

# It's About Time

Mary Ellen Edmunds

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*Mary Ellen Edmunds has served as a director of training at the Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah, and as a member of the Relief Society General Board. A graduate of the College of Nursing at Brigham Young University, she has been a faculty member in that same school and has served full-time proselyting and welfare missions in Asia and Africa.*

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Hello, friends. Wherever you are, it is good to be with you and feel of your love and goodness.

For the past several months I've given a lot of thought to the topic of time, but I didn't have time to prepare it for the teleprompter (I keep waiting for this talk to come up there).

I don't want anything that I share this afternoon to increase any stress that you might be feeling in your lives, or any guilt—just a little pressure. I pray that the Spirit will teach us wherever we are, that the Spirit will help you to receive what you need from the things I will share today. So get comfortable, and enjoy! Recline your benches.

In the Book of Mormon, Alma teaches his son Corianton that only men measure time, God doesn't. I'm an Earthling, and so for me—at least for now—I have to measure time. That is no small thing, trying to measure time. President Ezra Taft Benson has said: "Time is numbered only to man. God has your eternal perspective in mind" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 97).

We use the word *time* in so much of our conversation: leisure time, part-time, full-time, overtime, prime time, high time, daytime, springtime, Father Time, once upon a time, time after time, timeless, time off, time zone, time consuming, time share. Have you heard yourself say things like "I remember the time when . . ." "Where did the time go?" "Take your time," "I'll have it ready in no time," "It doesn't take too much time," "Have you got a minute?" "What time is it?" "Till the end of time," "Timing is everything."

We all know what time is, and we speak of it constantly, but it is a little hard to define or describe. I found this phrase in one dictionary: "A finite extent of continued existence" (*The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993]). So you can ask someone, "Do you have a finite extent of continued existence that you could

share with me?"

Have you ever in your whole life run out of time?

Time is a gift. It's a gift from God. We can't demand more, and we can't insist on less. We can't buy more, and we can't sell any (otherwise, it wouldn't really be a gift). Everyone in the world receives the same amount of time every day.

Brigham Young said: "I have told you many times, the property which we inherit from our Heavenly Father is our time, and the power to choose in the disposition of the same (in *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. [London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1854–86], 18:354).

Benjamin Franklin asked: "Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time, for that is the stuff life is made of" (*The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 3d ed. [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979], 218).

Elder William R. Bradford has reminded us that "we give our lives to that to which we give our time" (*Church News*, 11 Apr. 1992, 11).

Time is our *life*—it's our *day* to prepare to be with God forever and ever. Time is given to us for that preparation, for repenting and forgiving and trying to be good and do good. Alma taught his son Corianton, further, "that there was a time granted unto man . . . a probationary time, a time to repent and serve God" (Alma 42:4).

In hymn 226, "Improve the Shining Moments," there is this phrase: "Time flies on wings of lightning" (*Hymns* [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985]).

Sometimes that is so true that it makes me sick. Remember when summer used to be three months long? Remember when Christmas vacation was days long instead of just a few hours? Last year we didn't have July. I don't know what happened, but we didn't have July.

I came across this quotation in the *Church News*: "Time and tide wait for no man, and neither does the work of the Lord" (9 Apr. 1977, 20).

In the biography of President Gordon B. Hinckley by Sheri Dew, there's an insight into this reality of so much to do and how quickly time passes: "Apparently the tendency to shoehorn too much into any twenty-four-hour period was a Hinckley family trait. During one month when Virginia had her hands full with a heavy load of family and Church responsibilities, Marjorie outlined the list of things pressuring her second-oldest daughter and concluded matter-of-factly, "Life gets that way every once in a while when you belong to the true church" (*Go Forward with Faith: The Biography of Gordon B. Hinckley* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996], 347).

Is life that way for you? Are you busy? Are you tired? Are you weary, empty,

depleted, cross? Has hurrying and being too busy become a habit with you?

So much of my life is "management by crisis." I feel sometimes like I don't know how to slow down, or sit down, or get out of the fast lane—and I don't really know how I got in it. I missed an off-ramp! I don't know what happened. Me and my frantic lifestyle . . .

I've noticed in my life some TWYT symptoms—the TWYT Syndrome: T-W-Y-T, which is, of course, Trouble With Your Time. Some of the symptoms I notice in my life are trouble sleeping, rationalizing, eating too many doughnuts, beating up on myself, screaming, throwing my watch across a crowded room, eating rubber bands, staring into space . . . well, you get the idea. Stress and panic are not pretty things to see. Or feel.

