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WELS Women's Ministry

LESSON 1 | A Look at Time

Opening prayer and Introductions

Getting into our study

Time is a precious gift from a gracious God. How we make use of the gift is our topic for these four weeks of Bible study. The goal is to equip us in the midst of a “no limits” society to make wise decisions in scheduling each day; to live biblically in all the seasons of our lives. God speaks clearly saying “live in peace and be content.” We say, “How is that possible?” We’ll look at those possibilities. We also note that nowhere does God say, “Now here’s a great way to live a harried life!”

The concept of time has eluded the best of minds from every generation. Scripture lays the foundation of our study with some basics in Lesson 1—the creation and purpose of time. Throughout the study we keep in mind the words from the psalmist, our theme verse: “My times are in your hands.” (Psalm 31:15) Lesson 2 goes deeper into God’s Word to increase our understanding of four concepts of time: time of grace, times of refreshment, opportune time (vs. chronological time) and the fullness of time. Like a child spending precious time with her wise father, the time we spend with our just and loving Father gives the direction and confidence we need for Lessons 3 & 4 where we get practical, analyzing our current season and schedule, setting priorities, and looking at solutions. The final lesson refines our decision-making so that we respond to daily choices in how we use our time with a “joyful yes” or a “graceful no.” The foundation of all our study is that we live in God’s grace. Our plans and decisions are imperfect, but with the forgiveness we receive through Jesus’ perfect life and sacrificial death we are renewed to live again.

**1. Take time to think about time! Select thoughts that have run through your mind lately. Share with the group how time impacts your life, for better or for worse.**

- “I don’t have enough time!”
- “I think that’s the perfect time.”
- “I wish this (class/school year/test) would be over soon.”
- “My nights are rough. Will I ever be able to get a good night’s sleep again?”
- “My priorities seem to be in pretty good order at this point in my life.”
- “Now that I’m (retired/laid off/not working), I don’t know what to do with my time.”
- “My parents are really aging – I want to spend more time with them.”
- “I’m not at all sure what the future holds.”
- “That was time so well spent.”
- “Thank you so much for taking the time to be with me.”
- “Dear God, how do you want me to live out these last few (days/months/years) of my life?”
- “Hurry up! We’re late!”
- “My children are growing up too fast.”
- “I feel like I’m just wasting my time doing this.”
- “Tomorrow’s a new day—can’t wait!”
- Other? \_\_\_\_\_

2. **Why is thinking about time helpful and necessary, but when can it become unprofitable?**
  
3. **How would you define time? Consider the dictionary definitions of time. Do they help us with the practical use of our time?**

**Wikipedia:** **Time** is the indefinite continued progress of existence and events that occur in apparently irreversible succession from the past through the present to the future.

**Webster's:** **Time** is the measured or measurable period during which an action, process, or condition exists or continues (there are 13 options in the definition of time; some are: duration, occasion, age, present conditions, season, repeated actions, person's experience...)

4. **The inspired writers of Scripture write about time. Look up and tell about what we learn from the creation of time in Genesis 1:1-5, 14 and 2:2-3?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. **What else do we learn about time from the psalmist in Psalm 31:14-15?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. **God reveals to us the purpose of time in many places. Scan the following passages below. Tell about some of the purposes God has for us with the time he gives.**

**Genesis 1:26, 28**

**Psalm 50:23**

**Matthew 5:16**

**John 15:8**

**Philippians 1:9-11**

**2 Corinthians 5:15, 20**

**1 Peter 2:9**

- 7. Take one of the statements you selected from the opening exercise and picture it being carried in Jesus' hands. Talk about how that makes a difference. Now draw a picture of two open hands on your paper, filling the page. Inside the hands, jot down a few things you have to do tomorrow. How does this picture change the way you look at your list?**

**MORE TIME** (As time allows, choose any of the following for further study and discussion)

- 8. Compare the directive in Romans 13:11 (understand the time) and the assessment of Acts 1:7 (not for you to know the times). How do these relate to each other? To your life of managing time?**
- 9. Think about how people spent their time in days past. Was time ordered for them better than for us today? Who put the order in place? What would you change (if you could) in the way time is ordered today? In what ways does God's purpose for the use of time change from generation to generation? In what ways does it remain the same? Share memories of your grandparents' use of their time.**

