

2018 Stewardship Month
The Gift of Time
Hosea 10:12-13; Revelation 3
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INTRODUCTION

What difference does three-and-a-half minutes make? Well, it depends. It depends on where you are. It depends on what is happening around you. It depends on what you are doing.

The night was cold and clear, and the moon bright. The stars stood silently and steadily in their crystal place above the Ruhr.

And during the night a man fell.

From 17,000 feet he fell. Conscious, thoughtful, and—without a parachute—frightened.

On the night of November 4, 1944, only moments before he fell, Flight Lieutenant Joseph B. Herman had been the pilot of a Royal Australian Air Force Handley Page Halifax B.III bomber on a wartime mission over the Ruhr Valley, Germany. At 18,000 feet, the bomber was hit by antiaircraft fire. Herman's bomber caught fire, so he ordered the crew to bail out. He had taken his parachute off earlier because it was uncomfortable. As he crawled toward it, the bomber exploded.

- Now he fell, helpless, wondering how long it would take to fall 17,000 feet.

Around him in the night were flickering beams of searchlights. Dark objects fell beside him. He realized these to be the debris of the aircraft falling with him at 120 miles per hour. Was his parachute amongst those dark objects? Could he reach it, put it on, and. . . ?

As he tumbled head-over-heels, he gave himself up to die. At first, he kicked and screamed, but then realized it was a waste of energy. So, he just relaxed and gazed at the rivers and lakes that he saw below him.

How long would it take to fall to his death? How long did he have to live?

THUMP!

Suddenly, something crashed into him. He instinctively grabbed "it." He clung tightly to "it" with both arms.¹

Let's leave Joe Herman and you hanging on to something in midair for a few minutes.

Was time critical to Joe falling through the air without a parachute? How about in your life and mine? Is time critical? How's our quality time with those who mean the most to us? Do we have estranged relationships? Are there those whom we've cut off or with whom we have minimal relationships? Is our anger, hurt, rage, pride, and lack of mercy and forgiveness worth the barrier?

Could it be that we have won the battle but lost the war in that we've lost something that is precious, fragile, and tender by the hardness of our hearts?

While Randy Pausch, known for the “The Last Lecture,” was dying of pancreatic cancer, he said “I’m hanging in there, trying to spend as much quality time with my wife and kids as possible, and though it’s very frustrating to know I won’t beat the cancer, there’s a great satisfaction in knowing that I’m walking off the field with no regrets.”²

So, the question is, “How can we live a life of no regrets?” We’re busy. We have obligations. We have expectations. Sometimes, we are tired and feel like we’re on a free fall. How do we make quality time with those most important to us in our hurried world? I have a few suggestions.

WAYS TO MAKE QUALITY TIME

Quality time with our loved ones is important—especially children. It’s more than a hurried breakfast, watching TV, playing video games, and racing through life.

Some of you may remember the song, *Cat’s in the Cradle*, by Harry Chapin. Let me read the lyrics for you. I’m sure some of you will be singing it in your head as I do!

My child arrived just the other day
Came to the world in the usual way
But there were planes to catch and bills to pay
He learned to walk while I was away

He was talkin' 'fore I knew it
And as he grew he said
"I'm gonna be like you, Dad
You know I'm gonna be like you"
And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon
Little boy blue and the man on the moon
"When you comin' home?"
"Son, I don't know when
We'll get together then
You know we'll have a good time then"
Well, my son turned ten just the other day
He said, "Thanks for the ball, Dad, come on, let's play
Could you teach me to throw? I said, "Not today, I got a lot to do"
He said, "That's okay"
And he walked away
And he smiled and he said
"You know, I'm gonna be like him, yeah
You know I'm gonna be like him"
...

Well, he came from college just the other day

So much like a man I just had to say

"I'm proud of you

Could you sit for a while?"

He shook his head and he said with a smile

"What I'd really like, Dad, is to borrow the car keys

See you later

Can I have them please?"

...

We'll get together then

You know we'll have a good time then"

I've long since retired, my son's moved away

I called him up just the other day

"I'd like to see you, if you don't mind

He said, "I'd love to, Dad, if I could find the time"

"You see my new job's a hassle and the kids have the flu

But it's sure nice talkin' to you, Dad, it's been sure nice talkin' to you"

And as I hung up the phone it occurred to me

He'd grown up just like me, my boy was just like me

...

And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon

Little boy blue and the man on the moon

"When you comin' home?"

"Son, I don't know when

We'll get together then

You know we'll have a good time then"³

There's something profoundly sad about the song. Dad's too busy for a relationship when the kid is young and by the time he is ready for a relationship, the son is too busy for the dad and is living his own life.

- **Family Worship.** A great place to begin is to have family worship. Praying together every morning and evening bonds a family as they worship the most important Person in our lives. When the kids were young, worship in our family was a fun time. We had the cats and the dogs join us for worship. It was great! They had to pray just like the rest of us! Sometimes we sang. Sometimes we read stories. Sometimes we shared prayer requests. Our kids will never forget those times.

- **Listening and Affirming Conversations.** Quality time means setting aside the electronics. Quality time is looking the other in the eye, listening to and affirming the conversation.

Imagine. . . You've stayed up late watching a movie. You wake up late. You are about to grab a paper bowl, peel a banana, grab a piece of toast, and hurry out the door.

There's a knock. You hurry to the door and find your very best friend that you haven't seen in ages. He can only see you this morning for an hour. You have a dilemma: Do I hurry off for an appointment and not visit with my best friend or do I invite him in and have table fellowship catching up on the latest in his life and truly care?