I like trying to figure out how to do things that can save time and motion. You probably remember the movie or the book *Cheaper by the Dozen* (by Frank B. Gilbreth Jr. and Ernestine Gilbreth Carey [New York: Harper and Row, 1963]). It is one of my favorites. Both parents were industrial engineers, and they became time and motion experts. It was considered a sin in the house to waste any time or any motion. Even the six-week-old baby had a watch! They held regular Family Council (and that's what they called it) with Father as chairman. He would show them how to take a bath without one single wasted motion. He'd be in his three-piece suit, sitting in the living room . . . He got records of French and German for them to listen to, and then he put up the Morse Code in the bathroom. (These were the olden days). If you want a delightful book about time, easy to read and just plain fun, I think this is one you'll enjoy.

We all have a long list of things to do, whether written down or rattling around in our brain: pray; study; exercise; plant a garden, eat it; raise brilliant, cheerful, reverent children; clean a basement; write in a journal; avoid fat, calories, show house popcorn, and evil thoughts; pray for your enemies; do visiting teaching; store a year's supply of food (but not on your body! We're not supposed to *look* like Welfare Square); say yes to everything anyone asks you to do and hunt for more things to do; plant trees; remember the pioneers . . .

You know there's a lot. And we want to do everything so quickly. We hunt for fast-food, shortcuts, one-hour photo developing, express elevators, condensed books, instant soups, and ten-minute oil changes . . . Personally, I look for labels that say "Just add water." I can do that. And I have a *72-minute* kit . . . I don't want to be around to clean up.

But there's much in life that *isn't* instant and *isn't* fast. Skills and relationships and testimony and character traits—there are a lot of things that take time. They don't happen just in an instant. But you can tell something is happening all along the way as line is added upon line, slowly, steadily.

Pretty much everything takes time. Mothers don't sign up for an easy plan to have a baby in a few weeks. It's almost always around nine months—longer for elephants, shorter

for guinea pigs. (Oh, I thought of that myself! My mother didn't even help me with that!)

For the most part, the things in our life that matter the most will have to be attended to. We will have to budget some time—make and take some time—for them. It's a process—sometimes a lifelong process. Enoch and his city were taken up "in process of time" (Moses 7:21).

One of our challenges is to figure out which are the most important things in our life—where we should be putting our time and our energy and our other resources—right now, in this season of our lives. President Ezra Taft Benson taught us that "when we put God first, all other things fall into their proper place or drop out of our lives. Our love of the Lord will govern the . . . demands on our time, the interests we pursue, and the order of our priorities" (*Ensign*, May 1988, 4).

First things first, and everything else seems to fall into place.

President Harold B. Lee taught: "Most men do not set priorities to guide them in allocating their time"—maybe he meant women do, but I'M just going to continue his statement—"and most men [and women] forget that the first priority should be to maintain their own spiritual and physical strength"—don't forget that—"then comes their family; then the Church; and then their professions" (quoted in James E. Faust, *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, 23).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks said: "The treasure of our hearts—our priorities—should not be the destructible and temporary things of this world" (*Pure in Heart* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988], 74).

Elder M. Russell Ballard taught: "Think about your life and set your priorities. Find some quiet time regularly to think deeply about where you are going and what you will need to do to get there. Jesus, our exemplar, often 'withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed' (Luke 5:16). We need to do the same thing occasionally to rejuvenate ourselves spiritually as the Savior did" (*Ensign*, May 1987, 14).

Alan Lakein has written a book that has helped me a lot called *How to Get Control of Your Time and Your Life*. One of the things he says in the book is that "there is no such thing as lack of time. We all have plenty of time to do everything we really want to do" ([New York: Signet, 1973], 31–33). (There have been times in my life when I could have smacked him for saying that!)

He shares an exercise which can be helpful in determining what are the first things in our life. He suggests that alone or in a group—and maybe that could be family home evening or a family council with your bunny rabbit, with the birds you live with or whatever—you take just two minutes and write down five major, lifetime goals. Now part of the reason you take two minutes is that it makes you think fast and we tend to put the most important things first. Next, in two minutes, write down your five major goals for the next year of your life. Then take two minutes and write down five major goals you'd pursue if you knew you had only six months to live. Then, finally, take just two minutes and write

down specific ways you have spent time during the last week of your life that relate to the goals you have listed—it'll just gag you. I did it, and I was going to include it in my talk, but I just ran right out of time.