**10. Consider life in biblical times. What do Genesis 8:22 and Exodus 20:8-10a tell us about the ordering of time in a simpler agricultural society?**

**11. How did Jesus spend his time? Review some of the following passages and jot down specifics:**

Matthew 4:23, 9:35, 42; Luke 5:13, 6:10, 19, 9:6, 9:11

Luke 4:15, 5:17

Luke 4:18-19, 43-44; 5:20

Luke 5:16; 11:1

Luke 5:23

Luke 10:21

**12. Our culture seems to give greater honor to the one with a fully booked schedule rather than the one with extra time to pray, study, be available. What would it take to reverse that aspect of our culture? What might we share with our children to prepare them for a balanced lifestyle?**

**13. What might we learn from other cultures where honor is given to time spent in spiritual growth, relationship building and study?**

**Closing prayer** (Include prayer requests)

**Closing song**

Christian Worship Supplement #764, st. 4 **“There Is a Time for Everything”** (*License needed*)

Alternate Closing song – Christian Worship #469 **“Take My Life and Let It Be”** (*Public domain*)

**Opening prayer**

**Review**

**Getting into our study**

In Lesson 2 we'll explore four special biblical concepts of time that can enhance our understanding and appreciation of God's gift of time. Each of these presents a unique way of looking at time that can help us navigate the varied circumstances that life throws at us and make the most of the time God gives us to live our lives for him. Take the time to dwell on and savor these wonderful truths in a relaxed and unhurried way. This lesson may take longer than an hour; excuse those who need to leave early—continue as time allows for the rest of you.

**LESSON 2 | God's Time**

**Time of grace.**

- 1. Share a time when you've been relieved to know you have a grace period. It may have been as a student when you were granted an extension on a paper that was overdue. Or it may have had to do with the repayment of a debt. Have you experienced grace in a similar way?**
  
- 2. The biblical definition of grace is \_\_\_\_\_.**
  
- 3. The Apostle Paul gives us some great insights into the meaning of grace in a letter to the young pastor Timothy (2 Timothy 1:8-10). Look up and read the passage together. How does Paul see grace working in his life?**
  
- 4. Apply this now to the common expression "time of grace." How would you define our time of grace? What would it have meant to Paul in prison in the passage above that his imprisonment too was a part of his time of grace?**

5. **How does it help you to cope with whatever you may be dealing with at the present time to know with certainty that the whole of a believer's life is lived out as a time of grace?**
  
6. **In what sense is it true also for the unbeliever that his or her life is a "time of grace?" What is the purpose for which God gives unbelievers their time of grace?**  
(See 2 Peter 3:9)

**Times of refreshment.**

7. **Aaaahhh....to be refreshed! What comes to mind for you?**
  
8. **Explain: It's possible for us to look for refreshment in life in ways that don't really refresh, and may even do us harm.**
  
9. **Look up the following verses: Acts 3:19 and Romans 12:2. What is the path God provides for times of true refreshing and renewal in our lives?**
  
10. **The Apostle John, in his gospel, uses a picture from nature to further reveal the idea of refreshment. Read John 15:1-8 taking turns with each verse. Read slowly and note the repetition.**
  
11. **How does the vine refresh its branches? What is the positive outcome when the connection between vine and branch is firm and works as it should? What happens if the branch is cut off from the vine?**

**12. Complete the following: God's purpose in giving me times of refreshment in my life is \_\_\_\_\_**

**Opportune Time.**

**13. There are two words for time in the New Testament: one is chronological or sequential time (Greek: chronos), which is the normal use of time. The other is a special word for time: opportune time (kairos). How is this distinction still useful for us today in our understanding of time?**

**14. God gives opportune time in ways that may be unnoticed. Talk about these examples:**

Our children are little for only a short time. How will we make the most of that time? Do we even view it as an opportune time that God is giving us, or do we miss it because of busyness or preoccupation with other things that seem more important?

