

Power Lunch Series

The Search for Satisfaction #2

April 10, 2002 • My Clock Is Ticking • Ecclesiastes

Dr. David McKinley

[Dr. McKinley, message *My Clock Is Ticking*]

Thank you Donna so very much. Great to see you today. Thank you so much for coming to the Power Lunch and being with us and a..., we are grateful that you are here. The story that you heard earlier is a true story. It did take me quite a while to get that toilet paper out of my a..., trees, my yard, my shrubs and John I think that if I could drive that Lexus for a few days we might could call it a truce. [pause for audience laughter] In fact, I'm doin this thing on the search for satisfaction and I'd just like to see is it all that they say it's supposed to be about, [more laughter] because I've had this dilemma going on in my life ever since I lived in South Florida. A lot of people in South Florida would drive some very nice automobiles, in fact if you've never a..., been there you would not necessarily know this, but you really can see just about any type of vintage or a..., new automobile in Florida, in South Florida in particular it's kind of a Mecca for all types of unique vehicles. But one of the things that used to really perplex me was how many times I would see these advertisements for these beautiful luxury cars and I would see one driving along side me on the road only to have it fall in behind at the red light and as soon as that light would turn green, immediately that person in the back of that car was flailing their arms and yelling and screaming and honking the horn and I never could figure that out, because all those commercials show how you supposed to just kinda sit back and relax [more audience laughter] kinda put on that extra stereo with all the little, you know, features that are there and I, it just kinda bothers me that, you know, that's supposed to be the ultimate experience of life and every time they would honk at me I wanted to go back there and say, why don't we change here? I'd like to try your experience. Why don't you chill out a little bit and let me enjoy your experiences instead of you always bein on the edge? So a..., anyway, I think, John if I could have that Lexus a few days it might be good for research for this message that I'm doing [more laughter] and a... be something I could enjoy. No, that was a wild experience and I did not invite John back again and so a..., [pause for more laughter] and I'd almost forgotten until he brought it up today but a..., anyway, I am glad you're here and glad we can be together.

I want you to, I want you to imagine with me just for a moment. You know we adults have a tendency not to spend a lot of time imagining things. Children imagine all the time but as we get older in life we're such realists we sort of put our imagination away. But I want you to imagine with me just for a moment that suddenly at the end of the day today a promise was made to you and this is the promise; that beginning tomorrow

April the 11th and every day thereafter for the rest of your life that someone was going to make a deposit of 86,400 pennies in your bank account every single day, 86,400 that would actually come up to be \$864 a day. That wouldn't be bad change to have every day would it? That would actually end up being the equivalent of \$6,000 a week and \$315,000 a year. Any takers? Huh, yeah, that sounds like a pretty good proposition doesn't it? Did you ever wonder if toll tag...or if, if the tollbooths make money? Let me tell you pennies add up definitely. But if that were to happen to you that would be a pretty incredible thing, but, let's say that that had one stipulation and the stipulation would be that you had to spend those 86,400 pennies in their entirety every day because there was no accrual, no carry over, nothing else to, to be added; it was either you use it or you lose it. Now it'd still be a pretty awesome proposition wouldn't it? Well, let me take you out of the world of imagination and let me put you in the real world and say to you today that one of the most important things that you and I can consider every day is that we are given a deposit of 86,400 seconds every day. That actually ends up being 1,440 minutes, 24 hours a day and in a very real sense there's a deposit to your life, there's a deposit to my life every single day that gives us the gift of time and yet the reality is and you know this and I know this that no matter what we may say or do about time, the reality is we either use our time or we lose our time. And one of the most important things that we can consider in life is the issue of time, what we do with time, how we live our lives and ultimately how we are investing our time. Someone has said and I think in a very brilliant fashion that:

"Life is like a coin, ~~you can only spend~~...you can spend it any way you want to, but you can only spend it once."

It's like a coin, you can spend it any way you want to, but you can only spend it one time and I guess the question that I'd like to press to your mind and to your heart today is; how are you spending your time? Now, time is very important, in fact it's one of the most common talking points of our day. I want you to think about the talking points of time that you and I have, have gone through already in the course of this week. Probably many of you have already asked the question, even today, what time is it? Sometimes we say, how much time will it take? Or time is up, or we're losing time or I don't have time. Of course just this past weekend we went back to daylight savings time and it seems that as we look at life in the course of every day we spend a lot of time talking about time. It was Benjamin Franklin who said:

"Value time because it's the stuff that life is made of."

