

A Pastor's Guide to Time Management

SHEPHERDING TIME



Rush Witt and Joe Keller

Foreword by Tim Challies

"In a ministry culture often driven by urgency and efficiency, this book offers wisdom, clarity, and freedom."

Jonathan D. Holmes, Executive Director, CCEF

"If you're like me, trying to balance a number of responsibilities while wearing multiple hats, you will benefit from *Shepherding Time*. With brief chapters, helpful reflection questions, and clear action steps, this book will serve you well."

Juan R. Sanchez, Senior Pastor, High Pointe Baptist Church, Austin, TX;
coauthor of *Reaching Your Child's Heart*

"Joe and Rush are pastors who produce. But productivity is not their driving motivation—they want to see the Lord glorified by his Word being faithfully ministered to his people. These men are faithful guides to working well in ministry. Take and read."

Jeremy Pierre, Dean, The Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism, and Ministry, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

"*Shepherding Time* helps pastors examine their heart motives and relationship with God when stewarding both their callings and their time in light of ultimate and eternal purposes."

Mark Tatlock, President, The Master's Academy International

"Rush Witt and Joe Keller offer meaningful counsel to the church leader trying to be faithful both at home and in his local church. Their years of combined ministry experience show in a book that is accessible, honest, and full of practical action steps."

Ryan Robertson, President, Reaching & Teaching International

"Rush and Joe give busy shepherds a theological framework combined with genuinely helpful tools that I have not found anywhere else."

T. J. Freeman, Senior Pastor, Christ Church, Wellsboro, PA;
executive director, The Brainerd Institute for Rural Ministry

"Pastors struggle with time management because everything matters and everyone needs them now. Witt and Keller finally wrote the book that addresses that real tension."

Chris Kouba, Lead Pastor, United City Church, Humble, TX; podcast host, *Step Up*

"*Shepherding Time* helps pastors think wisely about how to steward their limited hours for the sake of their people, families, and mission."

Scott Zeller, Executive Vice President of Churches, Acts 29

"If your time is overrun by the busyness of ministry and the tyranny of the urgent, Joe and Rush are very capable guides."

Deepak Reju, Senior Pastor, Ogletown Baptist Church, Newark, DE; author of *On Guard*

“Rush Witt and Joe Keller have set a wise course of action for pastors. By being proactive and thoughtful, pastors can redeem precious, God-given time.”

Benjamin L. Gladd, Executive Director, The Carson Center for Theological Renewal

“Witt and Keller bring fresh biblical wisdom to productivity, helping pastors shepherd time without false guilt or neglect. This book helps pastors serve faithfully.”

Dwayne Milioni, Lead Pastor; seminary professor; cofounder, the Pillar Network

“Keller and Witt provide practical, Christ-centered tools that have helped me become a wiser and more faithful steward of the time God has entrusted to me.”

Timothy St. John, Counseling Pastor, Lighthouse Community Church, Torrance, CA; author of *After Church Hurt*

“You will be convicted, encouraged, and helped as you rethink how you use your time to maximize ministry effectiveness and do all for the glory of God.”

Garrett Higbee, President, Soul Care Consulting International; director, Lead Healthy Retreats

“Witt and Keller give insight and care to categories of shepherding, time management, pastoral priorities, and rest. Take a personal retreat and prayerfully read this book.”

Mike Seaver, Lead Pastor, Risen Hope Church, Summerville, SC; church plant coordinator, Sovereign Grace Churches

“This book is a rich source of both biblical wisdom and practical suggestions for how pastors can steward their time well. It will serve pastors to read and think about this essential topic so that they can use their time in ways that honor the Lord and serve the people of God.”

Matthias Lohmann, Pastor, FEG Munich, Germany; chairman, Evangelium21; 9Marks speaker

“Rush and Joe have developed a thorough understanding of time management and our common struggles with it, and they deliver helpful strategy from pastors for pastors. Your ministry will be blessed by your timely engagement with this book!”

Adam Bailie, Senior Lead Pastor, Christ Church, Greensboro, NC

“I am grateful for these two gospel-shaped men who are passionate about using their time for the glory of God. Apply the message of this book to your every day as you seek to redeem your time with the one life you have to live.”

