

It's Time

By Pastor Jake Wilkinson

Time, it is our most precious resource in the world we live in today. And it's our number one problem. We all have the same amount of it. We have 24 hours in a day. We've got seven days in a week. And we all get the choice on how to spend that. A lack of time, we call that—we call that hurry. There's a saying that goes, "Hurry is not of the devil, but hurry is the devil."

There's someone called a time perspective therapist—I've never heard of that before—I heard about this, but her name is Rosemary Sword and a psychologist named Philip Zimbardo, and they called it "hurry sickness." And it's actually the very thing that is pervasive and even invasive into our culture, and we've adopted it as Jesus followers. Here's a diagnosis—are you ready to be emotionally wounded for a moment? Well, you say that now! [Laughter]

Hurry sickness diagnosis: if you are a person who moves from one checkout line to another because it's a little bit shorter; when you come to a stoplight and you count the number of cars in order to change lanes—you know who you are, you're sick! If you multitask to the point where you forget one of the tasks, or maybe many of the tasks in my case, you suffer from hurry sickness. We say this thing, we ask each other, "How's it going?" I said this last week—how's it going? "We're busy." Everybody's busy, right? And it is like a badge of honor, a little bit. If you're not busy, then you've got a problem. And we're going to make an argument today that I think if you are too busy, at least with the wrong things, that that is the problem.

A few types of busyness—two types, really. Type one is giving your life away to what is most precious in life. This is our good type of busyness. If we define busyness like this, Jesus was actually very busy when he was here. He gave his life away to God, his Father. He gave his life away healing and helping other people and teaching other people. But Jesus was busy while he was here. That's not the type of busyness we're going to talk about today. Jesus had his priorities set.

Type two is the busyness of the American culture that you and I live in, and it's this—well, there's a saying, it says, "Busyness is the new stupid." Because we have so much to do and so little time to do it, but we do none of it well, and most of it actually isn't important at all. And at the end of the day, do we ever reflect on our day and go, "What really mattered that I did today?"

And if you want to know—I will say this—if you want to know what your God is in life, you want to know what your idol is, go to keep track of how much time you spent on specific things during the day. I'm just saying that with a warning because it's terrifying if you do this. I've done this several times and I don't want to do it again! Because when it boils down to it, you look at your life, and our phones now have these little things that keep track of how much time you spend on each app and how long you've been on. And I'm trying to—like, I'm down 17% from last week, down to 12 hours a day, right? This has wreaked havoc on our lives.

Busyness is our major block—I'm going to say this—busyness is our major block to our relationships. Our relationships with God, our relationships with each other, and our relationships with the community. It is the major sickness. You would think it would be some horrifying sin; I believe it is busyness. It is hurry and it is distraction.

Michael Zigarelli conducted a survey of over 20,000 people in this, and he came to this conclusion of a life cycle that we get into within our culture. He goes, "Well, we absorb the pace around us, okay?" Christians,

we're assimilating to the culture of busyness, of hurry and overload, and God becomes more marginalized within our lives. That's the second step. It becomes just a thing that we do on Saturday mornings at 11 a.m. at Summit Northwest Ministries. God becomes marginalized within our lives, and then we have a deteriorating relationship with God, and then Christians become more vulnerable to adopting secular assumptions about how to live. More conformity to a culture of busyness and hurry. We actually add it, and this cycle goes on repeat until we actually don't know who we are, and we don't know who God is anymore. This is what busyness does to us. This is what distraction and too much filled with the wrong stuff in our lives does.

Are we feeling guilty yet? That's totally why I invited you here today! [Laughter] I'm not saying this to make us feel guilty, but without a proper diagnosis of a disease, we don't find healing. And I do believe that this is something every single one of us struggles with. I don't know anybody in my life that does not struggle with busyness, with being overwhelmed with too many things, and most of them aren't that important. And we struggle with priorities, don't we?

