

"Putting it all Together" 1 Corinthians 7:25-40

Introduction

- That profound theologian [Pink Floyd](#) has it dead on. We waste so much time. TV. Shopping. The internet. Frivolous pursuits. And I'm not just talking about being unproductive. You can apply all the Franklin Covey principles in the world and from God's perspective still waste your life. We spend far too much time on things that have no eternal significance whatsoever. If Jesus Christ isn't guiding and shaping and directing your life you're wasting your time.
- How does the world without Christ live? A recent survey by [MSN Money](#) found that the average U.S. worker, while at work and not including the time allotted for lunch, spends two hours a day surfing the web, running errands or staring into space. Missouri was the worst state with people slacking off an average of 3 hours and 12 minutes a day. Wisconsin ranked 4th worst at 2.8 hours of slack time per day.
- The sad thing is. And this is just a guess because I know myself and how I use my time; given that there is so little difference between the way we as Christians live and the way the rest of the world lives, my guess is that these numbers would not be that much different for us. We think time is ours. But its not. *You've been bought at a price.* 1 Corinthians 6:20 and 7:23. *For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.* Colossians 3:3. Your life is not your own. And if your life has been purchased the time you spend living your life been purchased too.
- What does it mean for God to sanctify our use of time? Does your use of time demonstrate you are living strategically for God's kingdom? What does it mean to have the Eternal, Timeless God who created time and owns all time, what does it mean for Him to change the way we look at and use time?

Transition

As we come to the end of chapter 7, this long section on marriage and relationships, this issue of time is at the front and center of how we must live as Christians. What I believe this passage teaches is that...

Proposition

- **The moment you become a Christian your life begins to run on Kingdom Standard Time**
- Not Central Standard Time. Not Daylight Savings Time. Not Me Central Time. But **Kingdom Standard Time**. If the cross necessarily changes everything for the Christian, and it does, then it also changes the way we look and live in time. Whose time are you on?

Transition

This morning I want you to see what God says about His time that you've borrowed

Organizational Sentence

- **Two results of switching to Kingdom Standard Time**

Transition

Ask yourself this morning, who's time are you on? And when you set your biological clock to Kingdom Standard Time what do you get? **Two results:** urgency and an undivided, singular purpose to life.

Background and Setting

- In this chapter Paul has addressed the married, the divorced, the widowed and now in verse 25 he speaks to those engaged to be married—the betrothed as the ESV puts it. I want you to notice the unity of this entire section. *Virgins*, or the engaged, from verse 25 and the man debating marriage starting in verse 36—that's one and the same group. Same group. Same issue. The ESV translates each as betrothed to capture this unity.
- Apparently some engaged couples in the Corinthian church were being pressured to not get married.¹ In other words, the *present crisis* Paul refers to in verse 26 most likely involved some leaders in the church advocating celibacy or marital separation or no sex within marriage for the sake of spirituality—not persecution. You can imagine the quandary in which these young couples would have put. Their so-called spiritual leaders were urging them to break off their engagements for the sake of spirituality. Confusion central. What do they do?
- What's Paul's pastoral counsel? It's important that you see his indifference on the matter. Get married? Well maybe. Stay single? That's an option too. He says in verse 26 that it's good for the engaged to remain single. But then he says in verse 28 if they marry they haven't sinned. And then he adds that those who marry will likely face pressures and challenges the single person avoids. What's his advice? Look at verse 38. *So then, he who marries the virgin does right, but he who does not marry her does even better.* Great pastoral advice Paul.
- He's indifferent because ultimately circumstances are unimportant. What I want you to see in this big contentment sandwich are the two slices of bread; verses 25-28 then verses 36-40 and the nice meaty section in the middle—verses 29-35. Why the meaty middle? Because in those verses Paul gives us the theological backdrop behind contented living. Paul's pastoral advice is not to marry or stay single. The real problem the Corinthians face is the proper expenditure of their time and energies given the present crisis. He doesn't tell them to switch their status or position but rather to switch how they keep time.

Transition

Listen. *What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none; 30 those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; 31 those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.* The moment you become a Christian your life begins to run on Kingdom Standard Time. And that changes the way you look at your circumstances. What do you get if Christ has switched you to KST? What's the **first result?** **Urgency.**

¹ Fee, p. 327.

Main Points

- *The time is short.* For the Christian time is different. It's been compressed.² As David Garland put it, "the time has been foreshortened."³ In other words, we're now living on **Kingdom Standard Time**. Christ has risen from the grave. He's coming again. Soon. Therefore, time is at a premium. It's a precious commodity. There's work to be done. A mission to be accomplished. Fields to be harvested. Disciples to be developed and deployed. Is there time for laziness? No. Is there time to live for self? No. Do we have spare time to burn? Are we to be wrapped up in our circumstances? No. Instead, how should we live? Urgently. Not as workaholics. Just urgently. In other words, since *the time is short* the way the Christian relates to the world necessarily changes. There's this tension. This urgency to the Christian life. And Paul describes, with rhetorical flair, what this urgency looks like. Look at the text.
- *Those who have wives should live as if they had none.* On Kingdom Standard Time, if you're married you've got to realize your marriage won't persist into eternity. Paul's not saying abandon your spouse. He's not saying neglect your spouse. He's not saying live a celibate life. What he is saying is that your relationship to your spouse must not dictate and consume your time. That's the way the rest of the world lives--consumed by relationships.
- *Those who mourn, as if they did not and those who are happy, as if they were not.* Is Paul saying don't laugh, don't cry? No mourning, no joy? No. His point is that on Kingdom Standard Time the Christian should not be lost or consumed or overwhelmed to the extreme by either emotion.⁴
- *Those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep.* In other words, "Christians buy but they do not buy to possess."⁵ You own nothing. God owns it all. On Kingdom Standard Time just recognize that what you have is not yours to keep.
- *Those who use the things of this world, as if not engrossed in them.* Time is short. Instead of using possessions too many Christians are owned by possessions—engrossed by them. They become little "g" gods to us. Don't be engrossed by the seductive lure of the things of this world. Why? This world is passing away. I love how one commentator put it. "Becoming wrapped up in the world," he said, "is to become wrapped in a death shroud."⁶ Those on Kingdom Standard Time don't cozy up with the world because this world is in its death throes. Keep a respectable distance.
- These things define what it means to live urgently. Do you sense the tension, the distance, the urgency? All of us need to ask the question are we living this way? If not, then you're not on Kingdom Standard Time.
- Have you ever met another Christian who lived and worked with this sense of urgency—as if what they were doing had eternal consequences and every second counted? I had a professor in seminary. This professor was and is one of the most respected New Testament scholars in the world. Without a doubt a godly man. Yet in my interactions with him, he had a curtness about him, a seriousness about him that was often interpreted as rudeness. Some people

