

TIME FOR RESTORATION



Restoring the Reconciled World Part 4

T. M. Moore

A ReVision Resource from The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe

Time for Restoration

Time for Restoration
Restoring the Reconciled World Part 4
A *ReVision* Resource from The Fellowship of Ailbe
Copyright 2020 T. M. and Susie Moore
Susie Moore, Editing and Finishing

Waxed Tablet Publications

Except as indicated, Scripture taken from the New King James Version. © Copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Time for Restoration

Contents

Welcome to <i>Time for Restoration</i>	4
1 The Time of Our Lives	5
2 Not Our Own	7
3 Time, the Mind of Christ, and Restoration	9
4 Paying Attention to Time	11
5 Restoration and the Kingdom	13
6 Strength for the Journey	15
7 Three Disciplines	17
Questions for Reflection or Discussion	19

Time for Restoration

Welcome to *Time for Restoration*

All our work of restoring the reconciled world must take place in time.

We need to make sure we understand what time is, and what it is for. Time is one of God's most precious gifts; since He gives it, we must look to Him to understand how best to use our time for the ministry of reconciliation that has been given to us.

We can improve our time by learning to invest every moment of it for seeking the Kingdom and righteousness of God. As we do, we will bring the newness of Christ for restoration into every area of life.

We hope you find these studies helpful. Take one lesson at a time, reading the Scriptures and narrative aloud, and pausing to reflect on and discuss the questions provided. Don't be in a hurry. Be willing to take more than one session on a lesson if it will allow you to delve more deeply into the subject matter.

If you're in a group, make sure you prepare for each study by reading through the lesson in advance and answering the questions in writing. Take turns leading your group. Let every member share in the privilege and responsibility of facilitating discussions. Group leaders should not feel like they have to "have all the answers." Their task is simply to lead the group through the readings and questions, and to help everyone participate.

These studies are designed as brief introductions to the subject under consideration. We hope they will enlarge your worldview, help you to become more firmly rooted in Scripture, equip you to minister to others, and stimulate you to want to learn more about the Word of God and the Biblical worldview.

We're happy to provide this study at no charge. If you find these studies helpful, we hope you'll consider sending a gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, to help us in making these resources available to others.

May the Lord bless your study of His Word.

T. M. Moore
Principal

1 The Time of Our Lives

“So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.” Matthew 25.28, 29

Enough time?

God has given us, the followers of Jesus Christ, the ministry of reconciliation. Jesus has reconciled the world to God, and we do not presume to replicate – even if we could – the great work He has accomplished in banishing death and hell, taking away the sins of the world, and giving us His Kingdom. Our part in the ministry of reconciliation is the work of restoring the reconciled world by making disciples, building Christ’s Church, and advancing His rule on earth as it is in heaven. We are working to make all things new, as Christ is at work within us, willing and doing of God’s good pleasure.

And we must always bear in mind that the work of restoration is a continuous, all-encompassing calling, requiring us to take every thought captive for obedience to Christ, put all things under the feet of Jesus, and glorify God in all things. Restoration is hard and glorious work, and the work we’ve been given to do is greater than the job at which we work.

Restoring the reconciled world takes *time*. And unless we have *Jesus’* view of time, and use our time in line with the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2.16), we risk frittering away our time or, worse, fumbling the time of our lives into the hands of the enemy of our souls, who seeks to destroy God’s creation, rather than restore it.

Our generation never seems to have enough time to do everything we want. “Where does the time go?” we ask, as the moments of our lives slip away without our noticing. “I just don’t have the time!” is the complaint we hear from many, when challenged to a more demanding life of discipleship and service in the Kingdom of God.

Of course, we all have exactly the same amount of time. But if I understand the parable of the talents correctly, it may actually be possible to gain *more* time to pursue the things that matter most in life – the work of restoring the reconciled world.

Time and the talents

The parable of the talents (Matt. 25.14-30) relates the familiar story of three servants entrusted with unequal amounts of their master’s wealth, and charged with the duty of making more of that wealth before he returns. Two succeed, while one squanders the opportunity by timidly hiding his talent rather than investing it for his master’s benefit.

At the end of the parable, the unfaithful servant is chided, and his amount of money is taken from him and given to the one who made the best use of that which he had been given. Thus, the parable ends with Jesus saying, “to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance”.

Jonathan Edwards, that great Puritan preacher and theologian, explained that of all the gifts God gives to His people, excepting that of salvation, the gift of time is the most precious. Everything that we are and do takes place in time. Each of us has just as much time as all the rest of us – twenty-four hours in every day. But some people seem actually to have *more* time than others, which is apparent by what they are able to accomplish with the time they have.

The time of our lives, like the talents in the parable, is a resource God gives us each day, that we might complete the work He has given us to do.