This cycle isn't only completed, but it's actually intensified. And out of the results of this—pastors are the worst people in this. Not this pastor, but, you know, other pastors! [Laughter] Pastors, doctors, and lawyers have this endemic spiritual disease, and it's actually contagious. What he's saying is that our spiritual leaders are spiritually sick, and they're actually giving it to the other people. You're welcome! Someone's... they're the ones leading the charge, and we're buying into this. But I want to say this, that if you are a parent or you're the leader of a household, somebody looks up to you, and the reality is, is when we live this type of lifestyle, somebody is watching that and absorbing it. We absorb it from the culture around us. We're not busy with the most important things. We're busy with almost nothing. And I will say this, that if we feel the pull on our souls to go back to the things that actually made us busy...

Nine markers of an overly—we're going to feel a little bit more wounded, I promise we'll get better at some point today, just not yet. Nine markers for an overly busy and distracted life. Number one is irritability. If we would just look at our politics for a moment—did we lose it? Number one is irritability. If we look at our politics for a moment, we would understand that maybe we're a little too busy in our politics, maybe.

Number two is restlessness, a lack of stimulation or an addiction to stimulation. We feel all that anxiety, and what we do is we tend to go back to going to being stimulated, which in turn just makes us busy again with the wrong things to make us feel good again, and the cycle continues. You feel it? Two people felt it. Everybody else is like, "Don't look at me!" [Laughter]

Compulsive working. One more email, one more text, one more phone call. I sent an email at 10:30 last night to somebody I needed to respond to. I realized after I had written this. Emotional numbness—we don't care about the things that we should, the important things, and we have no capacity for empathy for the people that are most important in our life. Escapism—we binge watch Netflix or your favorite app, we game, we shop, we turn to drugs or alcohol or whatever it is that we try to escape the reality of life and escape our burdened souls. We do this.

Disconnection from our calling and identity, that we forget our purpose in life or we never even figure it out in the first place because we're too distracted. We forget who we are and who we aren't, and we feel like we're pulled from one thing to another without ever taking an account of something of what we actually should be doing with our time. And I'm not just talking about—you can have a job and be the busiest, or not have a job and be the busiest person in the world.

Not being able to attend to human needs. Prior to the invention of the light bulb, humans averaged—take a wild guess what the average amount of sleep is that we had per night? More! It's 11. We averaged... yeah, everybody's like, "What?!" [Audience reaction] No wonder we're tired all the time! We'll talk more about that

next week, don't worry. More abuse coming. Prior to the invention of the light bulb, people slept an average of 11 hours a day. The average now is? It's seven, but you're surprised because your average is probably four, right? And seven hours is pretty good for some of us, right? It's like if you get seven hours, "I feel great!" You feel barely surviving compared to 11 hours of sleep. The light bulb, our screens, they keep us up, they keep us awake. And I think it has done a huge amount of damage on our spiritual lives.

Hoarding energy. I'm going to look over here. A lack of commitment to important things because we can't spend our precious energy on "you name it." And so we actually don't attend to the things that are important to us, that are most important to us sometimes and we really want to be at, because we have to save our energy for this thing. We're smiling because we all do that thing, right? We're like, "Ugh." And you have to be choosy. We all have a limited amount of energy. And this is—you are limited as a human being and you are blessed because of it, by the way. We'll talk about that next week. But sometimes we have our priorities so out of whack that we hoard our energy for things that just don't matter.

And then the last one is slippage in our spiritual practices. We turn away from our awareness and even our need of allowing Jesus to care for our souls. We can have nothing to do and still be incredibly busy in life and be distracted, and we can be hurried. Hurry is not of the devil. It is the devil. Now, I haven't done a deep dive and research in this, but I believe we are the most hyper-stimulated culture to ever walk this earth. We're addicted to it. We have to have it—and you're laughing, that's good.

But busyness in the form of distraction and hurry, this is the number one threat of everything out there. This is the number one threat to your spiritual life. It's the number one threat not just to our spiritual life but to our emotional and relational lives as well. It steals our time, it steals our lives, and we want to find purpose, we want to find life, but we don't have time to do it because we're so busy doing nothing but distracting ourselves to death. It's not just hurting ourselves. We're too busy to be with God, our close community, and too busy to do the work that God has before us.