² Garland, p. 328.

³ Garland, p. 329.

⁴ Garland, p. 330.

⁵ Fee, p. 341.

⁶ Garland, p. 331.

thought he was pompous jerk. But you know what? What people were picking up on was this urgency about his life. He lived and spoke and taught and related to others with urgency—the cross behind him and Christ's imminent return before him. He operated on **Kingdom Standard Time**. Jesus had this same kind of urgency about his life, didn't he? You read the gospels and it just seems like Jesus marches to the beat of a different drum.

- Again, **Pink Floyd's** got it. *No one told you when to run, you missed the starting gun.* Some of you—you've come to Christ but you've missed the starting gun. Start running. Others of you have set up camp and it's a wonder if you're really in the race at all. Where's the urgency to the way you're living? Who's time are you on?
- The problem is not just that we aren't urgent enough. The problem is also that our enemy is more urgent than we are. Revelation 12:12 says *that the devil is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short.* What are you waiting for? Where's the righteous urgency? Officially, our rest from the building project is over. It's back to Kingdom Standard Time. Synchronize your watches. Me Central Time ends now.

Transition

Look at verse 32 and the **second result** of switching to Kingdom Standard Time. *I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs--how he can please the Lord. 33 But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world--how he can please his wife-- 34 and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world--how she can please her husband. 35 I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord. It means living with a singularity of purpose.* Whose time are you on, really?

- As we talked about already, I really don't believe Paul is all that concerned with marriage or singleness per se. In other words, if all you see in this passage is marital status you're missing Paul's point. His point is that in light of time being short, this Kingdom Standard Time the Christian is on, everything must change, including all earthly relationships—even marriage. Paul's greater concern is one of devotion and purpose. In light of the new nature of time, singular devotion is the order of the day irrespective of your circumstances—married or single—doesn't matter. Call it an issue of lordship. Call it what you will. The right way to live, if you're a Christian, as verse 35 says, is unrestricted, undivided devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Paul says all this stuff about the time being short for the purpose of freeing us up. He uses the word *restrict* in verse 35. That word refers to a noose or a slipknot used for lassoing animals.⁷ With this renewed sanctified perspective on time Paul is trying to free us up, remove the noose from our necks if you will, so that we can serve Christ without an encumbrance.
- We are just too concerned, too strangled by our own affairs and everybody else's affairs and too unconcerned with the Lord's affairs. We're the undisciplined, no kingdom work going on busybodies of 2 Thesslonians 3. We too frequently fill our stomachs with the bread of idleness and God is calling us to repent. How many of God's affairs are on your to do list?

⁷ Reinecker, p. 409.

Our chief purpose in life is to glorify God and that can't happen, it won't happen if our attention, our affections are divided between God and something else.

- What does it mean for God to sanctify our use of time? Does your use of time demonstrate that you are living strategically for God's kingdom? How much TV do you really watch in a week? What if you were to take just two hours of that time and instead of giving those 120 minutes to the god of plasma, the LCD god, you gave that time to the one who raises the dead to life? And even more exciting to think about is how He might multiply that investment. Are you undivided, purposeful, unrestricted, singular in your devotion to Christ and his Kingdom? Are you on Kingdom Standard Time?
- The 18th century theologian [William Law](#) has said this about time; and I think it is particularly appropriate given this passage. He said, "Where did we come up with this concept of 'spare time,' anyway? Is there any time for which we aren't accountable to God? Is there any time during which God doesn't care what you are doing? *No Christian has ever had spare time.* You may have spare time from labor or necessity, you may stop working and refresh yourself, but no Christian ever had time off from living like a Christian."⁸

Conclusion

- Whose time are you on? This morning, as we reflect on our view of time and our misuse of that which God has created I want to draw your attention to the one who is timeless; the one who took a licking and kept on ticking; the only one who, by the power of his Spirit, can help us to redeem lost time. *"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."*⁹
- As the worship team comes back up to close just quiet your hearts before the Lord. You're invited at this time to adopt whatever posture best expresses your singular and undivided worship and devotion to our Lord Jesus Christ. Stay as long as you need or want. If you want to come to the front to pray, don't worry about what others think. If you want to kneel at your seat. If you want to stand. If you want to pray with the person next to you.
- In the book of Acts Paul says *in the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. 31 For he has set a day, a time is coming, when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed.* Let's come before the Living One; the one who was dead but is now alive forever and ever and ask him to sanctify our view of and use of his time. *Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever.*¹⁰

⁸ William Law, Christian Perfection, a contemporary version by Marvin D. Hinten. *Christianity Today*, Vol. 30, no. 9.

⁹ Revelation 1:8

¹⁰ 1 Timothy 1:17