You're on an errand and run into someone who's been on your heart and in your prayers for some time. Your time is really short. So which gives way? Your chronological timetable or the opportune time God is placing in your path?

Discuss other scenarios where it's important to be tuned in to the opportune time rather than only our scheduled hourly time.

**15. Do you take time in your prayer life to thank God for the opportune times in your life or do you see them sometimes as a nuisance? Pray that God would open our eyes to better seize these unexpected moments to show his love in the world. Record opportune time experiences you have and share in the next lesson.**



## Fullness of Time

**16. Read Galatians 4:4. How do you understand the expression “fullness of time” (original Greek translation) or “when the time had fully come?” (NIV paraphrase).**

**17. What specific events do the following passages reveal about God’s perfect timing? Take turns looking up the following accounts:**

Esther 4:12-14

Luke 2:1-3, 6

John 19:30

Romans 5: 6 & 8

**18. Share a time when you were in awe at how some events/thoughts/plans came together perfectly? Explain how you could see God’s hand and timing at work.**

## MORE TIME (As time allows)

**19. What is meant by the familiar section of Ecclesiastes 3:1? “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven.”**

You may want to gain further insight from the following section of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS) essay: The Eternal God Is Our Refuge: A Brief Commentary on Ecclesiastes by G. Wolff

God, the Creator of the universe, envelops in his almighty power all human life and with it all its activities and all earthly happenings. **“In him we live, move and have our being” (Ac 17:28). “For from him and through him and to him are all things” (Ro 11:36).** He has also established time, though he himself is not subject to it, existing, as he does, in eternity. Thus he has fixed a time for the beginning, the duration and the end of every event and of every human activity. It is not chance, nor the will of man, but the will

of God which governs all things. This almighty will of God is at work in all men, in the good and in the evil. However, man is at a loss to comprehend how God's will squares with human responsibility. The wicked, too, accomplish God's will unwittingly and involuntarily. The most striking example of this is the death of Jesus Christ. Consider the prayer of the Christian congregation in Jerusalem: "Indeed, Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you appointed" (Ac 4:27). And Peter in his sermon to the people of Israel said: "This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge, and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross" (Ac 2:23). Yet the Jews bear the full responsibility for their crime. They were cut to the heart, and upon asking Peter and the other apostles what they should do under the circumstances, they were told: "Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven" (Ac 2:37, 38). **Having, first of all, affirmed the general truth that there is a time for everything (stating, in effect, that everything happens with the foreknowledge of God and according to his fixed plan, in other words, according to divine providence),** Solomon goes into detail and enumerates fourteen pairs of events or acts involving man. Each pair is a contrast between a destructive or negative act along with a corresponding positive or constructive one. **Solomon thus demonstrates that human life is not a confused mixture of things, good and bad, due to chance and occurring higgledy-piggledy in utter confusion, but rather that everything happens at a time fixed by God and serves in effecting his plan, which is hidden from us, but concerning which the Bible assures us that it promotes his glory and our happiness.**

**Look also at the** Concordia Study Bible note on Ecclesiastes 1:2, p.994: "The basic thrust of Ecclesiastes is that all of life is meaningless, useless, hollow, futile and vain if it is not rightly related to God. Only when life is based on God and his word is life worthwhile."

Note: A "time for everything" doesn't mean we're here to cram everything possible into our daily planner. It means, as stated in the essay, that "everything happens with the foreknowledge of God and according to his fixed plan."

