother the same thing earlier in John 2:4 at the wedding of Cana of Galilee. Here this is more than a brother telling his other brothers, “You’re not the boss of me!” Jesus knew if He declared himself publicly, the antagonism toward Him would grow and that His days on this earth would be shortened. If Joseph and Mary had control over Jesus’ timetable as Messiah, I doubt they would written the script God had for Him: staying at home until 30 and then only having a ministry of 3½ years, dying at the young age of 33 on a cruel cross.

But Jesus continually lived on God’s timetable; not man’s (John 7:6, 8, 30; 8:20; 12:23; 13:1; 17:1). He lived every moment in perfect harmony with the His Father’s plan for His life which included His timing—what a model for each one of us! Jesus did not tempt the Father by rushing to the feast nor did He lag behind when the proper time had come for Him to attend it. We need this same spiritual discernment to know God’s timing for us.

Like Jesus’ brothers, when we take our eyes off the Lord and put them on man or when we are dull to hear God’s voice and listen to man’s we get in trouble. Dave McClung was a layperson at a large church. His pastor was elected to their denomination’s board, so he became the pastoral coordinator at the church. And after a few weeks on the job, he said, “The largest surprise I have

experienced is how much time pastors spend: 1) Calming members who have become upset over something; 2) Making sure that others don't get upset; and 3) Tracking down rumors about people who are supposed to be upset, but really aren't." You see, when things don't happen on our timetable, we focus on people and begin to blame each other.

The Good Doctor show is about a young autistic savant surgeon named Shaun Murphy. It was early on in his new job at the hospital that he arrived late. His supervisor said, "You're late." Shaun said, "No I'm not." "Sure, you are." "No; I am not late. I got to the bus stop on time. It was the bus that was late; not me." And there was no convincing him otherwise. We can make all kinds of excuses and justify all kinds of actions when we are not on God's timetable.

So how can we live on God's Standard Time? Today's big idea is simple: Live in the present. Sounds simple; doesn't it? It is simple. It's not easy, but it's simple. I find that in my life, this is one of the most difficult things for me to do. To live in the present, we must overcome a couple of temptations.

Let's resist the temptation to plod too far behind God's timing in our lives. We get sluggish. We procrastinate. We become unresponsive to the Holy Spirit. Let's not make the mistake of the children of Israel and the Promised Land as they wandered 40 years in the wilderness because they did not seize the day God had for them.

Let's resist the temptation to presume upon God and get ahead of Him. Let's not be like Saul who got impatient waiting for Samuel to show up to offer a sacrifice, so he took things into his own hands to his own demise. When we put God on our timetable; when we begin to rush God's timing; when we get impatient and in a hurry; when we decide to take matters into our own hands; when we stop and shout at God like a two-year-old in a tantrum, the consequences will be disastrous. We rush for what we desire, and it leads to disobedience (the [marshmallow test video](#)).

Satan took Jesus through "the marshmallow test" on the Mount of Temptation, didn't he? Jesus passed it with flying colors as He resisted the temptation to take now in an inappropriate way what God was going to give Him later appropriately (all the kingdoms of the world). So, let's not rush God. When we don't know what to do, we will sit tight till God does His thing. In the words of the song by Maranatha, "In His time, in His time. He makes all things beautiful in His time. Lord, please show me every day as You're teaching me Your way that You do just what You say in Your time."

Let's pursue God living in God's Standard Time.

Now is the time to be saved (2 Cor. 6:2).

Now is the time to serve the Lord (Jo. 24:15).

Now is the time to seek the Lord (Is. 55:6).

Now is the time to separate yourself from the world (Rom. 13:11).

Now is the time to be sanctified (Jo. 3:5).

What does living in God's standard time look like?

Wait patiently in GST. How well do you wait? (James Robinson and Stroud waiting story). Word of God speak. Isaiah 30:18 (NLT) says, "So the Lord must wait for you to come to Him so He can show you His love and compassion. For the Lord is a faithful God. Blessed are those who wait for His help." Psalm 25:4 says, "Make me know Your ways, O Lord; Teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation; For You I wait all the day." Habakkuk 2:3 (TLB) says, "But these things I plan won't happen right away. Slowly, steadily, surely, the time approaches when the vision will be fulfilled. If it seems slow, do not despair, for these things will surely come to pass. Just be patient! They will not be overdue a single day!" Expect God to come through for you because He always does. Perhaps God's word to you

is the same thing He said to Sarah in Genesis 18:14, “Is anything too difficult for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you.” Live in the present.

(Chris and Danielle Swiontek interview: “Was there a time in your lives when you found this principle of waiting patiently a challenge to you and how did you get through it? What encouragement can you give to others who struggle to trust God's timing?”)

Walk purposefully in GST. God says in Isaiah 46:10, “My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all my good pleasure.” Let us join Him in that wonderful promise.

Romans 13:11 says, “Do this knowing the time that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.” At the beginning of each day this week, let's pray, “Lord help me to walk in your purpose for my life today.” Maybe ask yourself the question, “Lord how can I love You and others today?” Live in the present.

Work passionately in GST. Jesus says in John 9:4, “Work while it is day; the night comes when no man can work.” Daily we have opportunities to be the hands, feet, voice, and heart of Jesus in serving others, sharing Jesus, and building the kingdom of God. Where in FBC do you see yourself working? Live in the present.

What time zone are you living in? Live in the present. Do not let the failures of the past or the fears of the future rob you of your faith in the present.

So, at the end of our days when all that is said and done and hopefully more is done and said, we can pray as Jesus prayed at the end of His days in John 17:1,4, “Father, the hour (of my death) has come. I glorified You on the earth having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.”

Jesus challenges us as He did His hearers in Luke 12:56, “You can predict the weather by looking at the earth and sky but you really don't know what's going on right now.” Live in the present. See Isaiah 43:18-19.

God says in Exodus 3:14 when Moses asked God what His name was, “I am who I am” which being interpreted means, “I am the God who always is.” God is the God of the now. Live in the present. God's train always runs on time. It's time to get on board!

“Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy and keep these things which are written in it for **the time is at hand**” (Rev. 1:3). “The men of Issachar **understood the times** to know what Israel should do” (1 Chr. 12:33). Now is your time to see, sense, and seize this day and obey God.

Life is not an endless gerbil existence running after ourselves in a wheel in a cage. Life is not *Groundhog Day* all over again day after day. Life is not a flat circle as the nihilist philosopher Nietzsche would state as we run round and round in life with no purpose. Life is in the present because God is here. “Life is a gift. That's why it's called the present.”—corny but true. Live in it to its fullest.

Some of us have lived charmed lives. Others of us have lived challenged lives with one challenge after another. All of us can live a changed lives as we simply live in the present.

Someone has said, “About all we do in life is use or lose opportunity.” Today is your opportunity to get on God's timetable. Don't miss it. This week our assignment is simple: Live in the present.

¹ <https://www.sermonsearch.com/sermon-series/S116390/god-standard-time-gst/>