But it was interesting to write down the things I felt were most important—my priorities, the things I wanted to put first—and then to write down the things I had spent time doing the week before. I think you'll have an interesting time as you do this. It can cause us to realize that we're spending a lot of time on things that perhaps don't necessarily matter most to us.

It occurred to me one day that if I had spent as much time that particular day reading the scriptures as I had going through the newspaper, the *TV Guide*, junk mail, or catalogues, and so on, I could have built a ship and crossed an ocean or had some other adventure in the scriptures. But there are just those days when junk mail is all I can handle . . .

What are the things in your life to which you are intensely devoted and dedicated? What are the things you spend your time on—not just the amount of time, but your *best* time? Your children? The scriptures? Pondering? Exercising? Eating? A book club? Visiting? Attending the temple? Reading?

Sometimes emergencies have a way of jumping right into first place, don't they? I have so many of these—I've got to get organized. (I wasn't going to say that yet. Pretend you didn't hear that. That's on the next page or so.)

Let's say you had to drop four things from your life to free up some time. What would you drop? And how would you decide? For what would you drop everything?

If there is something taking a lot of your time and isn't giving you very much in return, maybe you at least ought to cut down on it, if not drop it. We don't put first things first to get them done and out of the way—we put them first because of the critical impact that has on everything that follows. It's like building a house on a rock rather than on sand. And if we're always putting third things first, perhaps our foundation is too sandy and not rocky enough.

First things first isn't only about importance. It's about order—what we do first, what we focus on and make time for, in which order. When I first read in the Doctrine and Covenants about creating "a house of order, a house of God" (D&C 88:119), I thought that meant that all the cupboards and closets and shelves in heaven were neat and orderly. Of course, it's more a matter of things happening at the right time and in the right order, first things first.

There are things that become fundamental and foundational in our lives—soul builders. Doing the right things in the right order as much as we are able increases our capacity to use time well. It is sort of like we can stretch seconds and magnify minutes.

Here are some phrases from hymn 226 again:

*Improve the shining moments;  
Don't let them pass you by.  
Work while the sun is radiant;  
Work, for the night draws nigh.*

We must improve the shining moments—improve our time. That means we increase the value of, take advantage of, or make good use of, and in one dictionary it even said, make use of for spiritual edification.

How do we improve our time? Part of that has to do with our choices and how we choose to spend our time—in what order and how much for what task or what project.

We have lots of chances to choose among a lot of things that are good, enjoyable, important, and exciting, not just between good and bad. If it were always a choice of doing good or bad, well, I'd still have a hard time sometimes, but mostly it is a choice between a lot of things which are good, important, valuable, and enjoyable.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell said: "The highest challenge we have in mortality is to use our free agency well, making right choices in the interplay of time and talents. Time is one of the blessings we are given" (*Deposition of a Disciple* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976], 68).

We perhaps become more like God in our choice of how to use our time and other resources than we realize. I wonder how that might fit in to Moroni's invitation in Moroni 10:32, in which he said, "Come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness." I wonder what that means about my use of time and my choice of what to do and priorities and order. Are there things that are ungodly about the way I use time? It is worth thinking about, and when I have time I will.

What does it mean to deny myself? As I'm thinking about how to use my time, what does it say or show about me if I can delay some less-important things and work really hard to keep first things first? Once I have figured out for each season of my life what those are—and I'm just kind of entering a new season—I recognize again that time really *is* a gift from God. It's one of the finest things we can give to someone else as a gift, while it is today, while the sun is still shining and before the night comes.

Much of managing our time has to do with self-discipline and self-control.

President Spencer W. Kimball said: "Jesus also taught us how important it is to use our time wisely. . . . Time cannot be recycled. When a moment has gone, it is really gone. . . . Wise time management is really the wise management of ourselves" (*Ensign*, Aug. 1979, 6).

So what about all the things that we don't get done? How stressed should we be

about all the things we meant to do and weren't able to do? Elder Russell M. Nelson has said: "When priorities are in place, one can more patiently tolerate unfinished business" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 88).