**Closing prayer** (include prayer requests)

**Closing song – Christian Worship Supplement #761 Christ Is with Me** (*License needed*)

**Alternate Closing song – Christian Worship #584 O Blessed Holy Trinity** (*Public domain*)

**Opening prayer**

**LESSON 3 | Our Time**

**Getting into our study**

Our study of managing time began with a look at time itself. It's a gift, created by God for a purpose. In lesson 2 our study focused on the richness of time as we have received it from our Father's hand. Our life is a time of grace, fully lived out in his grace. As we make our passage through the seasons of life, he provides us with needed times of refreshment and renewal through his Word and sacrament. He gives us special moments of opportunity to serve him with our lives. Ask if anyone has noted an opportune time (kairos) to share with the group (see lesson 2 #8). We are confident that God is guiding all things according to his plan and perfect timing. In lesson 3 we'll talk about identifying and assessing our current season of life, noting that choices are involved and priorities may need to be adjusted. We'll look at the importance of depending on God's wisdom as a guide rather than on what the world has to offer. Practical exercises to develop a mission statement and time budget are introduced at the end of this lesson with encouragement to work through them at home.

**My season of life**

**We saw in Lesson 1 how times and seasons are part of the very fabric of God's creation.**

**Genesis 1:14**

**Genesis 8:22**

- 1. Explore with your neighbor how the seasons of a person's life correspond in some respects to the seasons of the year.**
  
- 2. The idea of going from one season to the next involves change. Why is it important to anticipate these changes?**

3. Identify your current season of life (student, single mom, working with family, retired...). What fills your schedule? Use the following chart to check the items that are on your agenda right now. Add others that are not listed.

SEASONS OF LIFE - Categories of Activity		My Season of Life:	
Check categories that apply to your season of life; add daily (D), weekly (W), monthly (M), annual (A), occasional (O)		single mom working, student, retired, single working, mom at home	
✓	D, W, M, A, O	✓	D, W, M, A, O
Spiritual Growth -personal		Projects (personal/for others)	
Family devotion/worship		Play with children	
Exercise		Sports with children	
Meals / Eating/Clean up		Homework with children	
Personal Care		Bedtime with children	
Sleep		Financial planning	
Commute		Home maintenance/care	
Groc/errands		Yard care	
Work		Professional development	
Work prep		Family	
Professional development		Friends	
Time with spouse		Recreation/concerts	
Care for parents/others		Travel	
Volunteer service - scheduled		Internet / Social Media	
Volunteer service - flexible		Free time	
Scheduled classes/lessons		Opportune time	
Study/practice			

Choices, wisdom and solutions.

4. This now gives us a general picture of what we do—what we fit into the planning of the 24 hours we’re given each day. The next step is to clarify what is important. Is our schedule balanced? Does it fit God’s agenda for us? This is called setting priorities and it involves making choices. We’ll look closely at the process of how to best make those choices. As we’ve learned, it is God himself who directs us to make wise decisions. Read and comment on the following verses for further insight into godly decision making.

James 1:5

Proverbs 1:7

1 Corinthians 2:4-6

5. Why might we be tempted to skip taking the time to search out God’s wisdom as a first step in planning our life?

6. It’s important to recognize there is a “wisdom of this world” (2 Corinthians 2:4-6). When making decisions about what we do, what thoughts might develop from a worldly perspective instead of God’s perspective?

**Important Questions to Ask Yourself**  
*See “Additional Exercises” at the end of this lesson*

7. When a worldly perspective overrides our better sense in the use of our time, what responses might godly wisdom make to the attitudes expressed below?

- When over worked we still might say...“No one else can get the job done—or done right.” “I’ll lose my job if I don’t perform to the max.” “It will get better next month.” “We really need this overtime pay.”

**If Finances are Driving Your Agenda**  
*See “Additional Exercises” at the end of this lesson*

- As a retired/unemployed person...“I don’t know what to do with my time since what I’ve done all my life doesn’t matter anymore.” “I don’t think I can learn anything new at this point.” “It would take way too much time to do ‘that.’” “This world is just falling apart and I don’t want to be a part of it anymore.”

**Reflect: Our lives are not perfect and God knows that. We can either try to ignore the bad choices we make in the use of our time, live in guilt and do nothing to correct it; or we can acknowledge how we’ve failed to live according to God’s will, repent and believe in God’s washing of forgiveness and his promise to restore and equip us to make wise decisions going forward.**

## Taking it home

8. A great tool in the process of setting or adjusting priorities is a mission statement. Have you used one? If not, take some time this week to develop one. What is your personal or family mission in life? Look at the benefits and use these examples to guide you.