Time for Restoration

Making the most of our time

I worked one summer with a master builder and craftsman named Ernie Daniels. Ernie loved the Lord and loved doing his work as unto the Lord. He knew every tool and its proper use, and there wasn't a construction job or repair task that Ernie had not accomplished at some point in his career.

One day Ernie had several work orders to complete, which he felt he could accomplish on his own. So he gave me one task to do – reverse a wrongly-installed doorknob and lock in a hotel door. When I'd finished that, he told me, I'd have plenty of time to clean up the workshop before the end of the day. I was charged with *restoring* a malfunctioning lock, because the way it was, was not the way it was supposed to be.

Simple enough, I thought.

Except that I'd never done this task before, and once I got the doorknob apart, I could not, for the life of me, figure out how to get it back on correctly. It took me nearly the entire afternoon to complete this simple task! By the time I finally got back to the workshop, Ernie was already there and had cleaned the whole place up without me. He graciously laughed at my ineptitude and assured me it was OK. Ernie understood that I was not trained to use my time for this kind of work, and so it made sense that, since he was, and was vastly more experienced in such tasks than I, he would get more out of his time than I did.

Following Jesus Christ is just like this – except that believers do not have the excuse of saying, like I did to Ernie, “This just isn't what I do well.” All believers are called to follow Jesus Christ, all the time of their lives, and to devote all their time to growing in Him, bearing fruit for His Kingdom, and doing the work of restoring the reconciled world.

As Paul put it, we must learn to “make the most” of the time allotted to us for the cause of Christ and His Kingdom, for any time not wholly invested in the work we've been given to do will be lost to the forces of wickedness and unbelief (Eph. 5.15-17). We need to be wise, and not foolish, in how we use the precious time God allots us each day.

The time of our lives is a gift from God, which He bestows on us, moment by moment, so that we will use it in the work of restoring the reconciled world. Our duty is to receive and master the use of this gift; and God's promise is that, if we will, we will never lack for time to grow in the Lord and to realize significant progress in restoring the reconciled world.

For reflection

1. In what sense is time a gift from God? When does that gift come to us?
2. Why is it important that we use our time for God and His glory? What happens to the time we do not use this way?
3. What are some things that can keep you from using your time like the good stewards in the parable of the talents?

Next steps – Preparation: Where does your time go? Write to me at tnmoore@ailbe.org, and I'll send you “The Time of Your Life,” a week-long exercise in keeping track of your time and beginning to make better use of it.

2 Not Our Own

*The day is Yours, the night also is Yours;
You have prepared the light and the sun.
You have set all the borders of the earth;
You have made summer and winter.* Psalm 74.16, 17

Never knew what they had

Susie and I enjoy watching “Antiques Road Show” on our local PBS station. The items people bring in for evaluation are so varied and beautiful – at least, the ones they choose to feature on the program. I’m always amazed at the knowledge of the appraisers, their understanding of the provenance and peculiar details and beauty of the item they’re considering.

I may look at a cabinet, for example, and think it’s interesting or even beautiful, but I’m sure I wouldn’t know why, or whether my judgment was reliable beyond an expression of my own taste.

But what I particularly enjoy about this program is watching the faces of people who learn, through the detailed explanations given by their appraiser, that this old piece of junk they’ve stacked books on for years is really a precious and quite valuable artifact. They never knew what they had, because they didn’t understand what it was.

However, the resolve of every one of them, from that moment on, is to treat this discovered treasure with the respect it deserves. Now that they *know* what has come into their keeping, they are determined to keep it well, and appreciate it more.

What is time?

The time of our lives is like that. We take our time for granted, which is not to say that we don’t value it. We do, and we try to use it well for all the things we consider to be most important. And hopefully, among those most important matters, the ministry of restoration is beginning to gain more priority of place.

But I suspect that most of us don’t think of time as a precious gift from God, bestowed by our Creator, one moment at a time, with a particular use and purpose in mind. For us, time is just something out there, something everybody has, that we use up, as the moments pass, for whatever matters most to us at the moment, in the confident belief that we’ll always have more time to do more of the same.

But what is time, really? Can you go down to the local grocery store and purchase a box of it? Can you swap some of your time with a friend so that you get better time, or, at least, time you consider to be more valuable?

And what about the time you had yesterday? Where is it? And the time for tomorrow? Why are we so certain it will be here when we need it?

It seems to me that if we understood more about time – what it is, where it’s from, and what it’s for – we might be more diligent in making the most of our time for the work of restoration (Eph. 5.15-17). Time is not only a gift of God, it is a *creation* of His as well. God does not exist within time; He is eternal and does not experience anything like the succession of moments we know as time. God made time and He gives time to His creatures, one moment at a time, every day of our lives. This makes the time of our lives much more valuable, and more fraught with potential for goodness and glory, than previously we may have understood.

