



Stewards of the Clock: A Biblical Philosophy of Time

MODULE 1

RTT MODULE 1 SCRIPT

**Pastor Clayton Maurede,
Pastor of the Cambridge District of Churches**



GOD FIRST
ADVENTIST STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES

REDEEMING THE TIME

Stewards of the Clock: A Biblical Philosophy of Time

Learning Objectives

- Understanding time as a created finite gift from God.
- A shift in perspective from “my time” to “Gods time” entrusted to me.
- Difference between *Chronos* and *Kairos*.

Time is often treated as a neutral container; something we have, lose or spend. Modern thinking and discourses speak fluently of time management, yet rarely of time stewardship. Scripture on the other hand resists such reduction. In the biblical witness, time is not autonomous, infinite or ownerless. It is created, finite and entrusted. To speak of time biblically is therefore to speak of God, creation, responsibility and hope.

This article argues that Christians are not owners of time but stewards of the clock. Its objectives are threefold first; to understand time as a created and finite gift from God, second, to shift perspective from my time to Gods time entrusted to me lastly, to demonstrate the theological distinction between *Chronos* and *Kairos*. Through tracing the origin of time and the stewardship mandate, Paul’s call to ‘redeem the time’ (Eph 5:16) and the telos of Christian time management, we arrive that is both sobering and hope-filled.

Time as a created reality

The Bible does not begin with timeless abstractions but with an act ‘In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.’ (Gen 1:1). Classical theism asserts that time does not “precede God, rather time begins with creation, from the opening declaration in the verse is simultaneously ontological and temporal. John Polkinghorne observes time is not a pre-existing stage on which the universe is set; instead, it is part of the created order itself.¹ This observation aligns with classic

1 John C. Polkinghorne, *Science and Providence: God’s Interaction with the World* (Templeton Foundation Press, U.S., 2005).p 95



claim by Augustine that God created the world with time (*cum tempore*) not in time.² Genesis 1 reinforces this by structuring creation through rhythmic repetition 'evening and morning, first day, second day.' Time is measured, bounded and ordered by God before it is ever inhabited by humanity. Walter Brueggeman asserts that the ordering of time in Genesis 1 shows God rules and not chaos.³ Time is not an accident of the universe, nor a mere backdrop against which life happens. It is a created reality—spoken into being, structured, and entrusted. Before clocks ticked or shadows stretched, time already belonged to order, not chaos. It began not as a tyrant, but as a gift.

To say time is created is to say it is finite. It has edges. It moves with intention. Unlike eternity, which simply is, time *becomes*. Time is the corridor through which creation learns how to exist without being God. It is the space where growth is possible because fullness is not yet. Created time also means measured time. Days and years, Sabbaths and jubilees, rhythms embedded into flesh and soil. Time teaches limits: you cannot harvest and sow at once; you cannot grieve and rejoice without transition. In this way, time is moral. It forms patience. It humbles ambition. It insists that even love must wait, mature, and endure.

Yet time is not neutral. It bends under meaning. Moments are not equal in weight—some seconds alter history, while years pass like breath. Because time is created, it is also redeemable. What is made can be healed. Time can be wasted, but it can also be gathered.

Memory, repentance, hope—all presuppose time's openness to transformation. Even suffering is not timeless; it has an expiration date written into creation itself.

Time as finite not Endless

Biblically, time is not an infinite resource. The Psalmist in chapter 90 confronts human finitude with divine eternity: "The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty" (Ps 90:10). The prayer that follows is telling: "So teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom" (v. 12). To number days is not to fear them it is to acknowledge their limit. Ellen Davis remarks that wisdom starts where the illusion of endless time ends.⁴ This remark makes it important for one to realise the finiteness of time to apply wisdom on how to use the time on hand usefully and effectively, since time is a premium. Time's finitude is not a curse but a pedagogical gift, training humanity toward humility and dependence.

2 James Odonnell, *Augustine Confessions: Volume 3: Commentary, Books 8-13: 03* (Oxford University Press, Usa, 2012). p 13

3 Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Westminster/John Knox Press, 2010). p 35

4 Ellen F. Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible* (Cambridge University Press, 2009). p. 112



From Dominion to Stewardship: Time as entrusted not owned

Genesis 1:26–28 grants humanity dominion (*rādā*), but dominion must be read through the lens of Genesis 2:15: “The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to **work it** and **keep it.**” The verbs *ābad* (serve) and *šāmar* (guard) are priestly terms. Humanity is entrusted with creation, not as exploiters but as caretakers. Time, as part of creation, falls under this mandate. We are not masters of time; we are accountable managers. N. T. Wright underscores this he supposes that all Christian ethics begins with the fact that what we have is not ours.⁵ This includes time since it has been entrusted to us and we do not own it. Modern individualism speaks of my schedule, my priorities, and my time. Scripture on the other hand reframes the question entirely: “You are not your own, for you were bought with a price” (1 Cor 6:19–20). If the self is not autonomous, neither is the time the self inhabits. The Psalmist in chapter 31:15: “My times are in your hand...” the plural is deliberate: not a single moment, but the whole sequence of one’s life its seasons, crises, and transitions. The psalmist does not claim control over time but entrusts time to God. Karl Barth insists human time is enclosed within God’s time and upheld by it at every moment.⁶ This does not negate human agency but situates it within divine sovereignty. To be a steward of the clock is to live with the awareness that every hour is received not seized. This gives rise to the two theological registers of time *chronos* and *kairos*.