A personal or family mission statement based on God's Word has godly benefits:

- Serves as a guide—all activity is weighed in light of the overall purpose
- Provides place for setting priorities
- Clarifies identity
- Gives place for each member to be involved and reinforces sense of belonging
- Increases effectiveness with everyone moving in the same direction with the same goal
- Reduces conflict. Consider including action, how action/activity will be carried out, and who will benefit.

Examples of mission statements for families (easily adjusted for personal use):

- “We exist to grow as a family by continually growing in our relationship with Jesus.” Values: spiritual growth, honesty, achievement, accountability, family joy.”
- “To prepare faithful disciples to witness to the gospel in all of life.”
- “Christ's love compels us.” (Painted on a sign as a daily reminder). When children came added: “To raise independent servants of the Lord.” (“Sent out every day as a child of God”)
- “Devotion to Christ crucified & to family”  
We resolve to glorify God by serving others.
  1. We value grace and knowledge of Christ crucified.
  2. We make our home a place of scriptural study, health, and hospitality.
  3. We prioritize time with loved ones above other activity.
  4. We interact with each other in a spirit of humility.

For families: Here is a great place for men to exercise their leadership as God intended for them and their families. Gather as a family and explore this opportunity to grow together with each other and your Savior as you work through the process of setting a family mission statement. Note that it is a process. Start simple from the examples provided. Study Scripture together to make it your own. Pray about it together. Gather regularly to assess how it is working. Use real life situations to test your mission statement. Here's one scenario: You're faced with a promotion. It's going to mean more travel. Your children are 2, 4 & 6. This would mean your wife could quit her part-time job, but you'd be gone each week for several days. How would having a mission statement help in determining your decision?

9. Once you've identified your mission, it's easier to set priorities that fit that mission. Developing a weekly time budget is a useful tool that works for some people. There are many templates and formats out there. This study does not allow working through a personal planner, but if any of you are so inclined we are providing a time budget template with several versions according to your season. This is for you to work on at home. It is an Excel worksheet that is also available electronically with formulas to automatically calculate the weekly total of time you spend on each activity. The "Seasons of Life-Categories" checklist from #3 in this lesson will help you decide which version of the template to use.

If you aren't interested in using a time budget template, use the checklist from #3 to get a general idea of how much time you spend on each item in your schedule.

Next week we'll look at how to fine tune the choices we make. Whatever our season, God desires contentment as we live out our lives.

**Closing Prayer** (include prayer requests)

**Closing Song**

**Christian Worship Supplement #757, st. 1 & 4 Where Your Treasure Is** (*License needed*)

**Alternate Closing Song – Christian Worship #580 Every Morning Mercies New** (*Public domain*)

### Lesson 3 ADDITIONAL EXERCISES (thought-starters for wise decisions in setting priorities)

#### **Important Questions to Ask Yourself and Your Family**

##### *For families...*

- How much time do you spend with each family member each day?
- Does work prevent quality and quantity time with your spouse and children?
- Are you involved in your child's daily school routine, expectations, accomplishments? Do you help them with homework?
- How much time do you spend talking about their spiritual life with set time for family devotions? Do you pray for and with your children regularly?
- Do your children observe and learn how you set priorities? Honor for personal devotion? Worship? How you turn to prayer and God's Word to determine your decisions?
- Do your sons have opportunity to learn from dads to be spiritual leaders in the home? From both parents, honor for God's plan of head and helper?
- Do you schedule fun times of fellowship with fellow-believers? Do you reach out to help others both physically and spiritually?

##### *For students and others...*

- Add up the amount of time you spend on social media.
- Does your non-school screen time take priority over studies/assignments?
- Are you spending most of your time with friends and very little with your family?
- Are you actively part of the body of Christ in your relationships? In being nurtured through Bible studies? In your service, outreach and witness to others? To an unbelieving world around you?

##### *For all to ponder...*

- Where do you place personal devotion, prayer, Bible study in your list of priorities?
- What parts of your day most often get in the way from this happening?

