

Coronavirus Positives – A Spiritual Perspective

TIME, PRECIOUS TIME



**“So teach us to number our days,
that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” (Ps. 90:12)**

Nonexistent a few months ago, the coronavirus has come upon us, and at this point in time, this microscopic invader is dominating much of our lives. But, as with all earthly things, this too shall eventually pass. The lessons that God is teaching us and that we can learn at this time, however, can have a lasting effect, but only if we have the wisdom to discover them and then apply them to our lives. Over the next few weeks, we will continue to share positives from this current crisis that we believe God has given us as He works this for our good (Rom. 8:28). Today, we examine how we view and value one of God’s most precious gifts, time.

One of the positives from this crisis is an opportunity to view time in a different light. Due to this pandemic, many of the usual activities of life have been temporarily halted. Many of us suddenly find ourselves with more “free time” than we’ve had in years. Most of the events and the special plans that we had made, as well as the everyday activities that have filled our calendars for so long suddenly are missing. School and extracurricular school activities, sports, entertainment activities and kids’ events are all suddenly absent. Many of us have either been laid off, are working less, or are working from home. Vacations have been canceled. Weddings have been postponed. We no longer go out to the movies, to kids’ sporting events, to restaurants, to concerts. High school sports, March Madness, the NBA, MLB, the NFL, NASCAR, the PGA, Wimbledon, the Olympics, all either canceled or put on hold indefinitely. ESPN has been reduced to either

showing games from twenty years ago, the “classics”, they like to call them, or televising events that no one would ever have watched in more normal times, think dodge ball juggling, corn hole competitions and slippery slide championships (I am not making this up). I know it’s hard to believe, but the morning and afternoon talk shows now have even less to talk about than they did before! Suddenly, the very things that have filled so much of our time, the very things that have become so routine and comfortable to us, have either been taken away or drastically changed. And with this, suddenly God has given us two life-changing opportunities! One, to reexamine how we have, up to this point in our lives, spent our time, and, two, to resolve to make better choices in how we invest our time going forward, not only making this short life better, but also paying eternal dividends (Mark 10:29-30).

Where do your true priorities lie? For the answer, look no further than your calendar and your checkbook. How you spend your time and your money will always reveal what is most important to you. A wise man once said, “Time is the most precious thing people have, most people will give you their money before they will give you their time”. There is great truth in this. After all, we can always make more money, but we cannot make more time! ***For all of us, whether we are willing to admit it or not, our time is at a premium, and how we spend our time is the primary indicator of where our priorities lie.*** Not only is our time on earth limited, but, once spent, it is gone forever. Every day of life is a gift from God. Every day, God gifts us with 1440 minutes. Every day, God also gives us a choice, a choice of how to spend His gift of time. As with any gift, we have 3 options. We may use it as the giver intended, we may use it for some other purpose, or we may not use it at all. Our choice of how to use every gift is determined by how much we value it. So, the question becomes, how much value do we place on the gift of time that God gives us? How many great things could God do through his people, if we were only willing to fully value and use the gift of time that He has given us? The hard fact is that we always make time for the things that are most important to us. So, the question for you and I becomes this: Is what I value and have decided to invest my time in the same things that God also values? To live a life with no regrets, both now and in eternity, we must take inventory of our life and how we spend our time.

Time once spent cannot be reclaimed. With each tick of the clock, a moment of your life is forever behind you. Once a day, an hour, a minute, is gone, it is gone forever. This fact shouldn’t cause us to be depressed or

fearful, but instead should liberate us to make the most of whatever time God gives us. I am reminded of the science fiction movie, *In Time*, in which everyone's remaining time is prominently displayed on their forearm and may be viewed at any moment. How much differently would we live, if we could look down at our arm and see our remaining time on earth ticking away minute by minute? Pope Paul VI stated, "Somebody should tell us, right at the start of our lives, that we are dying. Then we might live life to the limit, every minute of every day. Do it, I say! Whatever you want to do, do it now! There are only so many tomorrows." Is this not exactly what God has told us in His word? The shortness of our earthly life: "For what is your life, it is even a vapor, that appears for a little time and then vanishes away." (James 4:14) The urgency of taking action today, while we have the opportunity: "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might: for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going" (Eccl. 9:10). Jesus understood that his time on earth was limited, and therefore made the most of his opportunity, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night comes, when no man can work" (John 9:4). Shouldn't the same be said for his followers? In fact, listen to the New Living Translation of this verse: "We must quickly carry out the tasks assigned to us by the one who sent us. The night is coming, and then no one can work." We can waste, spend, or redeem the remaining time we have been given (Eph. 5:15-16). The choice is ours, and we make it every minute of every day.