Daniel S. Dumas, CEO, Red Buffalo

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to Time Management

Rush Witt and Joe Keller



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Foreword

I HAVE HAD the privilege of traveling across the world to visit local churches on each of the inhabited continents. I have been able to meet with pastors who minister in fast-paced global cities and in slow-paced rural villages. I have been able to spend time with pastors who are at the cutting edge of technology and those whose homes have yet to gain electricity or running water. I have learned from pastors in full-time ministry positions and pastors who rise long before the sun to tend to their cashew grove or rubber trees before they can begin to tend to their church. There are a few things that bind all of these faithful pastors together: their commitment to the Word of God, to prayer, and to shepherding the flock, and their shared struggle to manage their time well.

It is not only pastors who struggle with time management, of course. Yet pastors face particular challenges with their time that are not often addressed by the many books, guides, and programs. They have a unique collection of responsibilities and a unique structure of accountability. On any given day, they may be expected to exposit a text, counsel an addict, lead a premarital class, chair a meeting, and pray at the bed of a dying man. Because the work is never done, few pastors feel confident that they have used their time well. And perhaps of greater concern, few pastors feel confident that their parishioners believe they have used their time well either.

It is for these reasons that I'm thankful for this new book from Rush Witt and Joe Keller. They write as pastors to pastors—as shepherds to those who wish to shepherd their time confidently, successfully, and in a way that honors the Lord. They would be the first to admit that they have not mastered the art of time management, yet they have certainly made great strides in understanding how God means for them to use their time wisely and effectively. Their book is a powerful combination of biblical truths and practical pointers that draws from the deep wells of ancient wisdom and the front-lines of modern innovation. It avoids the heavy hand of the law to focus instead on grace. It guides pastors into a fresh understanding of how to use their time for the good of their church and the glory of God.

If you are already in pastoral ministry or training for it, I'm certain that *Shepherding Time* will prove to be a great gift to you. It will challenge, inform, and instruct you. Better yet, it will free you from false expectations—whether your own or other people's—so you can have confidence that you are honoring God with the time he has given you.

Tim Challies

Author of *Do More Better*, www.challies.com

Chapter 1

The Gift of Time

A FEW YEARS ago, HBO created a documentary about Berkshire Hathaway founder Warren Buffett titled *Becoming Warren Buffett*.¹ One scene on Buffett's view of time management caught viewers' attention in a special way. Speaking about his legendary protection of his time, Buffett made a fascinating offhand comment. He highlighted his notable timeliness and his insistence that people around him exercise a firm respect for time. He said, "I can buy anything I want, basically, but I can't buy time." Time is the one commodity he can't buy more of. It's a limited resource. It's finite. He has the same twenty-four hours in a day that the rest of us have.

An astounding revelation! Warren Buffett—a multibillionaire—sees time, not money, as his most valuable commodity. He knows no matter what endeavors he develops or how much money he amasses, he cannot buy or program into his life more time. Thus, he fears wasting it. Notice the key truth embedded in that story: How you think about time shapes your relationship to time. Every day, Buffett, perhaps unknowingly, borrows a principle precious to the Puritans.

The English preacher Thomas Watson wrote, "Time is a precious commodity, but how prodigally do many waste it! Time is the measure of our lives, and the loadstone of eternity; to trifle away time is to trifle away the soul."² What a powerful thought! Read that again.

In his work *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices*, Puritan Thomas Brooks wrote, "Time is a talent, and God will call you to account for how you have spent it. There is nothing more precious than time, and yet nothing of which we are more prodigal."³

While we may not share Buffett's financial world, we can admire his remarkable conscientiousness. He refuses to be enslaved to his schedule or the relentless demands of his work.

As pastors, we find Buffett's level of control both enviable and entirely foreign. In our combined ministry experience, we have spent years in the trenches of local church ministry, and we have often struggled to treat time with that same level of sober stewardship. In the life of a shepherd, the challenge rarely arises from a lack of work; instead, it comes from an abundance of good work. On any given Tuesday, we are faced with a dozen "best" ways to spend an hour: a sermon that needs depth, a grieving member who needs a visit, a leader who needs mentoring, or a family that needs a present husband and father.

We know the feeling of sitting at our desks, surrounded by these competing callings: a stack of books open for a series on the Psalms, a list of hospital visits to make, and a mounting pile of administrative tasks that feel essential to the health of the church. In that moment, we realize we aren't simply busy but reactive, trying to serve everyone well. Our schedules no longer serve as a tool for ministry; they become a master that we struggle to please.

In those moments, we remind each other that the *conflicting priorities* of ministry are not just items on a list; they are people with souls and responsibilities given to us by God. We find ourselves constantly torn between the needs of the sheep, the needs of our own homes, and the specific callings God has placed on our lives. We realize that without a clear, biblical

framework for our days, we would continue to be driven by the loudest “ping” or the most recent crisis.