Let's say this: You can't love anything if you're in a hurry. You can't love anything if you're distracted and too busy. Love requires time, it requires your attention, and it requires you to stop and be present in the moment. In fact, there's a cheesy one-liner—how do you spell love? T-I-M-E. You know what it's like. I'm going out on a limb here and saying many of you or most of you know that you cannot love people when you're in a hurry just because you are here this morning with your family.

And if you're the type of person that needs to be on time, wants to be on time wherever you go, and your family does not share the same disposition—I'm not trying to start a fight here, okay? But if your family does not share that same disposition—no looking at your spouse! No looking at your significant other! [Laughter] And if they don't share that same thing, it's like, "What do we have to do to get in the car and just get there to survive?" right? I don't have kids. I don't know what it's like. I know. "Half of us would be naked!" That would be eventful.

When you are in that moment and when you're in this section of hurry or wherever we're at or we're late for work or we're late for something and you know you have to be there, what is that feeling like? Can you actually love anybody? Can you love the people that are most important to you? It's impossible. And this is the disease our culture is steeped in. We've bought it. We've bought it into our Christian and our Jesus-following lives, and I think it's wrecked its havoc. Let me remind you that it's not about having a full schedule. You can have a full schedule without being distracted in this type of busy. Jesus had a full schedule. But he had his priorities right.

How guilty are we feeling right now? If you want to feel better about yourselves—if we pull... can we pull back up our list of nine things? People, I want you to... well, this is going to make you feel better, but make me feel better maybe. Um, if we pull that list back up and you count yourselves, like count how many of those things are actually you on there. Irritability, restlessness, compulsive working, emotional numbness, escapism,

disconnection with our calling and identity, not able to attend our human needs, hoarding our energy, and slippage in our spiritual practices. Now, I think I'm about a 7 out of 10, but if you ask my wife, she would say, "Well, 9's not enough! I need to add a couple to that list, and then we'll apply it to your life, Jake."

If you really want to feel better about yourselves and look down on someone, I'm going to tell a story about myself right now. When we first got married, we moved to Portland and I took classes at Multnomah Bible College and we would go play—I would go play basketball with my buddies almost every single evening. And on the way back, we had these apartments, and all the apartments were uniform. They all looked exactly the same. I also like to do something other than play basketball. I like to do something called fantasy football. Any fantasy football players out there? Okay, there's a bunch of liars that aren't raising their hand! I know you're out there. [Laughter]

And this was about 15 years ago. So if you could imagine, I'm on 3G. I know, the persecution was real! It was hard. I was on 3G and I remember playing fantasy football against one of my best friends and the trash talk in this league is out of control, okay? If you beat your buddy... I have a fantasy football league that's been going on for 20 years, okay? Since high school. And so beating my best friends in this league, it's very important to me. Far too important. In fact, it's quite distracting.

I'm sitting there. It's a Sunday evening, and we're coming back from basketball. I'm coming back from basketball, headed to my apartment. It's our first year of marriage, and I'm hitting the refresh button like mad because it's at the end of the game, and I have to beat my buddy at this fantasy football game. I'm sitting there, and so I get to my front door, and I take my shirt off because it's sweaty, and I smell bad. I take my socks off. In fact, all I have is my shorts. And I go to open up the door of my apartment, and it's locked.

And I thought, "That's weird." And so I knock. I knock. So my wife can, you know, she'll come open the door. I know she's in there. And something a little less beautiful than my wife opens up the door. In fact, it's a large guy I know, sort of new, and he was in my apartment. And he's sitting there staring at me, and his words—I'm blown away. I've got deer caught in the headlights, okay? I'm like, "What's happening right now?" And he goes, "Buddy, I don't know what you're selling, but I don't want it."

And my response to him was, "What are you doing in my apartment?!" And I put my arm in the door like I'm gonna come in there and I'm gonna get back what belongs to me—my wife! You're endangering everything right now! And he's trying to shut the door on my arm and we're having this tussle right there and I'm dead serious until I look past him and see into the apartment. I said, "Those are none of my things." [Laughter]

At that moment, I said, "I'm sorry." And I took a step back. I didn't say anything. I walked away. I was so embarrassed. I couldn't... I had a class with this individual. I couldn't go back to... I didn't want to... I sat on the other side of the room, no eye contact. Finally I came up to him and I said, "I'm so sorry." He goes, "Yeah, what the heck was that, man?" And I said, "I was really distracted. I was looking at my phone. I thought that was my apartment." And he goes, "Well, it wasn't." I said, "Thanks." He was actually a nice guy. We made up for it. We didn't make up for that—no, actually, that was cemented on our friendship forever.

