



A Time for Everything

Lesson 4

A Time to Pause

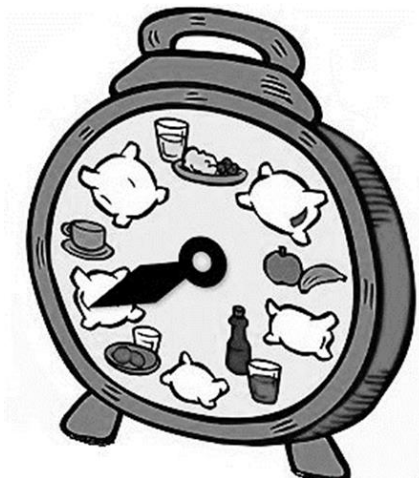
Prayer

Introductory Activity

A clock for what is most important

In an old Swedish cartoon about a bear who becomes strong when he eats “thunder honey” (kind of like Popeye the Sailor Man with spinach), one of the supporting characters is a turtle. This turtle has a clock which he follows religiously. But “Skalman” the turtle’s clock does not have times on it; it has activities. Whenever it rings, he does exactly what it says, no matter how inconvenient the timing may seem.¹ Looking at Skalman’s clock below, come up with your own clock and draw/write in at least three different activities that always seem to take up time in your day.

If helpful, there is a video clip in the footnote that you could watch showing the turtle fall asleep underwater at an inopportune time. The idea with this exercise is not to put aspirational items on the clock, but to put things that actually take lots of time (like checking phone, watching news, eating food, etc....) We all have things that we do all the time, even if it means interrupting whatever we’re working on. We’re leading up to the point that we **could** do this like Skalman, having non-negotiable times or attitudes about resting in God’s Word.



Before you let them begin, it might be good to make some joke here about NOT putting down “going to the bathroom.” It is likely they will spend 1-2 minutes on this on their own, then talk with someone next to them and add one more thing to their clock based on their conversations.



¹ <https://youtu.be/ZK3wlvjqBOU?t=560> This video shows one of the moments when it’s time to sleep at an inconvenient time.

Discuss the activities on your clock with people/the person next to you. Some questions to think about: How important are those activities? How beneficial are they? How much do they “add” to the busyness of your day? How much do they take away from other good things? What would happen if you stopped doing them?

Answers will vary here. They can start this one as a group from the get go. The idea is to see that lots of the things that always find room in our day are not necessary or important, and they can make us “busy” for no good reason. Do I really need to check the news? Watch these games? Worry? Shop online/in store? Eat that snack? Scroll Facebook? A main point would be to realize that we could stop doing many of these things, or at least put them off, and be fine!

An advertisement for a toy version of Skalmann’s clock says, “Hurry is the ugliest word Skalmann knows, and it is good to take a pause once in a while. That’s why you need this clock!”

Agree/Disagree: My life would be too busy to use a clock like Skalmann’s where I have to stop and rest several times a day.²

This connects to the study for priorities. You could agree and say, “I’m not a turtle and I can’t just take a nap while driving.” True. But you could also disagree and say, “If I made napping a priority (like I do with food or phone checking or sports) then those things would happen regardless of how busy I am. In fact, I might be less busy!”

I’m Too Busy for...

1. “Sabbath” is a Hebrew word that means “rest.” In the Old Testament, God’s people had particular times when God told them they had to rest (those rules no longer need to be followed because they were fulfilled in Jesus—Colossians 2:16). **Based on the passages below, share at least two of God’s purposes for the Sabbath day.**

You can assign different tables different passages, or have people work through in pairs/groups.

- Exodus 20:8-11
God’s purpose was to give the people rest so they could have a day dedicated to the LORD their God.
- Exodus 23:10-13
God wanted to give all the people in Israel (even foreigners!) the chance to be refreshed. Notice that this is connected to worship of the only true God in verse 13.
- Leviticus 23:3-8
These verses show clearly that one of the main purposes for Sabbaths were for holy assemblies, to gather together in worship (and not just on Saturdays—other festivals as well).
- Mark 2:27-28
The purpose of the Sabbath was for God to give good gifts to people, not to give them some command where people would do a good work to earn his favor.

² For those who disagree, Skalmann’s clock is available as an app!

- Luke 13:10-17

Almost the same point as Mark 2—the Sabbath was not some work to earn something from God. It was a day for God to provide healing. Verse 16 also shows that the Sabbath was a day for people to be set free by God!

2. God meant to give his people incredible blessings through his “rest” (and he still does today). **Read the passages below and identify some reasons God’s people did not enjoy this rest.**

The idea here is to get across that a time to pause is not just about spending time resting. It’s about resting, spiritually, in God’s promises.

- Exodus 16:21-30.

God’s people didn’t trust him!

- Amos 8:3-12

God’s people were preoccupied with their own busyness and wickedness, so they couldn’t wait for the Sabbath’s to end. So God would take away his word so they could no longer enjoy its rest.