We are writing this book out of our collective experiences with shepherding time. We have felt overwhelmed by the sheer volume of good tasks and deeply unsure of how to make the best use of the time we have been given. We haven’t mastered our minutes, but we know the importance of finding a way to honor the Lord with them. This is our attempt to move away from the frantic pace of chaotic calendaring, and toward a grace-centered, intentional stewardship of the days God has numbered for us.

The Pastoral Tension

While Buffett fears wasting a finite commodity, we often find ourselves fearing a different kind of failure: neglecting a soul. Buffett sees time as a resource to be managed; as pastors, we see it as a context for worship. And that makes the pressure feel much heavier.

In our combined fifty years of pastoral ministry, we have not sat on the sidelines. We have planted churches, shepherded congregations through crises, and counseled families in their darkest hours. Yet, despite those years of experience, we have spent much of our ministry in the “too-muchness” of the calling. We know the specific, heavy exhaustion of a schedule that never seems to honor the God we serve or the people we love.

Picture the common rhythm of a Tuesday morning. You are in your study, finally finding your stride in the text for Sunday’s sermon. Your heart is engaged with the Word, and the “ministry of the Word” feels like the priority it should be. Then, the phone rings. A deacon’s father has just passed away.

In an instant, your focus must pivot. As you grab your keys to head to the hospital, your mind begins to race. You realize

you still have three unreturned emails about the upcoming budget deadline. You remember you promised your spouse you'd be home for dinner to help with the kids. By the time you reach the hospital parking lot, you aren't just thinking about the grieving family; you are calculating the "cost" of the visit against the rest of your life.

You know the feeling. It's the whiplash of moving from a budget meeting to a hospital bedside, then back to a staff lunch, all while trying to maintain the spiritual posture of a shepherd. It's the nagging "time guilt" that follows you home—the sense that by being faithful to the church, you are being unfaithful to your family, or by resting, you are failing your flock.

We didn't write this book because we have perfectly mastered every fifteen-minute block on our calendars. We wrote it because we reached a point where we were overwhelmed. We were tired of feeling like we were constantly behind, perpetually distracted, and unsure of how to make the best use of our time in a calling that is never truly "finished."

This book is the result of our own search for a better way. We wanted to move past the frantic pursuit of secular efficiency and find a biblical theology of stewardship—one that offers pastors confidence and grace instead of just a longer to-do list. We wrote this because we needed a way to shepherd our time so that we could more faithfully shepherd our people. Do you think of time as your precious commodity, a divinely entrusted talent? Every person, whether they are a pastor or parishioner, has access to the same 168 hours per week. No more, no less. But not all people (and certainly not all pastors) will use those hours to the same effect. You don't need to understand Einstein's theory of relativity to know this important fact: The limited nature of your time means you have choices to make. While the amount of time cannot be

altered, its use can and must be shepherded. Thus, every wise pastor affirms the prayer of Moses, “Teach us to number our days carefully so that we may develop wisdom in our hearts” (Psalm 90:12). God bestows his good gift of time on everyone. Though he ordains some to have a longer breadth of life, he has determined each of us will have the same units of time. Sixty seconds in a minute. Sixty minutes in an hour. Twenty-four hours in a day. One hundred sixty-eight hours in a week. As a result, we must set our minds not on how we can get more time, but rather how will we make the God-glorifying most of it (Proverbs 16:9; Matthew 6:27).

One of the great mysteries of the world centers on the distinction between the Creator and his creatures. He stands above time. God transcends the natural world with omnipresence and omniscience. He does not need time to exist or function in any way. Yet God created time for his creatures: to structure our world, to mark our lives, and to give us a context in which we would glorify and enjoy him (Acts 17:24–28). In this way, time serves not as a mere commodity but as the context in which every moment of God’s redemptive plan unfolds. Stop and ponder that for a moment longer.

What a thought! God created time for the people of his world to live out his created design. God placed his unfolding plan of redemption in the context of time. Therefore, time serves as the very atmosphere in which we live out every moment he ordained for our ultimate good and his ultimate glory (Psalm 139:16).

And yet we must confess we’ve spent vast amounts of this most precious commodity on frivolous matters. What a waste of a good gift! Yet hope remains! The God of time intends to help us redeem our time.

The answer to this problem amounts to a change of heart and mind about the gift of time. Pastors need a renewed vision

of its purpose and potential in their lives and in the lives of others who serve God's people. May this book help you shepherd time wisely in the present moment and with eternity in view.