Time exists somehow within God (Acts 17.27, 28) and is dependent, like everything else, upon His upholding Word (Heb. 1.3). Time is not eternal, as secularism teaches. Nor does it come to us waiting for us to define its

Time for Restoration

purpose and best use. Time is from God, given as a gift of God, and intended for the glory of God, however we use it (1 Cor. 10.31).

Time is thus much more precious and valuable than we may have understood. Perhaps we should consider keeping it a little more diligently?

Measuring time

We measure time, from the human perspective, in various ways – seconds, minutes, days, weeks, months, years, and so forth. But these are not true quantitative measurements of some material quantity – like a half gallon jug measures a certain amount of milk. Our measures of time are more on the order of estimates (as we think of the future), experiences (with respect to the present), and records (as we think about the time that is gone by). They describe the time of our lives in terms that allow us to remember, plan, use, and prepare for time efficiently.

All time comes from the Word of God (Jn. 1.1-3), is sustained by the Word of God (Heb. 1.3), and returns – like the talents in Jesus’ parable – to its Creator and true Owner (Rom. 11.34-36). There is as yet no future time, and the time we’ve used up is gone forever; we cannot return to it.

The only time we ever have is the present moment, and each of those is supplied for us, as an act of free grace, by the eternal God and His Word. It makes sense that, since He has given us the ministry of reconciliation – which in our remit involves the work of restoration – and the time in which to do this work, that we would best fulfill the purpose of time, and thus know the greatest benefit of time, by learning to fill *more* of our time with the work God has given us to do.

God has a precious purpose for the time He gives us – that we might know Him, enjoy His blessings, express His glory, and demonstrate His love. That is, that we might know His restoring and transforming grace working for restoration in and through us in all things. But, for the most part, the human race squanders the time God gives them for merely personal and pragmatic ends.

Our time is not our own, just as we who know Jesus Christ are not our own (1 Cor. 6.19, 20). In time, we were bought with a price, that we might be restored to God and take up the work of restoration Jesus began. What we hardly think of as more than passing moments for temporal endeavors, God creates and bestows as investments of eternal glory, to be used and enjoyed as creatures destined to live with Him forever.

We need to pay more attention to the time of our lives – both in prospect and in actuality – so that we might be wise unto the Lord in making the most of it for the work of restoration.

For reflection

1. Time and the ministry of restoration both come to us from God. Why?
2. How is the time we’re given each day like the talents in Jesus’ parable (Matt. 25.14-30)?
3. Jonathan Edwards wrote about the importance of *improving* our time. What do you suppose he meant by that?

Next steps – Preparation: Where does your time go? Write to me at tmmoore@aible.org, and I’ll send you “The Time of Your Life,” a week-long exercise in keeping track of your time and beginning to make better use of it.

3 Time, the Mind of Christ, and Restoration

For “who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?” *But we have the mind of Christ.* 1 Corinthians 2.16

The mind of Christ

In order to make the best use of the time of our lives we need to see our time through the mind of Him Who creates, bestows, and upholds it. What is in the mind of God in giving us this most precious gift? What does God intend for the time of our lives?

We may protest, “But who can know the mind of the Lord?”

However, Paul reminds us that, if we are believers in Jesus Christ, we *have* the mind of Christ, the very Word of God, the same Word Who is creating and bestowing and upholding all the time of our lives. We have the mind of Christ!

But if the mind of Christ in us is like one of those antiques stored in the attic – treasured, but seldom used – it won’t do us much good. We must daily receive and be renewed in the mind of Christ if we want to understand the world – and time – as Jesus does (Rom. 12.1, 2; Eph. 4.17-24).

One thing we can be sure of: Jesus’ mind was bent on reconciling the world to God, for this is what He actually achieved. And if reconciling the world was on His mind *then*, it must surely be on His mind *now*.

Time as Jesus sees it

How does Jesus Christ see the time He gives us each moment of our lives? What is His purpose in giving us this great gift? We want to be good servants and stewards of our time, so that we return to the Lord Who gives us time, an investment of glory and progress in restoring the reconciled world. The better we understand what Jesus intends in giving us the time of our lives, the better we will be able to make good use of it according to His purposes and will.

According to Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15 – echoing Psalm 110 – Jesus Christ is presently employed at the right hand of God the Father, working to augment, improve, and advance His rule on earth as it is in heaven. That is, the *reconciliation* He has achieved, He is now bringing to greater completion through the ministry of reconciliation which has been given to us. And that aspect of the ministry of reconciliation, as we have seen, entails the work of restoring the reconciled world for the goodness and glory of God.

Jesus sends out His Word to uphold the cosmos, gives His Spirit to bring new life to those who believe the Gospel, endows His followers with gifts and fruit, calls them to particular places of service, sends His angels to guard and assist them in their endeavors, and puts His enemies under His feet as He builds His Church and fills the world with His presence (Eph. 1.15-23).