Chronos and Kairos: two theological registers of time

The concept of time can be classified into two registers, *chronos* and *kairos*. *Chronos* emerges from the Greek philosophical quest to understand reality through observation, order, and rational analysis. Its epistemology is rooted in human cognition engaging the world as an object to be measured. It refers to chronological, quantitative time, time that can be counted, scheduled, and measured. In addition, *chronos* is sequential, quantifiable, homogeneous and publicly observable. Scripture uses *chronos* to describe duration *Chronos* is not unspiritual; it is the arena of daily obedience, labour, rest, and responsibility. Yet *chronos* can become tyrannical when absolutized. Oscar Cullmann famously described *chronos* as linear, historical time, stretching from creation to consummation, the stage upon which salvation history unfolds.⁷ As Byung-Chul Han notes from a philosophical angle, modernity suffers not from “lack of time but from ‘time that has lost its fragrance.’”⁸ *Chronos* without meaning becomes exhaustion.

Kairos by contrast denotes the right time, the decisive moment charged with divine significance. *Kairos* does not arise from measurement but from encounter. Its epistemology is rooted in divine

5 Fellow and Chaplain N. T. Wright, *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters* (HarperOne, n.d.). p.95

6 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics The Doctrine of Creation, Volume 3, Part 1: The Work of Creation*, Pbk ed. edition. (T & T Clark International, 2004).

7 Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time, 3rd Edition: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History* (Wipf and Stock, 2018).

8 Byung-Chul Han, *The Scent of Time: A Philosophical Essay on the Art of Linger*, trans. Daniel Steuer (Polity, 2020).



disclosure, not human calculation. For instance, Jesus announces ‘The *kairos* is fulfilled and the kingdom of God has come near’ (Mark 1:15). *Kairos* is not opposed to *chronos* it transfigures it. Paul Tillich defined *kairos* as the moment in which the eternal breaks into the temporal.⁹ In biblical theology, *kairos* moments demand response such as repentance, faith and obedience. To be a steward of the clock is to live attentively in *chronos* while remaining responsive to *Kairos*. *Kairos* cannot be known empirically; it must be discerned. Jesus rebukes those who can read weather patterns (*chronos*) but cannot “interpret the present *kairos*” (Luke 12:56). Contrasting the two aspects one can observe that *chronos* asks “how much time has passed?” while *Kairos* asks “what is God doing now?” With such an understanding arises the question; how is time redeemed?

Redeeming the time

Christian theology does not abolish *chronos* in favour of *Kairos*; it redeems *chronos* by opening it to *Kairos*. In the letter to the Ephesians, Paul exhorts believers: “Look carefully then how you walk... **making the best use of the time**, because the days are evil” (Eph 5:15–16). The phrase *exagorazomenoi ton kairon* literally means “buying back the *kairos*.” As noted by Andrew Lincoln that Pauls language evokes the marketplace, suggesting an intentional costly action.¹⁰ Here time is not merely passing it can be squandered or reclaimed.

The word carries commercial imagery from the marketplace (agora). It can mean: to purchase something completely, to rescue from loss, to seize an opportunity decisively. The object is (ton kairon)—the *kairos*, not *chronos*. Paul does not say “redeem the hours” but “redeem the decisive moment.” Thus, redeeming the time means: To seize and reclaim God-given opportunities within history for faithful obedience before they are lost. Theologically, “redeem” echoes the broader biblical concept of redemption—the act of delivering something from bondage or waste. In this context: time can be wasted, opportunities can be missed and moments can be lost to evil. Paul assumes that time is contested territory. The phrase “because the days are evil” signals that believers live within an age shaped by sin, distraction, and decay. To redeem time, therefore, is to rescue moments from moral futility and align them with God’s purposes.

Importantly, Paul does not call believers to optimise productivity but to redeem time in light of moral urgency. Craig Keener also writes on this and he observes that Paul is not concerned about efficiency but rather about faithfulness in a hostile age.¹¹ Redeeming the time therefore is a theological act of aligning *chronos* with God’s redemptive purposes revealed in *Kairos*.