Maximizing the Impact of Time

A pastor's calendar may look like one long list of events, but the impact of those hours differs dramatically. Therefore, every faithful shepherd must strategize the use of his time for the most effective impact. In fact, pastoral wisdom comes through the shepherd's ability to discern the impact of each moment and then apply himself accordingly.

Think about some examples where impact differs between tasks. On any given day, you must navigate between things like sitting in a hospital waiting room and attending the youth group play. Pastors must think through the options of engaging in bus-stop conversation with an unbeliever and the post-Bible study conversation with a discouraged church member. You must balance your time between investing in leaders and consulting with a staff member. All these tasks carry a weight of impact, and each has a rightful place in the pastor's work. Yet to make the strongest overall impact, we must order our pastoral world. To drive home this important truth, we want to tell you a story.

Killers, fillers, and instillers

Our story finds three pastors living in three towns. The first pastor was a *time killer*. He always looked "busy," and yet much of his week slipped away into distractions and half-finished tasks. He lingered lazily over endless emails, scrolled through newsfeeds, and padded his schedule with tasks requiring little energy. He killed time, and with it, the opportunities God placed before him. The flock felt his presence little.

The second was a *time filler*. He kept active, was never idle. His days remained stacked with meetings, visits, committees, errands, and events. But his heart was thin. He filled his time with tasks, but much of it proved motion without ministry. The congregation saw him, and yet the quality of his efforts amounted to little in the end.

The third was a *time instiller*. He planned his ministry and administered his plan. Every aspect of his leadership carried weight and possibility. He sat in the hospital waiting room not only to pass the hours but to instill comfort and pray as an embodiment of God's presence. He attended the students' early morning Bible study not merely to fill space on the schedule but to instill the Word into young hearts. He brought into meetings, living rooms, coffee shops, and even sideline conversations an intentionality to instill the marrow of ministry into the people entrusted to him.

Invest with purpose

One killed time, one filled time, but the time shepherd instilled time, and God's people flourished. The goal of the instiller is to ensure that no moment is merely spent, but that every hour is invested with eternal purpose. However, this high calling of instilling value requires a sense of holy urgency, for the opportunity to shepherd our people is as fleeting as it is precious.

So the question is not *whether* your hours will be spent—they will be—but whether, when the Master returns, they will have been spent on what was merely urgent or on what was eternally important.

Time Waits for No One

In *The Canterbury Tales* we read these ironically timeless words: "Time and tide wait for no man."⁴ The Clerk's Tale

presents the scene of a peasant named Griselda, who marries a marquis and must prove her loyalty. The Clerk, who tells the tale, draws out this pithy line to show that not even a noble ruler can stop the relentless turning of time. Indeed, the tide of life and death rises and falls with no one to stop it.

Pastoral life brings so many incredible blessings to our lives. For many, on any given day, it seems our biggest problem is choosing between the litany of possible good works laid out before us. God has so filled our lives with good things that we must wrangle with choosing between them. You shouldn't hear this as bragging. Your pastoral life faces the very same reality. Yes, you have hardships and struggles like us all. But think about it: The pastoral life never lacks for rewarding ministry to accomplish. And it makes our shepherding of time even more foundational.

We feel the pressures of pastoral time, in part, because of the relentless nature of time. Time does not pause, rewind, or grant do-overs. We've heard it said, "Four things do not come back: the spoken word, the sped arrow, the past life, and the neglected opportunity."⁵ While all four deserve our attention, the last one holds special significance to us as pastors. Ministry always takes place in the moving stream of time. Pastor Thomas Adams wrote, "Every hour hath wings, and there is no moment passing from us but it flies up to the Maker of time, and bears him true tidings how we have used it."⁶ Picture the hourglass which John Piper flips over, shouting "for the kingdom and the family!"—every grain of sand falls whether we use it well or not.

Every minute counts (Ecclesiastes 3:1). If you embrace this reality with us, we will see together the way it changes our approach to everything. A pastor's calendar serves not simply as a record of tasks and appointments but as an account of stewardship before the Lord, our Chief Shepherd.

Therefore, today is the day because time and tide wait for no pastor. Procrastination hovers as a great enemy of shepherding time, and we must kill it. And yet we are convinced that in this life our battles with time stewardship will see no end. Walter Henegar recalled his own difficulty making the most of time, saying, “All of a sudden I could see myself clearly. There I was, buzzing diligently around the room, while that thing, the one thing I needed to do most, sat unheeded in the middle of it. I wasn’t just a procrastinator; I was a work-around-er.”⁷ Today is the day to visit, to call, to counsel, to pray.