So it must be the case that, in giving us each successive moment of time, Jesus intends us to receive and use our time according to *His* purposes in seeking and advancing *His* Kingdom and doing the work of restoration. He has told us that seeking His Kingdom and righteousness is to be the defining priority of our lives (Matt. 6.33), and this would entail the way we use our time.

Time for the Kingdom!

When we thus see our time through the mind of Christ, we understand that time is a resource for seeking and advancing the rule of Jesus Christ on earth as it is in heaven, so that righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit increase and abound in and through us, filling up all the time of our lives. This, in short, is the work of restoring the reconciled world.

Time for Restoration

We are making the most of the time (Eph. 5.15-17) Jesus gives us when the time of our lives is invested in establishing and enlarging the footprint of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. The restoration we seek takes the form of the Kingdom of God coming on earth as it is in heaven.

There are no moments in our lives that are given to us for any purpose other than seeking the Kingdom of God. This does not mean that every moment of our lives must be given over to doing “church work.” Since Christ is Lord of all – every aspect of human life and interest – we are using our time best when we’re employing it to further the presence of His Kingdom – doing the work of restoring the reconciled world. And we remember that the work we’ve been given to do is greater than the job at which we work, so that all our waking energies and efforts are to be invested in good works of restoration.

Even if all we’re doing is eating and drinking, or relaxing and enjoying a moment of well-deserved rest, we can do so in such a way as to express, further, and refract the reality of the Kingdom of God into the ordinary time of everyday life (1 Cor. 10.31).

But this doesn’t just happen. In order to live out the mind of Christ in the time of our lives, we need to study the Word of Christ, thinking through everything He teaches us in His Word, so that we are able to take every thought and every moment captive for King Jesus, and make our thoughts and time obey His good and perfect purposes (2 Cor. 10.3-5). The more we engage the mind of Christ, the more our calling to the Kingdom and glory of God (1 Thess. 2.12) will take specific shape, and the more we will envision what aspects of our lives will look like as we work to restore them to God’s plan of goodness and glory.

Are we up to so high and holy a calling? Well, what better employment could you find for the time of your life? Every moment of time has restorative potential; but we must think with mind of Christ, see with the mind of Christ, and work with the mind of Christ so that righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit will increase and abound in every area of life where God sends us to restore the reconciled world.

For reflection

1. How would you counsel a new believer to learn to use the mind of Christ which he has been given?
2. Why does thinking with the mind of Christ naturally incline us to the work of restoring the reconciled world?
3. What is involved in beginning to *envision* the world as restored to God? How can we nurture such vision?

Next steps – Preparation: Where does your time go? Write to me at tmmoore@ailbe.org, and I’ll send you “The Time of Your Life,” a week-long exercise in keeping track of your time and beginning to make better use of it.

4 Paying Attention to Time

See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Ephesians 5.15, 16

Wasted time

Most of us would be surprised, I think, to discover how much of the precious gift of time we invest in activities other than seeking and advancing the Kingdom of God – activities which, like the wicked steward’s buried talent, bring no return on investment for the Lord and the work of restoration.

I used to teach a time management seminar to business and professional men, and the first thing I had them do in the course was to keep track of their time in 30-minute segments for one week. Write down everything they did, every day, every 30 minutes.

Then I asked them, at the end of the week, to review the time of their lives and tally up how much of it they actually wasted during the week. This instruction was usually met with objections: “We’re professionals. We don’t waste time.” “Humor me,” I would reply.

It never failed. They would come to the second session looking a bit hang-dog and reporting that, to their chagrin and surprise, they didn’t waste a few minutes here and there, but *hours*, hours of time they could not describe in fruitful or productive terms.

And I suspect that most of us are like those poor, enlightened guys. How does it happen that we waste time, even when we think we’re *not* wasting time? I can think of two reasons.

Why do we do this?

One reason this happens is that we have never learned how to conduct our daily lives from a Kingdom vantage point and within a restoration framework. Our job, our relationships at home, taking care of the everyday business of staying healthy and managing our activities and possessions – for many believers, indeed, perhaps most, such things are not typically looked upon as Kingdom activities.

For many believers, the Kingdom of God has nothing much to say about how they do their work, take care of their yard, converse with their friends, or use their free time. These are considered as “non-Kingdom” time for most believers, with the result that hours and hours of time each week, given to us by the Lord for the purposes of restoring the reconciled world, are simply lost to merely temporal and fleeting ends.

“Kingdom time”, as most Christians think about it, is *church* time, when I’m with my Christian friends, doing my Christian thing, in my decidedly Christian setting.

Here there is a need, if we are to make the best use of our time for restoration, for more focused study in Scripture, to understand how the mind of Christ teaches us to approach *all* our work for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

The Bible is given to teach and equip us for every good work (2 Tim. 3.15-17). It instructs us how to conduct every aspect of our lives as unto the Lord, rather than to men – even, merely, to satisfy ourselves (Col. 3.23, 24). But we’ll never understand or begin to practice this teaching – and, thus, we will continue to squander Kingdom time on non-restorative activities – until we give ourselves diligently and continuously to the task of learning how the Scriptures shape our thoughts and practice in every area of life.