That was almost 15 years ago. And this problem of distraction and busyness or whatever it is—am I busy when I'm distracted? Your mind is busy. And it's only 15 years ago. This is only compounded. Well, I know how long we've been married. 13 years ago, right? Okay... no response. [Laughter]

Could you imagine having our smartphones and our devices and constantly being stimulated in the world that we live in today? Could you imagine trying to explain this, going back in time and trying to explain this to somebody 100 years ago? What about the time of Jesus? If we took somebody from then and put them into our world today, they would go, "There is something seriously wrong with the culture that you live in." It would

be blatantly obvious, and yet you and I, we laugh at stuff like this because it's common. It's not surprising to anybody. It's not even surprising to me. Although opening the door and seeing that man was a little surprising!

It's totally become normal to us to have this type of lifestyle. To even be that distracted where you mistake your home for somebody else's. And if we even take this seriously just for a second—to intrude on someone else's space because I was too distracted to realize that it wasn't my own—it damages us. It damages our relationships.

But I think Jesus tells a parable that helps in this situation. Living in a world that's plagued with distraction of things that are not important and steals our time and our life from us, he talks about a farmer that goes to sow out sow seeds. And in Matthew chapter 13, verses 4 through 8, he says, and as he scattered them across the field, some seeds fell on a footpath, and birds came and ate them. Other seeds fell on shallow soil with underlying rock, and the seeds sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. But the plants soon withered under the sun, and since they didn't have deep roots, they died. Other seeds fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants. And still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they produced a crop that was 30, 60, and even 100 times as much as he had planted.

Now, having a five times crop in the time of Jesus was considered a miracle. 30, 60, and 100 is what he's saying if it falls on good soil. This particular parable is called the parable of the sower and I think it's poorly named because this is not about the sower at all! This isn't even about the seed. It's about the soil. He explains the part with the with the thorns—Jesus later on in the chapter, he says, "The seed falling among thorns refers to someone who hears the word but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word making it unfruitful."

It's not about the seed being good or bad. The seed's great! It's not even about the farmer, it's about the soil. It's about our environment that we actually live in. Not one of those things was about the seed being better, trying to be better, making an effort to be better, but it was about where that seed was planted and the things that controlled it, to give it life and to take it away.

You and I, we love to beat ourselves up because we can't seem to get things right. We're too busy, we're too distracted. Maybe it's a symptom of the culture that we live in. Maybe it's something that we've adopted. And we talked about this morning in our marriage class that we might not be responsible for that. We were born here, or we live here now at least. But we are responsible to it. Just because you were born in a culture of hurry and of anxiety and of racing to the next thing that's not important does not mean you have to live like that. There is hope. There is a promise of a different life. But it is going to take you having some boundaries with that, with—let me say—this God in order to see the real one.

If you've read his book—if you haven't read his book, Atomic Habits—James Clear talks about this. We should apply these things to our spiritual lives. Making little tiny differences and making habits of our life of doing the most important thing and applying them to our spiritual lives, it will change your life. If you haven't read it, please go do it. One of the titles of the chapter is called "Motivation is Overrated." How much of us rely on motivation to do the right thing? Almost all, maybe all of us, if not all of us. And he goes, motivation actually isn't the thing. You have to change your environment.

If you change your environment and change the thing... and he goes to some pretty extreme examples of how people have had a boundary, particularly with technology and the things that have actually kept them from doing the things that they need to do. He says, if you're sitting there and TV is such an issue... because, look, we sit down. We go home. We go home from work. It's so easy, isn't it? It's the easiest thing in the world. We don't even have to use the TV anymore. But we sit down and we take our remote and we turn it on. We don't

even have to get up. And we're like, "I don't even want to get up to get water or a snack. So I'll just sit here." But we sit there and we turn it on. It's so easy. We flip on. It's so easy.