A pastor’s calendar serves as an account of stewardship before the Lord.

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How does remembering that time belongs to Christ reshape the way you plan your week?

Time will wait for no pastor. But by grace, biblical wisdom helps us redeem wasted time (Ephesians 5:16). Don’t merely watch the sands slip through the glass. Together we can learn to shepherd the moments, steward the hours, and offer each season of ministry as a good gift back to the Lord. Today is the day to shepherd time.

Time Is Central to Effective Ministry

As pastors we must think deeply about many things. This book will help you think wisely about time, what it means, and how it works in your pastoral context. This book does not merely aim to make you efficient with your time. *Shepherding Time* offers more than a formula for success, a time-tracking gimmick, or a plan to get more out of your remaining days. The shelves are full of books and resources designed to help you monitor your moments or get more done. This book will help you bring time into clearer view, as a central part of your pastoral life and ministry.

Pastors know the value of seeing all aspects of life through a shepherd's eyes, and that includes the subject of time. And you know the pastor's schedule contains unique challenges due to the unpredictable nature and variety of needs that arise. Thus, the average pastor needs a unique kind of help in this area. Time is a priceless commodity for any spiritual leader.

Two big truths will govern the remaining pages: First, God has limited your time, and second, he wants you to use your time for good. Unpacking these truths at the outset will lay out the two important tracks on which we can run forward together.

Time Is Limited

Every week offers you 168 hours. Time is one thing you cannot gain more of. Are your eyes bad? The surgeon can give you new ones. Do you need more money? Apply for a better job. Want more time? No answer. Everyone faces the same reality. Ask not how you can get more time but how you can use it more wisely.

Paul gives a robust exhortation about the wisdom of time-attentiveness. "Pay careful attention, then, to how you walk—not as unwise people but as wise—making the most of the time, because the days are evil. So don't be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is" (Ephesians 5:15–17). Perhaps the most striking words in the passage point to the evilness of our days. Why should you give attention to your time? The days are evil. The fallen world order works against the proper use of time for God's glory. If left unattended, the curse of sin will eat away at the fabric of our time, leaving holes of lost opportunities.

Feel the profound significance of this reality and the preciousness of time by recalling that this present hour, minute, or second will never exist again. Look at *today* on your calendar

and know there will never be another today. Just as the ancients told of Cronus devouring his children, so too does time, relentless and impartial, consume the days we fail to redeem. Truly, today is a “vapor that appears for a little while, then vanishes” (James 4:14). You know it’s true when you stop at your desk to check email for a moment and suddenly realize you lost half of an afternoon. Among Jonathan Edwards’s Seventy Resolutions sits, “5. Resolved, never to lose one moment of time; but improve it the most profitable way I possibly can.”⁸ The limitation of time means that though we may sometimes be labeled as a know-it-all, none of us will ever become do-it-alls. We live as finite creatures in every respect. This realization forces prayerful discernment about what matters most.

You might imagine our common need for discernment around the topics of time and productivity. Think of a jar, and next to it a pile of big rocks, a pile of pebbles, and a pile of sand. You need to put all three piles in the jar. You quickly realize the only way to accomplish it. You must move the big rocks first, then the pebbles, then the sand. In a similar way, the precious time you have will neatly fit into your life if you exercise discernment about the place and order of your affairs.

Some attribute to John Wesley (though of uncertain origin) the famous quip, “Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.” Though it displays disordered priorities, this encouragement still serves us well. In the spirit of it, we ask you to continue reflecting on your life and time as the book moves forward. Since your days are numbered by God, how many of them are already behind you? How have your days been used? What will you do with the remaining ones?

Time Is for Doing Good

As we embark on a journey into the unpredictable realm of pastoral time, we need to keep another key truth in mind: God has designed time with a purpose. Although we do want to think of time as a commodity, remember it exists not merely as a commodity for us to leverage. But time provides a purposeful context for good. Time is not neutral; it always functions with a sense of purpose. That's why there remains a time for everything under the sun (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

Thus, we do not shepherd time to do more things or merely work with greater efficiency. Shepherding time allows us to embrace the vast and endless goodness of God's calling on our lives. Shepherding time enables us to engage in effective gospel ministry, promote kingdom flourishing, and flourish in our own gifts.

