

04

Adding up the Hours

WHAT'S THE SAME | A SINGLE HOUR



So far, Jesus has been up in our business with these birds and barns.

This week, in both passages, Jesus asks a very pointed question: *can you add a single hour to your life by being anxious?*

My oldest son recently asked me why God chose to put 24-hours in each day. It was a great question. But I didn't have a great answer. If it were up to me, I would've created time to be more flexible. Need a few more hours? Go ahead and take them. Fill 'er up. Get it done.

However, Jesus never used time to be a tool of convenience; he used it as a tool of reliance.

Time is yet another invitation to trust God. But it isn't usually treated like an invitation, more so a limitation. When we feel limited in this precious resource, anxiety isn't far behind.

Joshua is one character in the Bible that trusted God with his time exceptionally well.

**TIME IS YET
ANOTHER
INVITATION TO
TRUST GOD.**

In Joshua 10, he tells God to make the sun and moon stand still so he would have enough time to defeat his enemies and fulfill God's covenant to Israel. (Quick aside: notice that Joshua didn't ask for more time for himself. He asked for more time to do what God had asked him to do.)

Commentators are all over the place as to whether this *standing still of the sun* was a physical alteration of time, an actual slowing of the sun, or if God sovereignly adjusted specific circumstances to stretch the sense of time to make sure Joshua was victorious.¹ In any case, Joshua tells God to add more time to his day and that's what happens. It is one of the most mind-blowing and mysterious examples of God's omnipotence and authority in the Bible.

God. Stopped. Time.

The Creator of the sun himself, sacrificed business as usual to keep a promise he had made to his kids. He also made it known to Joshua's enemies, who worshipped the inferiority of creation itself, that Joshua was worshipping the one true God.

In verse 13 it says, "The sun stopped in the midst of heaven and did not hurry to set for about a whole day."² The sun *did not hurry*. That word hurry is defined as "to rush; to act or move at high speed."³ The sun slowed at the command of God.

It is safe to say that the sun has a pretty big job to do. The sun holds life and time in its orbit. But sometimes we think we are the sun. We mistakenly believe that we are the force that keeps our life in balance. And so we refuse to slow at the command of God.

But a God that is kind and in control can be trusted with our time.

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Joshua's story is incredibly insightful into what Jesus is teaching. He wants us to remember who has the power to slow the sun. Jesus wants us to see how anxiety devalues the treasure of time, and how powerfully God can use it when we allow him to.

When our heart is set on controlling how we spend our time, it reveals that we think God can't be trusted with it. Stealing time from God is never a good

idea, even when we think we may be protecting it for our own good.

To trust God with our time requires humility. Which is one of those heart-sewn characteristics we cannot manufacture on our own. But one way to grow in humility is to cease our self-generated schedules with the slowing oar of obedience.

WHAT'S DIFFERENT | YOU ARE NOT ABLE

Jesus says something about the treasure of time in Luke's version that he doesn't in Matthew's. He elaborates on how little power we have over it by adding this sentence, "If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest?"

Luke is our attention-to-detail guy, so the fact that this is unique to his book means it was intentional and significant. It is a very personal question that Jesus has for his disciples: *If you are not able, why are you anxious?*

If you are not able.

Friends, Jesus answers the question for his disciples and for us. We are not able. We can't handle the chaos. We can't do it all. But let's be honest, it doesn't keep us from trying.

Jesus tells us plainly: we can't get more life by worrying about life more.

Some of us are walking in the opposite direction of freedom because we are worshipping worry with our time. To follow Jesus is to pluck the panic out of our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit and hand over our plans to God. Even our very hours. Minutes. Seconds.

The late Reverend Dean Brackley, a Jesuit priest, called the act of handing over our plans to God, "downward mobility." He implores us to "Have the courage to lose control of your life. Have the courage to feel useless."⁴ This is a part of the upside down kingdom Jesus has come to establish. Up until Jesus came on the scene, God's heart for mankind had been misconstrued to emulate upward mobility. *Climb the ladder of religion. Do more. Get more. Accumulate. Gather. Keep.*

**HAVE THE
COURAGE TO
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OF YOUR LIFE.**

And yet, we are told to be "rooted" in Christ (Colossians 2:6-7). To willingly descend down. To be humbled. To be grounded. To be established in the faith, not in the appearances of faith.

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In Western culture, nothing causes us more worry than feeling out of control and useless. And yet, Jesus says the only useless waste of time is spent entertaining our anxieties.

WHAT THAT MEANS | TITHE YOUR TIME

So what does Jesus ask? *Which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?* We can't add anything to our day by worrying, but we can certainly take from it. Jesus warns against appeasing worry by offering it the hours that belong to God. And *only* God.

When you sacrifice your time to another idol, God gets jealous. Sorry, I know that's one of those God-traits that sits sideways in most of our hearts. We don't understand holy jealousy. It's just not something we've ever seen done healthily in this world.

When God is jealous he doesn't throw a fit, employ the silent treatment, beat, punish, or shame—but at some point if you keep stealing time from God, your life will look broken into. Because idol worship doesn't produce life, it produces brokenness.

When busyness becomes the fuel that flares anxiety, we miss out on the sweet presence of the Holy Spirit's guidance. When we don't worship God with our time, we will see hours slip away like water through our fingers. I only know that because I have experienced what it is like to steal time from God to serve myself, and I've realized there's never quite enough time to pull off the heist.

Instead of trying to prove the impossible by adding hours to our day, let's allow God to prove the limitlessness of his goodness by giving him the time we have. Not to serve ourselves, but to serve his purposes. Not to fight for ourselves, but to fight for our faith. Not for more control, but for less.

ALLOW GOD TO PROVE THE LIMITLESSNESS OF HIS GOODNESS.

When we do, we may just feel the sun lengthening in our days. We may just find the breathing room in our lives and in our relationships that we didn't think we had. It's not magic, it's obedience. And God never asks us for something he doesn't plan on giving back in bulk.



DISCUSS

What is your relationship with time? If we looked at your calendar for the next month, what would we see?

Have you ever considered that God may give you the breathing room your schedule needs if you trust him with your time?

What do you think it looks like to practically “trust” him in this way?

What do you think about Reverend Brackley’s challenge: “Have the courage to feel useless”?

Would you be brave enough to consider if have you stolen time from Jesus in certain areas of your life? If so, share those areas.



READ & REFLECT

Read 1 Peter 5:6-10.

What is the first reward we are promised for humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God in verse 6?

Who is in control of when that “proper time” is?

What are we in control of in verse 7?

What warnings are we given in verse 8?

What single action are we told to take in verse 9?

What role does short seasons of suffering have in the master plan of God in verse 10?

PEACE PRACTICE | TITHE YOUR TIME

Whatever area of your life you recognized as a potential “time stealer” from God, redeem that by giving it to him. If it’s Netflix, don’t watch it. If it’s happy hour, skip it. If it’s avoiding hard conversations, have them. If it’s over-doing, do less. Whatever it is, fast from it. Keep each other accountable by doing check-ins throughout the week and come ready next week to share what replaced that time.

First Look

Luke 12:27-28

Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith!

Second Look

Matthew 6:28-30

And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?