Let's suppose that you're doing your best on a day that is really busy, and a lot of things have happened, and you just can't get it all done. The phone keeps ringing, your cat ate your list, and your baby's teething (on your arm), you dropped a gallon of milk, and someone selling magazines comes to the door, and you were supposed to get some things done, and you just didn't get them done. I have three all-purpose excuses (these took a lot of time because I wanted them to be good). Here they are—try them and see what you think: jet lag, the lake effect, or ragweed! You could say to somebody, "It was the ragweed." It would catch them off-guard, and they wouldn't be able to really pin you to the wall.

Even in seasons or situations where our time is already full, there are still some things that can't wait. I remember someone trying to describe to women in Asia and Africa the term *discretionary time*. It didn't go very far. It seems to me that for many of our sisters in many places, life dictates what they need to do and must do almost every hour of every day. Maybe it seems that way in your life right now, too. (I'm glad you could escape and participate in this conference.) We who have electricity and water faucets and appliances to save us time—what do we do with our leisure time? Our *leisure* time? How do you spell that? I can't find my extra time or my leisure time.

This is the year to think about the pioneers. We've heard a lot about how long it took them to walk to Zion and some of the suffering they went through. I think of who they became, who they *were*, as a result of their experiences, and I wonder, Who am I becoming? Who and what am I becoming by my experiences and my choice of time as I rush through life pulling not a handcart but one of those little suitcases with two wheels. Who am I becoming? (I thought about that this past Sunday as I was racing over Iowa and Nebraska in a jet at hundreds of miles an hour. I couldn't even *see* the trail.)

It's helpful and wise to use some of our minutes to plan—to anticipate—to look ahead and think ahead and figure out what might be happening, or what we want to have happen, and then sort out, When can we do this? or How shall we accomplish this or that? for the things that we *most* need and want to do. If we're not careful and aware, some of the time we had tried to guard for pondering or contemplating or communicating with our Heavenly Father or visiting someone might get eaten up with the crises that come along. If we'll give some thought to *how* and *when* (and *if*) we're going to do something, it will probably save us a lot of time in the doing.

One thing that's helpful for me in my planning is to figure out the right time to do it. For me the right time is in the morning. That's when I seem to be the most optimistic, the most awake—it's just a good time for me to do it. It may be exactly the opposite for you—*your* best planning time may be right before you go to sleep, or in the middle of the day, or twice a year, or whatever.

But I find that when I'm tired, when my battery is running low, when I'm exhausted

and weary, is not a good time to plan because I don't always make my best decisions then. Everything looks bigger and harder. (You should have seen me last night going through this talk. Aargghh!)

One thing that helps a lot of us is to write things down. I recommend making lists as a result of prayerfully, carefully thinking. I don't know that having something really fancy to write in makes a big difference for most of us. One day I was writing something in my planner, and my mother said, "I have a planner." I said, "I didn't know that." She said, "Yes." I said, "Can I see it?" She said, "Sure." She had an envelope, and on the back she'd written a few things she needed to do. It worked just as well for her as my little seventeen-holed pieces of paper worked for me!

Some people can remember everything without writing it down. They know the date of everything that ever happened in the history of the world, and everything that is going to happen, and the names of all the general authorities with their middle names and their wives' maiden names, and all the temples. Some people can remember without writing things down, but for most of us, it's helpful to write things down to help us remember.

Write down the ideas and thoughts that come to you. Have you ever been sort of in the twilight zone, and you're just about asleep but you're partly awake, and you have the idea that's going to save the world, and you don't have enough energy—you're not quite conscious enough—to write it down; or you do, and it's in another language? And you get up the next morning, and you feel *sick* because now the world will not be saved by your idea. A few weeks ago during the night I had this fantastic idea. It was really great, and so—I always keep a pencil and paper everywhere—I got up, and I wrote it down, and this is what it said: "How can you tell when a person is lying? Part of his soul leaks out his ears." Now that is true! This is the piece of paper—this is the visual aid. See, a talk is better if you have a visual aid. Oh, you want to see both sides? Oh, very smart. That's good.

But do write things down. So often we receive promptings and reminders of things that are important to us. If we don't write them down, we might forget them, and we might miss an opportunity or a good idea or some important spiritual guidance.

It's not good to get in the habit of wasting time, or "killing" time. Thoreau said, "As if you could kill time without injuring eternity" (*Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 550). Wow!