In Scripture, the goal of time is to do good. The flourishing of the Christian life stands out as the very best good we can do. Consider the various analogies which Scripture uses to describe the nature of spiritual leadership. Find the central thread running through each of them: *flourishing*.

John and Peter describe ministry in terms of a shepherd and flock (John 10:11–16; 1 Peter 5:2–3). Pastors serve as shepherds who lead, feed, and protect. As a result, the flock flourishes, not because the shepherd stays busy at tasks, but because he invests time and energy in what really matters. As he watches carefully, guides patiently, and leads the sheep through green pastures, the sheep flourish.

Paul and James reflect the pastor's role to that of a farmer in a field (1 Corinthians 3:6–9; 2 Timothy 2:6; James 5:7). The kingdom grows like a flourishing field under the pastor-farmer's labor. He plants with wisdom, waters generously, and waits prayerfully for God to give the glorious increase. Thus,

the pastor in God's field cannot rush the harvest's development, but he certainly can hinder it through undisciplined neglect. In this way, kingdom flourishing depends not on a pastor's frantic busyness but on his steady and faithful investment. The field flourishes.

Paul also offers the temple builder analogy, in which pastors serve as builders who lay strong foundations and build up the church (1 Corinthians 3:10–15; Ephesians 2:19–22). With Christ as cornerstone, he pictures local churches as temples which grow and develop into a dwelling place for his Spirit. Wise builders don't merely slap a bunch of stones together. Instead, they steward time to design, measure, and carefully build strength toward the ultimate vision. The building flourishes.

Take these analogies and more, and we see again the role of pastors who shepherd. They equip the saints for the work of ministry, promoting and mobilizing others to follow Christ (Ephesians 4:11–12). They do this most faithfully when they minister with a keen sense of time.

God has created and called every Christian as his workmanship, and every ministry leader has the unmatched privilege of promoting this ultimate good in a world full of profound need. Let's move from here to think a bit more about God's design for time to produce redemptive good in the world.

In Colossians 4:5, Paul directly ties wise stewardship of time to doing good before a watching world. We carry into the rest of this book the reminder that our time never functions in neutrality but always with a missional punch. Every moment of time presents an opportunity to show Christ's goodness. Paul makes a further point you might not think of as time-focused. In 1 Thessalonians 5:15, he writes, "See to it that no one repays evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good for one another and for all." Many people find

it easy to pass right over a verse like this, thinking about it as a general call to do good. But look more closely at that word “pursue.” Paul uses a Greek word, translated *pursue*, which combines both urgency and effort over time. Every pursuit in

God has created and called every Christian as his workmanship.

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How does this relate to the pastoral calling to shepherd time?

life requires a strong sense of time because without it the pursuit falls flat. Look at the *pursuits* of your life. Each and every one requires a solid investment of your time. To the degree that you steward your time, you will also achieve your pursuit.

Finally, read again Paul’s words to the Ephesians: “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10). Did you catch that? God prepared our good works ahead of the time in which they would be done. Truly, God’s intentions for our time—past, present, future—rest securely in his hands (Psalm 31:15). What more motivation do we need to take our time seriously as leaders of God’s people?

Time Is for Shepherding

At this point, we need to arrive at a firm conclusion from the basics of time we just considered. God has given to us the good gift of time, a limited resource by which he intends to use us to accomplish an unlimited good. Read that critical sentence again. Moving from biblical foundations to pastoral implications, what conclusion can we draw? Every one of us needs to steward our time with intentionality, humility, and hope. The point does not call us merely to find something good to do (as we often tell our children), but we must answer the question, “What specific good should I do today, or this hour, or in this moment?” Answering the question requires a keen sense

of stewardship, priority, and vision. The needed effort does not happen by accident. Just as God created time with divine intention, he calls us to intentional effort and leadership in stewarding this limited resource to the best effect.

As we move forward, a surprising reality awaits. Stewarding time as pastors is not a mere exercise in practicality. Instead, we find pastoral time management flows from a consideration of the art of shepherding time.

Reflection Questions

1. How do you think focusing on Christ rather than our failures can help us better use our time?
2. How does image-bearing relate to time?
3. God has created and called every Christian as his workmanship. How does this relate to the pastoral calling to shepherd time?
4. As pastors, we see time as a context for worship. How does shepherding time increase worship in the heart of the pastor?

Action Step

Begin each day with a dedicated time of reflection using Psalm 90:12. Write out what you perceive as your most valuable uses of time each day. List three activities you can embrace that day to treat your time as a precious commodity.