Last week, a friend called me to say she was visiting family in Loma Linda. I hadn't seen her since her for 19 months. We arranged to meet half way and have lunch together—table fellowship. We lingered long at the table. Then I suggested that we go shopping together, something we both enjoy doing. We talked before, during, and after our shopping time together. Finally, we prayed together, and I left. I not only enjoyed my quality time we had together, I wanted *more* time with my friend.

Jesus, the One who loves us, died for us, and intercedes for us longs to have unhurried table fellowship with us.

- **Doing Activities Together.** Quality time may include doing an activity together, reading, and discussing a book together. But the important point is to discover each other's desires, needs, and heart.

You might ask, “Can we have quality time miles apart?” Modern technology makes that a lot easier. We can call, write letters, email, Facetime, text, etc. The important thing is to be in touch. To care.

This week, Pastor Phil and I went with the older school kids to the Reagan Library to commemorate Holocaust Day. The speaker for the event was a Holocaust survivor, Miki Polik. Because of the horrible atrocities that he experienced, Miki believes that if there were a God, He was busy somewhere else in the universe or perhaps taking a nap during the Holocaust.

I can truly understand how he would come to those conclusions. But the God I know was found by the Corrie Ten Booms of this world. The God I know inspired the kind gestures of the supervisor that put bread in the wastebasket every day so that Miki could have some extra bread. The God I know suffered tremendously as He walked beside those hurting, broken people.

- The Psalmist (34:18) said, *“The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart and saves such as have a contrite spirit.”* And, again, in Psalm 145:18, *“The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth.”*⁴

God desires to give us the gift of time—a quality relationship with Him.

- John the Revelator depicted it in these beautiful words, *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me”* (Rev. 3:20).

Wow! The Creator, the Faithful and True Witness, the Alpha and Omega, the First and Last, the Redeemer desires to have table fellowship with all of us from the youngest to the oldest. He had face time with five-year-old Samuel and face time with 120-year-old Moses.

Hosea (10:13) the prophet, speaking to the children of Israel reminds God's people, *"You have plowed wickedness; you have reaped iniquity. You have eaten the fruit of lies, because you trusted in your own way."*

Friends, what are you plowing? What are you sowing? What's truly important in your life? Are you sowing shallowness? Are you sowing indifference? Are you sowing criticism? Are you sowing pride? Or you we sowing the things of eternal importance?

Hosea told the children of Israel in his day, *"Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, till He comes and rains righteousness on you"* (10:12).

If you were to compare your time with God with the time you spend watching TV, reading, playing video games, or whatever occupies your "free time," how would it compare? Do you have a hunger and a thirst to know Him more? Do you appreciate what He's done to save you? What would it take for your time with God to be expanded, and you would be reluctant to leave the table fellowship He offers?

CONCLUSION

Back to Joe Herman.

Suddenly, something crashed into him. He instinctively grabbed "it." He clung tightly to "it" with both arms. What was "it"? A pair of legs.

A voice, from just a few feet away, spoke in the night.

"Is someone there?" the voice asked. It was the voice of Herman's mid-upper gunner, Flying Officer John Vivash.

"Just me, Joe," said Herman.

The two stunned men fell together in silence. Both hit the ground with Vivash landing feet first onto Herman's chest, breaking two of his ribs in the process. But miraculously, both survived.

Later, they worked out how the miracle had happened.

Vivash had been knocked unconscious by the explosion. He had been one of the dark objects keeping station with Herman in his free fall. For 12,000 feet they had fallen, until Vivash began to come out of his blackout.

Though only semi-conscious, Vivash pulled his ripcord. As the chute streamed out of the pack on his chest, he began to swing out under it like a pendulum. At the end of his first swing toward Herman, Herman was at a point in his head-over-heels cycle where he was face down, almost horizontal. In this

position he smashed in to Vivash's legs which also were nearly horizontal at the end of his swing.

Had Herman been a foot away from either side, he would have missed colliding with and grabbing Vivash's legs. Had Herman collided with Vivash just a fraction of a second earlier or later, the impact would have killed both or hindered the Australian pilot from grabbing his comrade's legs. But the miracle happened! Herman had to hang on to Vivash, even though his arms ached, even though Vivash asked him to loosen his grip. To save his life he'd had to hang tight.

All of us are in a free fall in this world. The plane has exploded. Some of us are clinging to Jesus as our only hope to land safely on heaven's shore. Others of us may be enjoying the thrill of the free fall, not too concerned about the deck coming up rapidly upon us. Others of us may have bumped into Christ, but instead of grabbing on and holding on for dear life, we bounce off of Him from time to time when we sense our need or when we face a crisis.

My brothers and sisters, clinging to Christ is our only hope in a fearful free-falling world! While most of us won't have to face an experience in which a fraction of a second is a life-and-death matter, what we do with our time matters. Seconds add up to minutes, minutes to hours, hours to days, days to years, and years to a lifetime. What will we do with it? Will we spend it on table fellowship with the King of the Universe?

Tighten your grip on Jesus. Hold on as if your life depends on it.

Because it does.

¹ Taken from <https://www.warhistoryonline.com/war-articles/wwii-miracles-two-airmen-saved-by-one-parachute.html>.

² Taken from http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/quality_time.html#ZGMz7I5Kef0BIRmW.99.

³ Taken from <https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/harrychapin/catsinthecradle.html>.

⁴ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture texts are from the New King James Version of the Holy Scriptures.