Kingdom time all the time

A second reason we waste so much time is that we don’t follow Paul’s command to “walk circumspectly”

Time for Restoration

concerning how we use our time each day. We fall into habits and routines of time usage, without ever taking the time to consider just how the time of our lives is being invested and spent.

Paul says we must not use our time like unwise people, people who have no regard for how the wisdom of God, or seeking the Kingdom, or doing the work of restoration plays out in the time of our lives. We are called to live as wise people, trusting in the Lord with all our hearts and in *all our ways* acknowledging His Lordship over our lives and time (Prov. 3.5, 6; Eph. 5.17). The fool says, “My time is my own; I can do with it whatever I will.” The wise person says, “Thank You, Lord, for the gift of time. Help me to use all of it wisely.”

So we need to develop a means of paying closer attention to how we use our time, in order both to live wisely in the time of our lives, and to be sure in our own hearts that we have made the most of the moments granted us each day.

We’re no different from those business and professional men I taught years ago. It might be an interesting activity for you to track your time in 30-minute blocks for a week or so, to “walk circumspectly” and determine whether you’re living as a wise person, using your time for the progress of the Kingdom, or like a fool.

You might be surprised – or chagrined – at what you discover.

Certainly one thing we can begin to do is to cover the time of our lives with prayer: “Teach us to number our days,” Moses prayed, “that we may gain a heart of wisdom” (Ps. 90.12). Each morning, pray about the day ahead. Pray in specific detail, for specific needs and opportunities, for the work of restoration that can go forward in all the work you do in the day ahead. Pray for a restoration mindset, that allows you to see everything in your life as an opportunity for making all things new. Pray as you move from one activity to the next. Pray for the activity that just ended and the one you’re just about to begin. Ask Jesus to give you wisdom, and to use you in making all things new. Review your day in prayer at the end of the day, and begin praying about the next day, committing yourself and everything you do to being faithful in seeking and advancing the Kingdom and righteousness of God.

What are you presently doing to “walk circumspectly” where your time is concerned? If you’re doing nothing, then you may be wasting the gift of time that God has given you for the ministry of reconciliation. We have to determine where the time of our lives is going, and do whatever we can do to improve our time for restoring the reconciled world. And we need to keep this up continually. You may end up doing exactly the same things you’ve been doing every day, but hopefully, you’ll do them with a different mindset. Walk circumspectly, and work to use all your time for the glory of God.

Time is too precious a gift, and it is given for too specific a purpose, for us who know the Lord not to make the best use of all our time for the glory of Christ, the progress of His Kingdom, and the work of restoration.

For reflection

1. Have you ever kept track of your time like was suggested in this article? What did you learn?
2. What are you doing now to make sure that you “walk circumspectly” in all the time of your life?
3. What can you do in prayer to improve the time of your life?

Next steps – Preparation: Where does your time go? Write to me at tmmore@aible.org, and I’ll send you “The Time of Your Life,” a week-long exercise in keeping track of your time and beginning to make better use of it.

5 Restoration and the Kingdom

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” Matthew 6.33

Every moment for the King

Since, as we have seen, the Lord Jesus grants us the time of our lives for the purpose of augmenting, improving, and expanding His rule on earth as it is in heaven, we do well to take His command about seeking the Kingdom into every area of our lives.

Jesus taught us to pray that the Kingdom would come on earth after the pattern and with the same character and impact as it has in heaven (Matt. 6.10). The Kingdom brings all-things-newness to the world, and it does this as believers work out their salvation in fear and trembling, and pursue good works of restoration in every aspect of life (Phil. 2.12; Matt. 5.13-16).

We are making the most of the time of our lives when we are using every moment of it on the King’s business, devoting ourselves to the progress of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit as our overarching framework for life (Rom. 14.17, 18). And since these attributes are not everywhere enjoyed, our work of restoration – the ministry of reconciliation that has been given to us – must aim to bring more of these to the world.

The better we understand and the more consistent we are able to be in seeking Christ and His Kingdom, and doing the work of restoration, the better use we will make of the time of our lives in bringing glory and honor to the Lord.

This is a call for a new outlook on the time God gives you each day. As a citizen and ambassador in the Kingdom of God, you are both a *sign* that the Kingdom has come, and an *outpost* from which the Kingdom is extended to others.

Know the King

Seeking the Kingdom means preparing, growing, living, and working in such a way as to experience and express the reality of Christ’s rule in every area of our lives. This is what the work of restoration seeks to achieve.