President Joseph F. Smith put it this way: "I protest against every practice that has no better recommendation for it than the wasting of precious time. I pronounce it wrong. And I say to the Latter-day Saints that idleness is one of those things set down in the revelations of God to this Church as evil" ("Avoiding the Evils and False Doctrines of the World," 7 Apr. 1894; in *Collected Discourses*, comp. and ed. Brian H. Stuy [Burbank, Calif.: B.H.S. Publishing, 1991], 4:61).

President Gordon B. Hinckley said: "I deplore the terrible waste of the intellectual resources of so many people . . . who devote countless hours watching mindless drivel. . . .



This old world needs straightening up" (Dew, *Go Forward with Faith*, 457).

I'm often extremely busy, and yet I'm wasting time. How about you? Other times I can be relaxing, thinking and feeling, pondering—and I'm using time very, very well! I don't want to mix up busyness with being effective or using time well. More busyness is not evidence that I'm good at using my time. I need to be doing the right things at the right time, and sometimes it means being quiet and listening and feeling. One thing I want to suggest is this: Don't let lists run your life. Sometimes it feels so good to be listless. (That's another one I thought of myself!) Just *listless*. Take a break! Give it a rest! Slow down! Turn off the machines! Be quiet! Be still!

My friend Peggy has a clock that has a lot of numbers that have sort of collapsed and are haphazardly scattered toward the bottom. You never can say, "The big hand is on the . . . and the little hand is on the . . ." because they are just sort of twitching. They never go anyplace, but across the middle it says, "Who cares?"

How long has it been since you walked anywhere slowly, just thinking and feeling? Or gone outside and looked at the stars? Or watched the sun rise or set? Or played in the sandpile with a child, or laughed at the jokes from *Boys Life*? Just being busy is not a sign that time is being used well.

Elder J. Richard Clarke said that the "proper use of leisure requires discriminating judgment. Our leisure provides opportunity for renewal of spirit, mind, and body. It is a time for worship, for family, for service, for study, for wholesome recreation [like today]. It brings harmony into our life" (*Ensign*, May 1982, 78).

One important thing in my life that troubles me, and I'm not good at it yet, is that I don't want to seem too busy for people, to help people. That's hard for me. I'd love to sit with some of you and find out how *you* handle that. It seems like Jesus was willing to stop and help people. He didn't act too busy or too rushed to stop and be kind. I want to be more like the Savior, and I find that I don't exactly know how to do that always.

There are times when I have to say to someone, "I wish I could, and I would if I could, but I can't. I can't do it." I realize I can't do everything that others request of me, even if I want to. So how do we kindly and sincerely say no to things we cannot do, and how do we say yes to things we need to do even if they are hard things?

Anne Morrow Lindbergh said: "My life cannot implement in action the demands of all the people to whom my heart responds" (quoted by Neal A. Maxwell, *The Smallest Part* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1973],46). That's how I feel. It's not my idea, but I feel that way.

Right now my parents are a top priority in my life as they get older, and I love to spend time with them. But it means that I have to say, "I'm sorry; I can't; I would if I could but I can't" to a lot of nice people. Sometimes I feel like leaving the following message: "If you're calling me about buying something I don't need, call 1-800-BUZZ-OFF! or 1-800-

GET-LOST!" They're always so cheerful, you know it's them. "Hello, Mrs. Edmunds?" "No, she doesn't live here. I don't live with my mother."

It's hard to have interruptions when you're "on a roll," isn't it? You're doing things, and you feel good about them, and an interruption comes along. I want to say strongly that the most important things in our lives—our highest priorities—are *not* interruptions: they are our air, our water, our bread, our life, our eternity! There is always, for almost everyone on the planet, so much to do and not enough time. That's why we have to choose and do our best to plan wisely about how we're going to use our time.

In the biography of President Gordon B. Hinckley, there's an insight into Sister Hinckley which I love: "Her general outlook, however, was more practical than self-critical. 'I have a new project,' she wrote to Kathy, 'one chapter a day from each of the standard works. I have been on it for four days and am only 3 days behind. Better to have tried and failed than never to have tried'" (Dew, *Go Forward with Faith*, 346).

Good for her! Don't beat up on yourself. Maybe one of the things we need to do is relax a little bit more, to do the best we can every day and not get mad at ourselves if we can't do it all right now.