And so it's important for us to understand that any discussion of satisfaction in life and any investigation as to how to live a fuller and more meaningful life would ultimately address the subject of time and what we do with time and how we view our time. It is a very relevant, it is a very important ~~ser~~...subject and search and so Solomon in his search for satisfaction took the time to talk about time. In fact I believe that he dealt with what many of us would assume today and I believe that if

there's a common assumption in this room, that common assumption is this; that better life management will result in better life fulfillment. How many of you've ever thought if I could just get my act together my life would be more effective, I'd be more fulfilled, I wouldn't feel as stressed, I'd feel that I'd contributed more? How many of us have every thought or felt that, that just better life management would result in better life fulfillment? Now, I know that we have a tendency to think that we are the only culture that has ever lived with the amount of time crunch and time pressure that we have. But the reality is, is that in the ancient days Solomon thought about time and the issues of time and in fact he included it in his life management seminar, the one that we've been studying and the passage that we're gonna investigate today is probably one of the best know passages in all of the Bible and yet many of you may not know where it is located. So I want you to hear this passage and see if you recognize it. Okay Doug hit it! [play music] Do you recognize it? All right who sang it? [The Birds] The Birds, all right, you get an A+ on that one. It was the Birds and many of us grew up hearing that song, knowing that song. But how many of you know that was a passage of Scripture? Some of you did, probably not all of you did. It's a very common song, *Turn, Turn, Turn*, sung by the Birds that actually just put into music the reflections and the words of Solomon in his life management seminar found in the book of Ecclesiastes. In fact in that one passage, Ecclesiastes chapter 3 we read 28 times the use of the word time and over and over in that text he talked about the importance, he talked about the significance of time. And so today I want to talk to you about the subject, *My Clock Is Ticking*, and as I look at my life and as you look at your life and as we consider the issue of satisfaction I want us to really put it together as it relates to the issue of the time of our life. In fact I really wanna begin by just telling you that the essence of everything that I'm going to say today can be put into one simple specific statement. It's really the statement that I think that Solomon was making as he was writing these reflections about the subject of time and it simply is this that:

"While life may at times be chaotic, life is not chaotic."

Life many times seems to be chaotic. We really don't know from day to day what we're gonna find, what we're gonna see, what we're gonna hear in the news. We've seen things in the last few years that have absolutely staggered us, things we could have never imagined and life keeps changing and life many times is, is very chaotic. But Solomon says it's important for you to know in your search in life that while time can be chaotic, life itself is not chaos and there's a lesson to be learned about time. So I'm gonna read to you now, that passage, here's what it says:

*To everything there is a season,
A time for every purpose under heaven:
A time to be born, And a time to die;
A time to plant, And a time to pluck up what is planted;
A time to kill, And a time to heal;*

*A time to break down, And a time to build up;
 A time to weep, And a time to laugh;
 A time to mourn, And a time to dance;
 A time to cast away stones, And a time to gather stones;
 A time to embrace, And a time to refrain from embracing;
 A time to gain, And a time to lose;
 A time to keep, And a time to throw away;
 A time to tear, ...a time to sew;
 A time to keep silence; ...a time to speak;
 A time to love, ...a time to hate;
 A time of war, And a time of peace.*