This requires, in the first place, that we maintain a *vibrant and fruitful relationship with the Lord* of the Kingdom Himself. That is – as we have said – the work of restoration must be continually attended to in our own soul and life. We cannot bring restoring grace to others if we are not making the time each day to be restored in all aspects of our soul and life.

Peter commands us to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ so that we encounter Him in His glory through the various disciplines He has provided, especially reading and meditating in God’s Word, and prayer (2 Pet. 3.18; 2 Cor. 3.12-18). We cannot expect to have much success in advancing the rule of Christ if we do not *know* the Lord well enough to understand how He would have us use the time of our lives for His honor and glory. The paltry spiritual life that characterizes many professing Christians will keep them from making the most of the time for the work of restoration, for the simple reason that their relationship with the Lord is not as deep, vibrant, and vital as it should be.

The Kingdom visible

The Kingdom of God – the reign of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit – comes to expression in our lives through the various relationships, roles, and responsibilities in which we engage each day. Thus, the more mindful we are about these, the better we prepare for each; and the more attentive and diligent we are in conducting them, the greater will be the likelihood that what we are learning about Christ and His

Time for Restoration

Kingdom will become visible in our time at work, our conversations and relationships with others, and the various activities of our lives.

In every area of our lives, we need to be alert for opportunities to advance the work of restoration. The more we grow in Christ, the more clearly we will see what that work entails, and the better prepared we will be to devote the time and energy such restoration requires.

We are seeking the Kingdom when we seek to bring more of the Biblical reality of the Kingdom to fruition in those spheres where we have influence, conduct relationships, and use up the time of our lives (2 Cor. 10.13-18).

The agent of the Kingdom

Finally, we seek the Kingdom of God and do the work of restoring the reconciled world as we are involved in making disciples and building the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 28.18-20; Eph. 4.11-16).

The Church is the agent of the Kingdom, brokering its grace and truth to the world through the lives and ministries of faithful disciples and witnesses of Jesus Christ. Each of us is called to participate in the great work of making disciples and bearing witness for Christ; using our time with others to encourage, instruct, and assist them in knowing the Lord and growing in Him; and joining with other disciples to carry out the various works of ministry that build up the local community of believers in unity and maturity. The Spirit of God has given us gifts to use in this aspect of the work of restoration, and we must be good stewards to identify, improve, and employ those gifts as many ways as we can (1 Cor. 12.7-11).

Making disciples is not the calling of pastors alone. Jesus expects all His friends to be actively involved in this great work. Similarly, each of us has unique gifts and opportunities for ministering to others, and we must be faithful stewards of these as the Lord leads us day by day (1 Pet. 4.10, 11; 1 Cor. 4.1, 2). As we encourage and assist others in growing in the Lord, and devote some of our time to helping our local church become more the Body of Christ, we fulfill an important aspect of the work of restoration.

When we are seeking the Kingdom of God in these ways – growing in the Lord, doing His work in all our work and other activities, making disciples and building His Church – we will be making the best possible use of the time entrusted to us by the Lord, and we can expect a return on our investment that brings honor and glory to Christ and the blessings of peace to those around us.

And that return on investment is the increasing restoration of the world Jesus has reconciled to the Father.

For reflection

1. How would you explain the Kingdom of God to a new believer?
2. What is the relationship between the Kingdom of God and the work of restoration?
3. How would you explain to a fellow believer what it means to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness? How does this relate to the time God gives us each day?

Next steps – Preparation: Where does your time go? Write to me at tmmoore@ailbe.org, and I'll send you "The Time of Your Life," a week-long exercise in keeping track of your time and beginning to make better use of it.

6 Strength for the Journey

*Blessed is the man whose strength is in You,
Whose heart is set on pilgrimage.
As they pass through the Valley of Baca,
They make it a spring;
The rain also covers it with pools.
They go from strength to strength;
Each one appears before God in Zion.* Psalm 84:5-7

The journey of faith

In his sermon, “The Christian Pilgrim,” Jonathan Edwards elaborated the idea of the Christian life as a journey. There is an end to the journey, and they travel most efficiently who keep that end in sight, so as not to become distracted along the way. We are travellers, pilgrims, and we must neither dawdle nor delay in making progress toward the vision of Christ and His Kingdom.

The end of that journey, of course, is the Presence of the Lord and the fully restored creation – the new heavens and the new earth. This is the destination of our journey, and though for now we must often travel through a vale of tears, yet we know the outcome is secure in the Lord.

Edwards’ teaching about our pilgrimage dovetails nicely with his sermon on “The Preciousness of Time”. Together, these sermons provide a framework for thinking about the life of faith that can help us in making the most of the time of our lives, doing the work of restoration as we journey each day in the glory of God.

The idea of the life of faith as a journey has solid Biblical roots, for example, in Psalm 84. In this psalm, the sons of Korah anticipated the preaching of Jonathan Edwards by teaching us how to regard our lives in the Kingdom of God, so that we don’t squander our time but use it as God intends.