Many of us have found comfort and instruction in the verses in Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 (and if any of you've got this memorized I'm going to drive you crazy because I'm just going to read a few verses): "To every thing there is a season, and a time for every purpose under the heaven" (1); "a time to be born, and a time to die" (2); "a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance" (4); "a time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away" (6); "a time to keep silence, and a time to speak" (7).

In Mosiah 4:27, King Benjamin is teaching his people about helping and sharing: "And see that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength. And again, it is expedient that he should be diligent, that thereby he might win the prize; therefore, all things must be done in order."

Put *you* in that verse. We are told to liken the scriptures to ourselves, so put your name or your circumstance in the verse. Let's see how it might read: "And see that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a [mother of young children] should run faster than [she] has strength [amen!]. All things must be done in order." *You* fill in that blank: wife of the bishop, caretaker of aging parents, Relief Society president, mother of a child with a disability, woman who has to search for water and fuel every single day, full-time student, single parent, and on and on (and you're sitting there thinking, Well, I wonder which five I should put in my blank!).

I am convinced that our Heavenly Father is aware of the season you are in. He is not just aware of what that season is; he understands it. He will not ask us to do anything stupid, anything that doesn't really matter. And our burdens will never be heavier than we can bear if we let him help and let others help.

Let's be supportive and kind to each other because you may be in a different season than your neighbor, your sister, your mother at your age, or whatever. We can't judge each other because we're in different seasons. If you're not doing what others are doing right now, or if someone isn't doing what you're good at or doing, back off. Let's back off and not judge. Sometimes we harshly—even if we don't say it out loud—think, Surely she could be more organized, have less dust, read every lesson ahead of time, never be late to anything, dress her children better, have them behave better, and be in better physical condition! Oh, how we need to be understanding and kind. Try not to say or think of another, "That's easy for *you* to say!" It may not be easy at all.

I feel sure there will be enough time for all that we most need and want to do in this life, however long or short. But I'm also certain that there will never be a season where we'll just sit with nothing to do.

In the book of Alma, Amulek is testifying to the Zoramites, and he teaches a great principle:

"Now is the time and the day of your salvation; and therefore, if ye will repent and harden not your hearts, immediately shall the great plan of redemption be brought about unto you.

"For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors.

"And now, as I said unto you before, as ye have had so many witnesses, therefore, I beseech of you that ye do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end; for after this day of life, which is given us to prepare for eternity, behold, if we do not improve our time while in this life, then cometh the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed" (Alma 34:31–33).

If there are critical things that we fail to do today, either they'll still be waiting tomorrow, or they won't be there anymore. They might go away, and the opportunity or the moment may have passed. Procrastination is deadly. It can destroy time, energy, and other resources. And it can become a very strong habit—hard to break.

Joseph Smith counseled: "Let us this very day begin anew, and now say, with all our hearts, we will forsake our sins and be righteous" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1938], 364).

Jesus taught in 3 Nephi 27:33: "Enter ye in at the strait gate; for strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it; but wide is the gate, and broad the way which leads to death, and many there be that travel therein, until the night cometh, wherein no man can work." So someday, it will be night. (Wait a minute. *Someday* it'll be night?) Eventually, the night will come and the day will be finished when we could have done our work. We will either have used our time well and done the things that

mattered most or we will not have done.

In hymn 229, "Today, While the Sun Shines," we sing:

*Today, today, work with a will;  
Today, today, your duties fulfill.  
Today, today, work while you may;  
Prepare for tomorrow by working today.*

They tricked us because the hymn used to say: "There is no tomorrow, but only today." They put in a few little changes.

One of the most valuable things we can give to one another is our time. We can go to someone and say, "I have forty-five minutes—would you like them?" I guess we have to come with it.

Elder Hans B. Ringger has taught us: "Money alone does not lift the burdens of our fellowmen. . . . The world is in need of time, and if we have but one hour to spare, we are wealthy. It takes time to listen and to comfort, it takes time to teach and to encourage, and it takes time to feed and to clothe" (*Ensign*, May 1990, 26).

Many of us have used the expression "Time is money." Oh, surely we can come up with something better than comparing this precious gift from God with money. "Time is manna"? You have to gather it every day and use it every day and it doesn't store very well (except on the weekend, or something like that).