What was he saying? What was it that Solomon wanted us to understand? Well, he simply said, as I look and investigate life I've come to the conclusion that time reflects order; time reflects order. You see even though life sometimes is full of chaos, life is not chaotic because the very existence of time in and of itself reflects order and so therefore I have to look at life from a big picture perspective and understand that in all the times and in all the seasons of life that there is an order. What is happening in this world is not all by accident, beginning with you and beginning with me. You see a part of the difficulty of his struggle is that Solomon looked so many ways, so many places that he just sort of threw life to the wind. But ultimately deep down inside there was something in him that said life has got to be about more than just these things and in that search for satisfaction was a search for significance to say, what is it about my life, these times, these cycles, these seasons that I live through? I need to understand more and he understood that under the sun life can be very chaotic but the reality is, is that when I look beyond the sun, life in and of itself is not just chaos, because time reflects order. Time reflects order. You see so many people struggle in life because they have bought in to the faulty assumption that everything that is here is simply here by chance and by accident. I wanna go on record today, publicly telling you I don't buy that for a minute. Not any more than I would believe that an explosion in a parts factory resulted in every model from Rolex to Timex. Because the result of, of a watch that you have...I've already taken mine off there it is, I know you're hoping that I'll pay attention to this, I may or may not, I not gonna make any promises. [pause for audience laughter] I just want you to know I have one. [more laughter] Wisely I have not moved it up with daylight savings time, so I've actually got a hour more than you do today [more laughter] and so we'll just see what happens. [pause for more laughter] But who would ever believe that this instrument simply happened because a parts factory blew up? And yet we look at our world and we have people postulating the idea that all of this is just random accident, some sort of a cosmic explosion and yet every thing in the world reflects precision and accuracy and interdependency and, and dependency upon one another and everything in the intricacy of the design of this world and this life says there is an order. [pause] Have I started preaching? If I have I apologize, I'll try to be a little bit ~~more~~...less dramatic, but I'm passionate about this subject. How can we ever make people believe that life is just a series of accidents and then you die; that you just were an

accident in conception and whenever it happens it happens and it's all random. You see Solomon looked at life and that's what made him almost go crazy, because he kept trying all these things and he kept coming up empty and he said, you know when I stop and think about it, ultimately, life isn't just a series of happenstances because time reflects order and the orders of life were put down in a series of couplets that he discussed and they're the ones that we've been reflecting on. Now, very quickly I just wanna walk through what he said, okay? He said:

To everything there's a season, and there's a time for every purpose under heaven;

He said first:

There's a time to be born and a time to die.

We all know that one don't we? That is a part of the order of life, that it seems that we have a baby book and we have a book of remembrance. Whenever you exit planet earth there is, for most of us, at least some marker, a memorial and what do they put on that marker? The day of your birth, the day of your death, there is a marking of time and yet even the marking of time in life is something that calls from within us, the sense of desire to know why am I here? And why was I made? And was my life simply just an accident or did my life have meaning and significance and importance? You see all of the animal kingdom looks down to the ground to find it's meaning, it's existence by simply following the instincts and the drives. But mankind, though out all of history has always looked up and looked at the stars and tried to consider why am I here? And what is the significance of my life? And while I am, yes, like a speck of sand on the shores of time there is something important about my life and we keep up the birth date and we keep up the anniversaries and we do all of these things because we believe that time reflects order from the time to be born and a time to die.

Over in the book of Psalms, Psalm 139 the psalmist says: [verses 13, 14 & 16]

...I am fearfully and wonderfully made;...

God You saw me when You formed me in the inner most parts of my mother's being.

...And that every day of my life was written, even before there was the first one of them.

The psalmist said I believe that my order of life comes from understanding that God made me. And then in the book of Hebrews, the Bible makes it very clear, there's a: [9:27]

...it is appointed unto man once to die, and after this the judgment,

And the reality of birth and the reality of death doesn't make us a

fatalist, it makes us a realist and as we mark time, the time to be born, the time to die we realize the significance of the order of time. So a time to be born, a time to die.

Then he says there's a time to plant and there a time to harvest. He's talking about timing. He's talking about the cycles of the seasons and the events of life. Obviously, if you're like me you're enjoying very much the, the beauty of springtime as it's beginning to emerge here all around us, and it's sort of like a back in time experience for me because where I came from just a month ago a..., everything was perpetually green and then it was brown and now it's getting green again and so it's sort of fun, you know, to go back through that cycle and that season. But he's saying here that when you look at the world, that even that, the order that there's a ~~ey~~...a season when you plant and there's a season when you harvest. Now I'm not a farmer but I'm the son of a farmer's son. Think about that one. [pause for slight laughter] And my dad was determined that I was going to taste life on the farm. Now I didn't have any need to taste life on the farm. I liked life as I knew it growing up in Memphis, Tennessee. But my dad had a friend who had a 350 acre garden and every summer of my high school years my dad would take 5 acres of that parcel and would plant beans and my job for the summer was to go help take care of the beans and the tomatoes and whatever else he had decided to put in his garden. I always wanted to say, dad why couldn't we just have a little garden in the backyard, you know, where we just kinda go out and see it after dinner. [audience laughter] But no, I had to go at the break of dawn and look at the fields with all the stuff that was out there on them. But I tell you I did learn one lesson and that was that when something was planted and when it came time for it to be harvested if you didn't get it off the vine, if you didn't pick it, it wasn't long until it was rotten, till it would fall, till it was gone. And it would ultimately impact the, the whole cycle of the crops. Well, in many of the same ways I've had to learn in life that there is a time to plant and there is a time to harvest and the seasons of life come and go and change and some seasons are very productive and some seasons are dormant but you have to be able to live with the seasons of life because life has an order in it's season.