He goes, "Take the batteries out of the remote. Go put them in a drawer somewhere and watch your inability to turn on the TV." What's that? You gotta go find... "Well, yeah, button ain't gonna work if there's no batteries in the remote!" Oh, on the TV... nobody's gonna do that, that's crazy! Well, I remember... well, I'm showing my age if I do that, and where I'm from in Alaska we have to go up on the roof and like change the antenna... I miss those days. You'd have to hold it in the cold. Don't laugh! It's not funny. [Laughter]

But he explains, he goes, some people bought plugins for the wall and set them on a timer so that at a specific time in the evening, it would shut off the TV. It would shut off power to anything. He said, there's a spot for your phone in the house where you'd have to stand to use it? How terrible! Talk about persecution in our lives! [Laughter] But he said, go to whatever extreme is necessary to buy back the time that is being stolen from you.

Jesus had a little statement about this. He goes, "If your eye causes you to stumble, cut it out. If your hand causes you to stumble, you cut it off." Thankfully, I don't think—even though some people have taken that very literally through history—I don't think he's talking about that literally, but to what extreme extent are we willing to go to buy back what has been stolen from us? To take back time. To take back the very thing that you've been entrusted in, the very breath in your lungs. The next thing that we're about to do, it is a gift from God, and let's use it well.

It can seem overwhelming, and it can seem like, "Well, this is all I do with my time." Look, go read the book Atomic Habits. I'm serious. This book tells you little, tiny, incremental changes over a long period of time, you'll end up at a completely different destination. Just 1% a week or 1% a day, you will be a completely renewed and different person.

I want to say this, is that I don't believe that technology is evil. I enjoy it very much, and I use it all the time. In fact, we're making a little robot to help us... should I not be talking about this? That's too late! We're making... it's not a real robot, okay? It's just the one out there in space somewhere to help us prioritize things and help us go about our week. So I'm not against technology, but technology is a tool. Our phones are tools. And if you do not have a boundary around the freedom that we have in it, it will own you. That's what today is about.

It's not about getting away from running into the woods and becoming... you know what? I really admire the Amish sometimes. I do. I do. I could never do it, I don't think. Maybe. But I really admire some of the slow adoptive ways because they've made priorities. In fact, the Amish don't have cars, not because it's technological, but because they saw how it fractured our communities and we lost sight of family. And what was most important—they said, "Even as convenient as cars are, we won't have cars in our lives because family is more important than convenience." They have their priorities right.

Something I've started to try to be more present in life... now, I've lost my wallet because Eduardo only gave me something to keep track of my keys as well as my wife. I have two key finders on my keys. That was for my wallet? Huh. When I find my wallet, I'll put it on my wallet! But there's a little card inside my wallet, and it's called a Bloom card. And it's about 40 bucks, and you buy it, and it locks me out. In fact, I was trying to use YouTube this morning, and I couldn't because I was locked out of it because I have a Bloom card. And I will tell you, this is one of the best devices of my life.

If I can use this on a consistent basis, it blocks me—how easy it is to go into these distracting apps, whether it's social media or sports or a game or whatever it is that's distracting. It blocks me out of it. They have these things called a "brick" where you have to put your phone up to it to actually unlock it so you can use your distracting apps. There are tools nowadays that we're actually becoming aware of the wreckage that

technology and the freedom we have and the consistent addiction that we have constantly stimulated by them and the harm that it's doing—that we're actually wising up to it as a culture and we're realizing those things.

And I realized that I got this because I thought for a moment, it's how many more moments am I going to miss because I'm too busy or distracted with things that just don't matter? Missing sweet moments with my wife and my dogs, or a good cup of tea with a friend, and heaven forbid, missing a precious moment with Jesus where he wants to restore my soul.

Some good news here is that if we read in Joel chapter 2 verse 25, there's a statement in there, it's from God and he says, "I will restore you to the years that the locust has eaten." Sometimes I weep for the time that is lost in my life. The time that is lost in our lives. And yet God promises no matter how much time we've lost, no matter where time has gone, He actually has the ability to restore the very things that have been stolen from us. When we turn our time, when we turn our heart fully over to Him, He has the ability to do this. Excuse me.