But what if it *were* like money? What if time were like money, and there would be things like a fifteen-minute charge for being "overdrawn." Let's suppose that each morning the bank credited your account with \$1,440 on one condition: Whatever money you did not use at the end of the day would be out of your account and the next morning another \$1,440 would be put in it. What would you do? (I would frantically draw out all those pennies and use them like crazy.)

Well, we *do* have a bank like that. It's called a time bank! And every morning in our account we have 1,440 minutes. At the end of the day those we haven't used, or improved, disappear. Miraculously, nine minutes go further than ten, just as nine pennies go further than ten. You can't get out paper or use a computer to figure this out scientifically. It's one of those heavenly things that just *is*—nine minutes can go further than ten. Somehow, when we do what God asks us to do, the best we can, keeping first things first, our time seems to come back to us, added upon and multiplied. It's a miracle.

Brigham Young said: "I want everything that the Lord places in my possession, my time, my talents, every ability I have, every penny that he has committed to me to be used to his glory, and for the building up of his kingdom on the earth" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 18:248).

President Kimball said: "Consecration is the giving of one's own time, talents, and means to care for those in need—whether spiritually or temporally—and in building the Lord's kingdom" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982], 366).

President Benson said: "We covenant to live the law of consecration. This law is that we consecrate our time, talents, strength, property, and money for the upbuilding of the kingdom of God on this earth and the establishment of Zion" (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988], 121).

Perhaps we can consider advice that has been given by many, to tithe our time. Cherry, my friend, and I were thinking about this, and we were wondering, could we use sleep time or Sunday? Could you have 10 percent come, part of the time, at least, when you're asleep, or does it have to be an "out-of-bed" experience . . .

The Lord who taught us that "charity never faileth" (Moroni 7:46) surely would not fail to help us use our time in such a way that that can be true! He wouldn't teach us something that can't be true or is not true, so surely he who taught us "charity never faileth" will help us to use our time in such a way that it will remain true, so that pure love will never ever fail.

Here are just a few suggestions. Maybe you can pick out one or two that might be helpful for you.

Make appointments with yourself. You look on your envelope or your seventeen-holed paper and see if you have made any appointments with you (or in my case, *me*). Make appointments with yourself just to do what you need to do, and then if someone calls, you can say, "Oh, I have an appointment that day."

Go for a day without watching the news. Or cut down on the amount of TV watching. See if that will help.

Could we add one minute of thanks to each prayer we offer? Out of the 1,440 minutes God gives us every day, could we add one minute just to thank him?

Drive slower. Avoid road rage. (I kind of like the way that sounds: just go out with your little BB gun and hunt the Road Ragers). If we could leave earlier, or slow down, or keep the speed limit, so we don't have to use our time watching for the you-know-what with the you-know-what on the top of the you-know-what—perhaps we could enjoy ourselves more and actually find in our driving—depending on where you're driving, what city or circumstance—maybe a little pondering time, maybe time to be a little kinder.

Simplify. I like the idea, or the concept, of simplifying. It can be a timesaver. I spend a lot of time in my basement, where there's matter unorganized, trying to find a 1983 *Ensign* or a particular toy that I want to play with or a box of stuff. If we could simplify . . . I get emotionally attached to *things!* and it is very hard for me to give them away. I have much,

much, much precious trash, but if we simplify, we could have more room in our closets—and imagine a home with an empty drawer! I get sick of hearing myself say, "I've got to get organized!" I think the last thing I'll say before I die is, "I've *got* to get *organized*!"

Have a bag to take with you. In that bag you can put some things you could work on for a few minutes if you find yourself in a situation where you're waiting: you could read a lesson or write a note or sew on a button or paint an oil painting. (Big bag.) Think of it—if you could just capture and protect an "extra" few minutes every day.

Here are some five-minute investments: go outside, look at the sky, pick a flower, whistle a tune, sing a hymn, tell someone you love him or her. Ten-minute investments: write a note, call a friend, visit a neighbor, sort a pile of "stuff" (ooh, that feels good). Fifteen-minute investments: write a letter, read a chapter, work in the garden, clean a drawer, fold some clothing, talk to a child, talk to your Heavenly Father and be a child.