He goes on to say there's a time to kill and there's a time to heal. Every day of life we pick up and read in the newspaper an article about a series of people who've been killed and then we read an article about a series of medical research projects that are benefiting and perpetuating life and side by side we see the killing and the healing that goes one and even this is a part of the ongoing reminder of the order of life.

He says there's a time to tear down and there's a time to rebuild. I've realized since coming back to Dallas a..., that that lesson has not all together been learned by those who are leaders in our city. When I left in 1992 Central Expressway was torn up. [slight audience laughter] I've come back in 2002 and Central Expressway is still torn up, [pause for more laughter] and I wish that they would really embrace this as their vision statement, a time to tear down and a time to rebuild and that they'd get on to the second half of the vision. [more laughter] But anyway, just the

same in life, it is true there's a time to tear down and there's a time to build up.

He says there's a time to cry and there's a time to laugh. Did you know that they're both gifts of God. One of the greatest gifts that God has given us is the gift of laughter. How we need laughter! I was just reading an article a few days ago in U.S.A. Today about the fact that a good belly laugh can ultimately help to improve the condition of your heart and how you need to laugh regularly. It's healthy to laugh! But just as God has given us the ability to laugh and to release the joys of life, God has given us the propensity to cry and to release the grief of life and sometimes there're moments in life where not any word, where not any other expression can cover it, it's the tears and they're all a part of the order of time. A time to laugh and a time to cry.

He says, there's a time to grieve and there's a time to dance. I've known that in life. As a pastor, so many times in the same day I've done a funeral and visited a couple who had a baby. I've know what it is to stand at a head of a casket and then to stand in a gathering like this and speak to a group of people who are looking for a..., ~~energiz~~...energy and encouragement in life. And it is so strange how these things go on side by side in life and yet they're a part of the order of life. It is the order of a time to grieve and a time to dance.

He says, there's a time to scatter stones and a time to gather stones. Of course in the ancient world they would build houses by gathering the stones and then there were times when they would try to plant crops and they would have to scatter the stones out of the field.

He says, there's a time to embrace and a time to turn away.

He says, there's a time to keep and a time to throw away. I've recently been through that. We all have the tendency to be pack rats in life. We tend to gather and to keep and to keep, now we don't know why we keep it, we just keep it and he says there's a time to keep and there's a time to throw away. Some of you that would be the most practical application today to say I'm goin home and throw somethin away, you know. [pause for slight audience laughter]

He says, there's a time to search, there's a time to lose. Will we ever forget the intensity of the search on September the 11th and the day that it was announced by Mayor Giuliani that they were no longer in a search and rescue mode, but simply a search and recovery mode. A time to lose.

He says there's a time to tear and time to mend.

There's a time to be, to be quiet and there's a time to speak up and I don't know about you but I have learned that this may be the hardest one for me to figure out, because I often seem to speak up when I should be quiet and I seem to be quiet when I need to speak up. Is that hard for anybody else? Have any of you ever opened your mouth only to exchange

feet? Some of you, okay. [pause for audience laughter] A time to be quiet and a time to speak up.

He says there's a time to love and there's a time to hate.

There's a time for war and there's a time for peace.

Obviously my time is limited and I cannot go extensive on these things, but what he was saying in these 14 couplets is simply this that ~~ex~~...**TIME REFLECTS ORDER**. And for all the different cycles and all the different seasons that life in and of itself is a testimony to us that time reflects order. But he goes on to tell us something else and that is not only that time reflects order, but he says in this same passage that time **REVEALS OUTCOME**. That not only is there order that we see, even in all of the seemingly random moments of life, but he says there's an order there, but there's an outcome and that's where he expresses it in chapter 3 and verse 10 and this is what he said:

¹⁰I thought about this in connection with the various kinds of work God has given people to do. ¹¹God has made everything beautiful for it's own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so people cannot see the whole scope of God's work from the beginning to the end.