#### **If Finances are Driving Your Agenda**

- Set up a budget
- Cut back on expenses to cut back on hours at work (even if it means one parent staying home for the sake of family)
- Take a less expensive vacation
- Be content with last year's outfit
- Take lunches instead of buying them everyday
- Cut back on eating out as a family
- Encourage the whole family to take one hour on a Saturday to eliminate housekeeper expenses. It's important that children learn to pitch in to do their share!
- Plan meals and cook together from scratch—healthier...less expensive...time together



**Opening prayer**

**Review**

**Lesson 4 | Yes & No**

**Getting into our study**

Our final lesson leads us to refine our decisions even more carefully. Managing our time in the season of life where we find our self comes down to saying “yes” or “no” to the many choices facing us each day. God keeps us connected to the life-giving vine through his gospel of love and forgiveness (Lesson 2, John 15:1-8). This same gospel enables us to give a “joyful yes” or a “graceful no”—without guilt and without pride. Let’s enjoy this final lesson together, learning to be content in whatever season of life we’re in.

**Determining our “yes” and “no.”**

- 1. Every day we make decisions that determine how we manage our time. Write down some “yes” responses you’ve given in the last few days or weeks—with a friend, fellow-student, teacher, your spouse, children, co-worker, congregation. Put a heart by the ones you’ve given joyfully.**
- 2. Some of our “yes” answers are made in the midst of struggle and uncertainty. Give examples.**
- 3. What about our “yes” answers to what is repetitive and mundane?**
- 4. What biblical insights might help us to a more consistently joyful response?  
See 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 and Romans 12:12.**

5. **Now talk about situations where you've said "no." Jot down one or two and indicate how you came to that decision.**
  
6. **Oftentimes we find it hard to say "no." Let's explore why that is.**
  
7. **How can we learn to offer a graceful "no?" Give examples of what this might look like.**
  
8. **"Graceful no" avoids over-commitment and pride. Explain.**
  
9. **Why is it important to take time before we say either yes or no? Consider some of the following responses. What others would you add?**

<p>"I would like to pray on it/I would like to talk to _____ about it."</p> <p>"This sounds like a great opportunity. When do you need an answer?"</p> <p>"Let me see how this fits in where God has placed me in this season of life."</p> <p>"Thanks for this invite. If I may ask, why did you think of me for this?"</p> <p>"Please share specific expectations, goals and job description with me."</p> <p>"Can you tell me how much time is involved in this?"</p> <p>"What type of training do you provide?"</p> <p>"Please join me in praying about this."</p>
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10. **What role does guilt play in our decision-making?**

**11. Does some of our frustration in the management of our time arise from spending too little time on our knees?**

**12. A note to congregational leaders. How can you be a positive instrument in helping members to a “joyful yes” and “graceful no” when asking them to serve?**

**13. Some things God wants us to do don't even require that we fill another slot in our daily journal. Share ideas.**

**14. It's important to engage others in the process of finding solutions in planning our daily schedule. How have you benefited from the godly wisdom of others in the past? Are there decisions you are currently weighing where outside guidance would be of benefit?**

#### **Content in our season**

**15. How are we to understand what the Scripture teaches about being content in all seasons? Look up and read the following?**

Philippians 4:11-12

1 Timothy 6:6-9

Hebrews 13:5

**Read together the theme verse:**

**Psalm 31:14-15** <sup>14</sup> But I trust in you, LORD; I say, “You are my God.” <sup>15</sup> My times are in your hands...”

**Reflection. The contented life is the life that centers and builds on God’s Word and sacrament. Regular worship, regular reception of the Lord’s Supper, frequent remembering of my baptism and all that it means to me that God has made me his child are the foundation of an ordered life that enables me to fit everything else into its proper slot. We came from God, and ultimately return to him. “My times are in your hands...”**

**Closing Prayer** (include prayer requests)

**Closing Song – Christian Worship #467 “May the Mind of Christ My Savior”** (*Public domain*)

**References**

Scripture references: The Holy Bible, New International Version Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society

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