With an investment of a few hours, some of you can go to the temple. For others it takes a much, much longer time. One early morning I was on my way to the Salt Lake Temple, driving along, and the still small voice came into my mind and said, "Edmunds, are you ready to go to the temple today?" I said, "Yep, yep—got my clothes, got my recommend." "That's not what I meant." And then into my mind came the feeling that friends of mine, like Endang (whom some of you have met) from Indonesia, have to wait a long, long time to go once. Some of my friends will likely never have *one* opportunity, and I live within a few hours of at least ten temples. Do I appreciate that?

A week ago now I was in the Provo Temple with my father's friend Lewie Younger, Dr. Lewis Younger from Minnesota. They've been pals for about seventy years. And Dr. Younger was baptized in 1994, the week before Christmas. Through all these years I think of the time my father took to write letters, to phone, to visit, to keep caring and loving—and the joy they felt when Dr. Younger was baptized and my father confirmed him; the joy they felt last year when they went to the temple together; the joy I felt last week being with him in the temple. And the joy I felt on Wednesday being with Endang in the temple. Do I appreciate what I have? Is it one of my *first* things? To be in the Lord's house as often as I can?

I know you've heard speakers, as I have, who have invited you to act as if you *do* have only six months to live. They've asked you to consider how you would spend your time—your life, your days, your hours, your minutes. If you've never done this exercise, you might find it somewhat interesting. I hope you wouldn't think it a morbid thing. We're all going to die someday. It's like transferring to another time zone a long ways away.

Someone among us *has* just six months or a few months to live. Maybe it's you. Maybe it's me. If it's someone you know, and the person has just a few months to live, what are you learning? If it's you, and you could tell us, how do you spend your time? What matters most to you right now? I think that would teach us a lot of important lessons. I guess in some sense we're *all* dying, but we've got a lot of living to do before that happens, no matter when it happens. And God has said that the time will be shortened as it gets close to

his Son's coming again.

Looking back from right now, from the season you're in and from where you are, what would you trade for a chance to talk to someone you love who's gone Home (capital H)? What would you trade? A TV show? A movie? A game?

Let's spend time *now* doing the things and saying the things that matter most, way in our hearts, way in the center.

In Africa we often used to sing, with Wandering Bob, our neighbor, leading us, "God Moves in a Mysterious Way" (*Hymns*, no. 285). We always sang all the verses. God does move in a mysterious way, but he is his own interpreter, and he will make everything plain eventually.

In Doctrine and Covenants 88 there's a wonderful verse about the end of the day. (My mother said it's evidence I won't be there. See what you think.) "And there shall be silence in heaven for the space of half an hour"—they'll probably have to put me in my own room—"and immediately after shall the curtain of heaven be unfolded, as a scroll is unfolded after it is rolled up, and the face of the Lord shall be unveiled" (v. 95). Oh, what a feeling! We'll know. We'll know that's what is about to happen, and then we'll have the chance to think back, How did we use our day? How did we use the day that God gave us before the night came?

I have a painting of the Savior that's my favorite, partly because it was painted for me by my brother-in-law Wendell, who was paralyzed for thirty-two years of his life. It took him a long time, a lot of time to paint this for me. He knew the Savior as he painted this, and he knows Him now because he's gone Home. As I look at this painting, it helps me know much, much more about what I possibly will think about during that half hour, when it's all over and all that I could do has been done and all that I left undone is undone.

I think, during that half hour, as I anticipate seeing the Savior, I will perhaps think more deeply about what he did for me in a very personal way in the Garden, such that he can understand everything—everything you feel, everything you experience, everything that makes you feel lonely and heavily burdened (and that makes you cry when nobody else is around—or in public).

He knows. He understands. He's been there. He loved you that much then; oh, how he loves you right now, *right now*. There is nothing you can do to cause him to stop loving you. Even if you had a campaign, it would fail. And just because as an Earthling I don't understand unconditional love doesn't make it unreal. It *is* real. God loves us, the Savior loves us—they love us unconditionally. They love us *right now*.

Let him help you! Let them help you. Let the Savior encircle you in the arms of his love.

I pray that we will live as happily and positively and enthusiastically as we possibly

can the great plan of happiness, the gospel of Jesus Christ; that we will do as much as we possibly can, in any season in which we find ourselves; that we will use this precious time that our Heavenly Father has given us, this day of our lives, to do all we can to be more like him, closer to him, and to build up and defend the kingdom of God.

And now I'll turn the time over to you. Use it well. Enjoy it. Appreciate it. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.