But it's time. It's time to take back time. It's time to take the responsibility of what this is doing to our souls. And I do believe that we can do this together in this community. If you want to have deep, meaningful relationships, you have to spend time, full attention. And our solution is not extending 24 hours to make it bigger than it actually is. Do you ever wish that? "There's just not enough time in the day to get everything done." That's not our solution. It's actually putting rules around our lives to have a more singular focus.

In fact, I had a conversation with somebody about this this week. They actually said "no" to me! Can you believe that? [Laughter] I don't like them anymore. Actually, I love them very much! And I respect them more for actually saying no because they said, "I've been too divided in my life with my attention and I have to focus on this." I said, "That's what we want." It's to make sure we are so focused on the things that are important in our lives that they don't slip through our fingers anymore.

It's not that we won't have to try harder—we will. But you can't live in the kingdom of God when we're distracted and hurried and busy in life. It's not that you won't or you have to try harder; it's that it's not possible. You can't do it. It's like a seed growing in bad soil without water. We have to change our environment in our little worlds and take control, and it's time to take our time back.

Now, many of you have come up to me and said, "I love our vision and purpose statements." Anybody? The reason I think we're having the response we are is because of what we talked about today. On some level, we recognize the war that is going on in our soul and the hurt and the havoc that it has wrecked in our lives. And we realize that you can't have presence with anybody. We desire this: presence with God, presence with each other, and presence in our community. Do you want that?

We have a world that's dying for presence. I'm dying for it. To stop and to recognize what's most important and to spend time on the things that are most important in life. We've been gifted time and energy. We've been gifted money. We've been gifted these resources. And God has promised that when we make these His, that He will not only give us an abundant life moving forward, but He'll restore the lost years. That gives me hope this morning.

And I want to say if you've had this calling on your heart where you want to do this with your life and you want to be a part of this community and you want to invest in it more—and however, whatever that looks like—we have... if you look on all the back of your chairs, minus the front row (sorry, you guys aren't as lucky, you'll have to use the QR code), but David has put together something. There's a little tap tag and you can tap your phone to that right in front of you.

And if you would like to get involved with any type of service here, we want to know what that is. We're starting to develop those things. If you would like to be baptized or become a member of this church—if you filled out

one of your old forms and we haven't responded, it's because I have no idea who they are. Please fill it out again, okay? In this new form. If you want to get baptized, become a member of this church, and if you would like to partner with us financially or give financially in a way, we have those options for you right now to actually be involved if you hear that calling on your heart.

Yes, I believe that the reason for our vision and our purpose statements for taking hold is because it's prodding a deepest desire in our lives to actually make the most important things important in life. I do believe that that's happening here right now, and I'm hearing stories happen in our church. That is because I believe the Spirit is alive and you are taking your time back in some way or another. We're recognizing this in a culture, and I think that we could be leading that culture here at Summit Northwest Ministries. [Laughter] What did I just say? West North? You know where we are! At church here at Summit Northwest Ministries. I got it right that time.

You guys, thank you for being here. I'm glad you're here, and we want to involve and be in each other's lives. We want to be a community that is present. We want to be a people that are present. Let's have a word of prayer.

Jesus, thank you for being present in our lives. Thank you for the Holy Spirit and how it continues to nudge us in that direction. And Lord, at some level, we all know that we are sick, and it is because of the hurry, distracting culture that we live in. We want rest, God. We want to break from this, and we want to prioritize the right things and make sure that those are the most important things. Those are the things that we're putting time into, and our energy, and our money, and every single resource.

And I just pray that you put—help us to understand what those boundaries are we have to put around our life, because Lord, there is an enemy, and he is after the same things you are, and that is our heart, and that is our soul, and his promises will not do what your promises do. Help us to believe that. We continue this cycle expecting a different result, and we trust idols and we trust false things, and yet, Lord, if we trust you, you promise not only to give us abundant life, but to give our time that has been stolen from us back. Lord, that is a promise I can get along with. Thank you for that. Thank you for this church. Help us to live out the very mission that you've put before us. Amen.