- Hebrews 4:1-2, 6

God’s people didn’t enjoy God’s rest because of unbelief.

3. Pick one reason from question #2 that you think is common still today and explain why.

Ideally all three could be chosen! Still today people don’t enjoy God’s rest because they don’t trust that God will provide (if I take a day off, request a different shift, get a different job in a location closer to a church, etc....) They get preoccupied with *busyness* and everything they have to do (how antsy do we get when church goes longer than an hour!?). They hear God’s promises but focus more on the here and now instead of God’s unseen promises in his Word.

4. Read Luke 10:38-42. Then read the excerpts of a survey below. **Compare the experiences of Mary and Martha to most people in modern day America (or your own experience).**³

- In a 2016 survey, about half of Americans (52%) said they’re usually trying to do two or more things at once. But just 11% of Americans said the fast pace of their lives was harming their health. In a 2018 survey, 60% of U.S. adults said they at least sometimes felt too busy to enjoy life.

³ <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/02/05/how-americans-feel-about-the-satisfactions-and-stresses-of-modern-life/> & <https://www.barna.com/research/americans-just-want-a-good-night-of-sleep/> & <https://explodingtopics.com/blog/smartphone-usage-stats>

- Seven-in-ten U.S. teens ages 13 to 17 said in a 2018 survey that anxiety and depression were a major problem among people their age in the community where they live.
- Seven out of ten adults (71%) said they look forward “a lot” to having a refreshing snooze.
- On average, people spend 3 hours and 15 minutes on their phones per day.
- Individuals check their phones an average of 58 times each day.
- 22% of Americans attend church every week. 50% never or seldom attend.
- 45% of “Scripture-reading” Americans read Scripture never or seldomly. 8% read it “several times a year.”

Probably works well to have people do this on their own, and then to pair-share. Either that or do it in groups from the start. The idea is to show that a Martha attitude is very common today, and that a Mary attitude is not very common. Then hone in on how the “busy” attitude, being distracted and worried about many things, is not beneficial in many ways. Does spending three hours on my phone really improve my life, or just crowd out God? On the other hand, resting at Jesus’ feet could solve basically every one of the bullet points above! You could have people raise hands if they are reluctant to share: “Raise your hand if you think a ‘Martha’ attitude is more common in the world today? ‘Mary’ attitude? Raise your hand if you think ‘Martha’ attitudes are less common among Christians today than people in general? Why or why not?”

I’m Too Busy Not To...

1. Martin Luther is quoted as saying, “Work, work, from morning until late at night. In fact, I have so much to do today that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer!” **Read the passages, then discuss the questions below.**

As a big group or small groups... (The first two passages from Ecclesiastes and the first two questions are there to make sure we don’t see busyness as bad in and of itself—only when it crowds out God.)

- Ecclesiastes 1:2-3, 8
Busyness is meaningless when it’s an end to itself, or just for me, instead of out of gratitude for God and to his glory.
- Ecclesiastes 2:24-25, 3:9-13
Busyness is good and meaningful when you have God and you know it comes from him!
- Psalm 62:1-2, 5-8
Nothing we work for in this life will give us satisfaction and rest if we don’t have God. Our soul finds rest in God alone! And when we rest in him, we can’t be shaken by any of the craziness of this life.

- Matthew 11:28
The classic passage telling us to come to Jesus for rest.
- Hebrews 4:6-11, 14-16
We rest when we believe God's words and his promises.

When is "busyness" good?

When is "busyness" bad?

Pick at least one favorite verse/truth from Scripture that motivates Christians to pause and enjoy God's rest.

"Too Blessed to Be Stressed"

"Work, work, work, from morning until late at night!" Describe how a Christian's "busy" day/week is different when he or she is "resting" in God's word.

The point here is that Christians don't necessarily need to stop doing lots of things (though it might be a good idea to come up with a NOT-TO-DO list). They might look just as busy as everyone else. But the perspective is different when you're resting in God's Word. The stressful commute to church is more relaxed when you are listening to the Bible during the drive. You worry less at work when you pray throughout the day. Your lunch is good for the body, but also for the soul because you take the time to read a Bible passage. Your home life of running from practice to practice isn't just busyness, it's something done for the glory of God out of gratitude for him. Your weekends center around church, not other things. Etc....

Closing Activity

Brainstorm!

Take a few minutes to think about Skalmann's clock again. Fill in at least three things (and you can even include actual times if you want) that you can include (or exclude) in your day to help you find *time to pause* in God's Word.

Simple things like (written or drawn):

- Bible after breakfast/lunch/dinner or before bed
- Five minutes of quiet prayer in my car before beginning my commute home
- Church every weekend
- No phone after 7 p.m.
- Prayers before meals
- A new Bible reading plan/app
- No-news Saturdays
- Etc....



You can take suggestions from things people are already doing in order to prime the pump—make sure the “recharge” times are connected to God's Word—fishing might help you pause and be refreshed, but not in God's Word.