The psalm begins with a joyous exclamation concerning the destination of our journey: the courts of the living God (vv. 1, 2). The place where God dwells is exceedingly lovely, so much so that the psalmists’ soul longs and even faints to be there with the Lord in His glory. The vision of that glorious, eternal destination fills the psalmists with joy and leads them to sing to the Lord with all their strength, and to turn even the hardships in their journey to opportunities for growth, progress, and restoration.

What vision?

Everyone has some vision of life, some way of thinking about their lives that give direction to their journey. For many Christians, that vision too often overlooks the journey that must take us to our appointed destination, so that they are content to hope in the promise of eternal life, but sit out the journey that realizing their goal requires.

Advertising encourages us to believe that everyone is longing and fainting to be one of the beautiful people, to own a new car, and to enjoy a prosperous and entertaining retirement. If this is the commanding vision of our lives, the way we use our time will find us mainly involved in getting and spending. Within the framework of such a vision, we live as *consumers* and not *restorers* of the reconciled world.

If our vision, however, is that we are pilgrims journeying to eternal glory, called to refract that glory as we journey, then we will expect our time to be employed rather differently.

Psalm 84 envisions the journey of life as a kind of “living sacrifice,” not unlike the way Paul describes our lives in Romans 12:1, 2 (cf. Ps. 84:3, 4). Every day we offer ourselves up like birds on an altar, so that our

Time for Restoration

lives, in all their facets, may be pleasing to God, because we live in a manner agreeable to the progress of His Kingdom. We offer to God all the details, activities, and work of our lives, that He might receive them as part of our “worthy walk” (Eph. 4.1ff), and bless them in line with our eternal destination.

Such a view of life comports well with Jesus’ instruction to take up our cross daily and follow Him in works of self-denial and self-giving (Matt. 16.24, 25). Life is a struggle. There are toils and tears. But the prospect of our glorious destination enables us to bring spring rains and fresh growth to our every step.

Drawing on the strength of the Lord

But in order to live this way we will need to draw on the strength of the Lord (v. 5). The “highways” that lead to eternal Zion can be difficult to travel. Temptations and trials arise; we experience hardships and opposition; and it can be difficult to keep the vision of our destination in mind.

Indeed, our journey in life can often feel more like the Valley of Baca than Happy Valley (v. 6). But, knowing that we’re on a journey to eternal glory, that we are devoted to serving the living God *en route*, and that we journey every moment in the strength of His Word and Spirit, we turn our trials to rejoicing and our setbacks to renewal, using our time to “go from strength to strength” (v. 7) as we prepare to appear before the Lord at the end of our lives (cf. 2 Pet. 3.11-14).

So we hang our lives, and all the time of our lives, on prayer (v. 8), and shield ourselves under the Word of the Lord (v. 9; cf. Ps. 12), as we strain to improve our vision of and progress towards the heavenly courts of the Lord (v. 10).

Every day we walk according to the good and upright Word of the Lord (v. 11; cf. Rom. 7.12), in the light of Christ’s resurrection and the promise of blessing He holds out to us (vv. 11, 12). That word “uprightly” in verse 11 is the Hebrew **תָּמִים**, *tomim*, and means something like “full and complete.” As we seek to use the time of our lives in a full and complete manner, according to the full and complete Word of God, God blesses our journey with every “good thing” we need. Living this way each day fills our lives with anticipation, rejoicing, strength, and hope – a hope which can become visible and infectious to those around us (1 Pet. 3:15).

Seeing our lives as pilgrims on a journey to eternal glory and bliss can help us in making the most of the time of our lives, so that we invest each moment for the glory of God and His Kingdom, doing the work of restoration, “full and complete” at every stage of our journey.

For reflection

1. How is it helpful to think about our lives as a journey? What should characterize our lives as we journey toward our destination?
2. What is the end toward which we are traveling in this life? How should focusing on that end affect the journey we undertake each day?
3. What does it mean to live “full and complete” before the Lord in each stage of our journey?

Next steps – Preparation: Where does your time go? Write to me at tmmoore@aible.org, and I’ll send you “The Time of Your Life,” a week-long exercise in keeping track of your time and beginning to make better use of it.

7 Three Disciplines

*So teach us to number our days,
That we may gain a heart of wisdom.* Psalm 90.12

Time and our journey

We began this part of our study on restoring the reconciled world by considering the gift of time and ourselves as stewards of this gift, called to invest it in such a way as to return glory and honor to God with all the time of our lives. We do this by taking up the ministry of reconciliation and the work of restoration that have been given to us, investing all the time of our lives in the work of making all things new.

When we see our lives from the vantage point of Jesus Christ, exalted in glory and furthering His Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven, we understand better what we're supposed to be doing with our time. Seeking the Kingdom of God with *all* our time is our highest priority, so we need to be clear both about how we *are* using our time in the present, and how we can *improve* the use of our time so as to pursue the Kingdom of God and His righteousness in all the time of our lives.