What he's saying here is, if all we do is look at the cycles and the seasons we will be confused. While we see order we don't understand the outcome and it ultimately takes the ability to look beyond the sun and to consider that God may have a plan, that God may have a purpose to which I need to perceive and to connect my life if my life is ever going to have satisfaction. And that is something that is so unique to you and me. We know that there is an outcome to life. There's something inside of you and me, eternity, the Bible says in our hearts that causes everyone of us to try to understand God's outcome, God's purpose and the meaning of life.

Have you ever seen a squirrel with a daytimer? [pause for audience laughter]

Two guys talking sayin let's do lunch and one of em says well I'll check on it after...you know, that doesn't happen.

Have you ever seen an alligator with a ~~rich~~...wristwatch?

They may have one in their stomach, you know, ticking. But you see animals aren't even time conscious. But the amazing thing about you and me is that we are obsessed, we are compulsive, we are completely driven by time and time management and time sequence and even in the cultures that are not as time oriented they are event oriented. And the reality of life is that time reveals outcomes and it's God's work that we need to see in life because He makes all things beautiful in time. You see Solomon's beginning to progress here, he's beginning to realize that, that maybe there is more to life than just the cycles and the seasons. Maybe there is some sense to this order and that the order has an outcome that will only ultimately be

understood when I consider the purpose of God for my life.

And so that takes us to the final thing that I want you to see and that is not only that ~~time reveals order and that time...or excuse me~~ time reflects order and time reveals outcome, but **TIME REQUIRES OVERSIGHT**. Because this thing called time is so important there is a need for oversight in life. Again in Ecclesiastes says:

¹⁴*And I know that whatever God does is final. Nothing can be added to it or taken from it. God's purpose in this is that people should fear Him.*

¹⁵*Whatever exists today and whatever will exist in the future has already existed in the past for God calls back each event back in it's turn.*

But then he goes on to say:

Don't let the excitement of youth cause you to forget your Creator. Honor Him in your youth before you grow old and no longer enjoy living. Here's my final conclusion. Fear God and obey His commands for this is the duty of every person. God will judge us for everything we do including every secret thing whether good or bad.

He said, when you look at life you realize that the meaning of life comes ultimately from seeing the purpose of God, but when you live life every day it is so important in life that you and that I understand that we have to give oversight to time so that life is lived on purpose.

So let me wrap up what I've said today. We've got just about 30 seconds, let me wrap it up. If I'm gonna oversee the time of my life then there are 5 things that I need to do to maximize my days, 5 things. Write em down like a grocery list.

NUMBER 1: Treat each day, view each day as a treasured gift from God. View every day that you have as a gift from God. When that deposit is made with the opening of your eyes every morning, look at the day, whether it's rainy, cloudy or sunny and say thank You God for this gift of life. View every day as a gift from God. Not only that..

NUMBER 2: If you're gonna maximize your days, live in the present tense. There are 2 days that take the joy out of today, it's yesterday and tomorrow and so many of us loose life because we're living in the yesterdays or we're fearing the tomorrows and we're not living out life today and it is living today to the fullest that makes a difference in the satisfaction of life. One of the reasons I'm dissatisfied is that I'm not living today and Solomon was saying get your cycles and your seasons in order and wherever you may be, be fully there.

NUMBER 3: Set priorities for each day. Every day know what's important in your life, not just what's urgent, but what's important in life and give yourself to it.

NUMBER 4: Refuse to procrastinate. Quick public confession, how many of

you have ever procrastinated? [audience laughter] Some of you just procrastinated to put your hands up cause [more laughter] I know all of you have done it and I've done it. I had a pastor years ago who used to say:

"Tomorrow is only a day in a fools calendar."

NUMBER 5: Choose to enjoy today. This is the only day you have and you need to use it. You need to take the time that God has given you today and you need to enjoy this day. Listen to what he says again in the book of Ecclesiastes, he simply says:

I know that nothing is better then for men to rejoice and to do good in their lives and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of his labor. This is the gift of God.

Live with the gift. Enjoy the day that you've been given. And by the way I'm out of time. [audience laughter] I'm out of time. Thank you for being so kind and listening and sharing with me today. I'm so grateful.

[applause]