God's desire is for us all to make the best use of our time. This begins in our youth, when life seems easy and so full of possibilities, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth" (Eccl. 12:1). In our youth, our time seems unlimited, however, God describes our lives as a vapor, something that appears for just a moment and then vanishes (James 4:14). God's desire for us to use our time wisely continues through our adult years and into old age. May we live our lives in such a way so that we may be able to echo the words of David in Ps. 71:17-18, "O God, You have taught me from my youth, And I still declare Your wondrous deeds. And even when I am old and gray, O God, do not forsake me, Until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to all who are to come." As God's children, we have both the blessing and the responsibility to invest our time to teach others about God, including the generations that follow us. As Christians, we are also to be good examples to those who are not, and we are to make the most of our opportunities to reach them with the gospel, "When you are with unbelievers, always make good use of the time." (Col. 4:5, CEV).

“Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.” (Eph. 5:15-16) How do we do that? One way is by realizing how short our lives are. I have yet to meet the person, even those who have lived to be a hundred years old, who thought their time on this earth was long. The psalmist recognized this long ago, “As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, Or if due to strength, eighty years, Yet their pride is but labor and sorrow; For soon it is gone and we fly away...So teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom.” (Ps. 90:10-12). To walk wisely is also to realize that, after our earthly lives have ended, we will face God in judgment. Our days on this earth are finite (1 Chr. 29:15, Job 7:6, 9:25, Ps. 39:5, James 4:14), and God’s judgment and an infinite eternity awaits (Eccl 12:14, Matt. 25:31-46, Heb. 9:27). May we all make the best use of the time that God gives us. That certainly includes also accepting God’s gift of His Son, Jesus Christ, in baptism (Acts 2:38, 22:16, Gal. 3:27), presenting our body as a living sacrifice to Him (Rom. 12:1), and remaining faithful, even unto death (Rev. 2:10).

Perhaps no earthly place echoes eternity quite like a cemetery. Walk through a cemetery and examine the tombstones. Realize that an entire life has been reduced to two dates and one little dash carved into a stone. For each person who has ever walked on this earth, our lives really come down to what transpired between those two dates. It all comes down to what’s in the dash. We don’t have control over many things in life. We don’t get to decide when we are born, who our parents are or what time period we will live in. We don’t get to decide the dates on our gravestone. We don’t know when our time on this earth will end. Only God knows. Our lives are in His hands (Eccl. 9:1). But there is one thing we have a vast amount of control over. We get to decide how we’re going to use our dash.

God wants each of us to realize that our time on earth is limited so that we spend it wisely. You get to choose how to spend that little dash of time between the two dates of your earthly existence. What are you spending yours on? Are you living the dash, with eternity in mind, knowing fully well who you are and why you are here? Or, perhaps instead, are you dashing to live, hurriedly spending precious time chasing things that, in the long run, really don’t matter?

The past is forever behind us and tomorrow remains uncertain. All we have is today. Our lives and our time on this earth are finite. Eternity is not. Given those facts, doesn't it make sense to make the most of every precious day? Doesn't it make sense to live like we are dying? How many ticks of the clock do we have left? Only God knows. The angel of death may come for us at any moment. All we have is today, but, if we are wise, that is enough, because each new day of life brings a new opportunity (Eccl. 9:4). Today, you can either recommit your life to God or, perhaps, commit your life to Him for the first time. Today, you can reconsider your God-given purpose and the eternal legacy you want to leave behind and allow that to guide your schedule moving forward. Today, God has given you yet another precious chance to come to know Him. With this current pandemic, God has given you an opportunity to re-evaluate how you spend your time and to vow to make improvements going forward. How do you refocus? To make the most of your remaining time on earth, spend each day in a way that leaves behind a worthwhile legacy, both now and in eternity. The most valuable thing God has given you is your eternal soul. The most valuable currency God has given you is your time. Please, don't waste either one!