Restoration doesn't just happen. When it happens, it happens because people who look to Jesus exert themselves in the time of their lives to restore the reconciled world to God. This is why God gives us the gift of time each day.

Living each day within the framework of our lives as a journey toward eternal glory can help us to grow in the Lord, draw on His strength, live sacrificially for others, do the good works for which we have been redeemed by the Lord, and in so doing, bring a greater measure of restoration to the sin-wracked world (Eph. 2.8-10).

Putting it all together

But how do we put this all together?

Practically speaking, how can we get into a rhythm of making the most of our time each day, so that, at the end of each day, we can have the satisfaction of knowing that the labors of that day – all the ways we have used our time for restoring the reconciled world – have not been in vain (1 Cor. 15.58)? Let me suggest three disciplines for an ongoing process that can help us to be good and faithful servants of God because we are good stewards of His most precious gift of time.

First, establish and maintain some system for *continuous planning*.

If, as Moses prayed, it is possible to “number” our days – and all the moments of them – before we get to those moments, we'll be more likely to use the time of our life for the purposes of the Kingdom and restoration. If we just wait around for the next moment to show up and see what it brings, we'll never be effective in the work to which God has called us. Christians, as we've seen, must live toward the future, toward that eternal destination of glory, arranging the days of their lives in patterns that foreshadow, anticipate, and actually make visible the eternal glory toward which we are journeying. We need to *plan* for restoration if we're going to be effective at it.

By planning our lives carefully, thinking through in advance how we want to live and use the time of our lives, we'll have more success in making the most of our time, because we will have accounted for the use of this most precious gift before we actually begin to unwrap it. In this sense, making a plan for your time is like making a budget for your finances. You know where your money is going before you get there, so you won't squander it on lesser things, leaving the most important things unaccounted for. So also with your time.

Second, learn to *live within an envelope of prayer*, so that you are continuously in communication with the living

Time for Restoration

God. Your journey in this life should be like that of the disciples on the road to Emmaus, in continuous conversation with the Lord, listening as He sheds light on your path and strengthens you for the work of restoration.

Let Psalm 139.23, 24 guide you here: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.” If this simple prayer can become the attitude of your heart throughout the day, you’ll be open to however the Lord may want to convict, correct, or co-opt your time for the purposes of His Kingdom.

Taking a few moments at different times of the day, just to pray this prayer and listen for the Lord’s prompting, can help to make this prayer an attitude in which you continuously pursue your journey with the Lord in the time of your life. Review the day thus far, giving thanks for what God has done; preview the remainder of it, setting your heart and mind for restoring the reconciled world in all your opportunities.

Finally, *partner with a few soul friends* who love you, know how you’re trying to live your life, and will provide prayer, encouragement, and accountability for every step of your journey. These should be people who will take seriously the command to “consider one another in order to stir up love and good works” (Heb. 10.24). As you meet with them for prayer, sharing, strategizing, and growth, you’ll find such companionship to be an invaluable resource to help you in your journey with the Lord.

The time of your life

The time of your life that remains to you, whether the days be many or few, can be a glorious, joyous, hope-filled adventure of living for Christ and His Kingdom. The time of your life can be, well, the time of your life – full of meaning and fruitful living for the Lord. If you set your mind and heart on the work of restoring the reconciled world, arrange your time before you get to it, and keep in touch with the Lord each step of the way, you’ll discover that your whole life can be a journey of restoration and Kingdom progress.

But you’ll need to take seriously the challenge of stewardship which God has laid upon you by bestowing His most precious gift of time into your care.

And you’ll need to understand the Lord’s agenda for the work of restoration.

For reflection

1. What is your present approach to planning the time of your life? How can you improve on that?
2. What can you do to remind yourself to stay in company with the Lord throughout the day?
3. Who among your Christian friends can you turn to in helping you make the best use of your time for the work of restoration?

Next steps – Preparation: Where does your time go? Write to me at tmmoore@ailbe.org, and I’ll send you “The Time of Your Life,” a week-long exercise in keeping track of your time and beginning to make better use of it.

Time for Restoration

For Reflection or Discussion

1. Why do we say that time is a most precious gift of God?
2. How does the time God gives us each day relate to the ministry of reconciliation that has been given to us and the work of restoration?
3. What does it mean to “walk circumspectly” with respect to our time? Why is this so important?
4. What can we do to make sure that we are always improving our time for the work of restoration?
5. What’s the most important lesson about time and restoration you have learned from this study? How are you putting that lesson to work in your life?

For prayer:

Time for Restoration

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. Visit our website at www.ailbe.org to learn more.

We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship. You can contribute to our ministry by using the donate button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 360 Zephyr Road, Williston, VT 05495.

Thank you.