Christian time management is not about squeezing more tasks into fewer hours. Its goal is conformity to God’s will. Time is not neutral ground. It can be filled with wisdom or swallowed by foolishness (Eph 5:15) Thus, redeeming time is a resistance act. It is spiritual defiance against

9 Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture* (Galaxy Books): 124, ed. Robert C. Kimball (Oxford University Press, U.S.A., 1964).

10 Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (Send The Light, 2005). p 345

11 Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (IVP Academic, 2014). p 709



entropy, distraction, sin, and moral drift. *Kairos* moments are decisive. They demand action. If neglected, they vanish. Jesus wept over Jerusalem because it did not recognize “the time (*kairos*) of your visitation” (Luke 19:44). That failure was not chronological—it was spiritual blindness. To fail to redeem time is to fail to recognize divine visitation. The telos of time is not success but faithfulness. ‘Time is the medium in which obedience takes shape.’¹² Oliver O’Donovan made this assertion and he emphasizes that practices such as the Sabbath, prayer and liturgical rhythms resist the idolatry of urgency and train believers to live under God’s tempo. To redeem time requires discernment of priorities, moral clarity, and the ability to distinguish urgent from ultimate. Without wisdom, *chronos* consumes us. Time is wasted when it serves ego, indulgence, or triviality detached from God’s mission. Thus, redeeming time means asking, does this reflect the will of Christ? Does this build love, holiness, or witness?

After calling believers to redeem time, Paul commands them to be filled with the Spirit. Redemption of time is impossible apart from the Spirit’s control. Notice the Spirit-filled practices that follow; worship, gratitude and mutual submission. Time is redeemed when it becomes worshipful, grateful and relationally ordered. Paradoxically, time is redeemed not only by activity but also by restraint. Sabbath interrupts productivity culture and declares God is Lord of time. Rest is not wasted time. It is redeemed time because it reorients *chronos* under God’s sovereignty.

Conclusion

To speak of stewardship is to speak of accountability before a Giver. If time is created—as Genesis declares—then it is neither self-generated nor self-owned. It is not an autonomous field in which human beings exercise absolute sovereignty. Rather, it is a bounded, structured, and purposeful dimension of creation itself. Time begins because God speaks; it continues because God sustains; it culminates because God redeems.

To be a steward of the clock is to live between Genesis and Revelation, between created time and redeemed time. Time is God’s gift, humanity’s trust, and Christ’s arena of redemption. *Chronos* gives structure; *kairos* gives meaning. Redeeming the time means aligning our finite hours with God’s eternal purposes. To “number our days” is not to live in fear of their end but in awareness of their weight. Finitude is formative. The limitation of days forces prioritization, repentance, reconciliation, and worship. The question is no longer, “How can I manage my time better?” but “How can I be faithful with the time God has entrusted to me?” Wisdom begins there—and stewardship follows. The language of possession subtly corrupts our theology. When we say, “I don’t have time,” we often, mean, “I choose not to give time.” When we say, “This is my time,” we assume ownership Scripture never grants. Paul’s declaration that believers are not their own destabilizes the myth of temporal autonomy. The hours we inhabit are not private property but sacred trust.

This shift alters Christian ethics profoundly. Time is no longer primarily something to be optimized but something to be offered. The Christian does not merely manage minutes; the Christian consecrates them. Prayer, Sabbath keeping, hospitality, and service are not interruptions to

12 O. O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline Of Evangelical Ethics* (Apollos, 2020)



“real life”; they are faithful deployments of entrusted time. In this sense, stewardship transforms productivity into obedience. The metric changes from efficiency to faithfulness. *Chronos* reminds us that time is sequential, measurable, and accountable. Bills are due on dates; bodies age; seasons change. *Chronos* grounds responsibility. It disciplines us against laziness and presumption. *Kairos*, however, reminds us that not all moments are equal. There are hours when eternity presses near—moments of repentance, calling, suffering, or decision. The gospel itself announces a *kairos*: “The time is fulfilled.” *Chronos* gives structure to life; *kairos* gives it redemptive meaning. Without *chronos*, life dissolves into abstraction. Without *kairos*, life collapses into monotony. Paul’s exhortation in Ephesians 5 holds these together: believers redeem the *kairos* within *chronos*. The clock continues to tick, yet within its steady movement, God opens decisive opportunities.

Stewardship, therefore, is attentiveness. It is living in chronological discipline while remaining spiritually alert to divine interruption. This integrated vision also clarifies the goal of Christian time management. The end is not exhaustion, nor control, nor achievement, but conformity to the will of God. The redeemed life is not frantic but faithful. In a culture obsessed with acceleration, the Christian learns both urgency and patience—urgency because days are finite, patience because God’s purposes unfold according to His wisdom.

Finally, Christian hope reframes the entire discussion. Time is not ultimate. It is penultimate. Creation began it; redemption directs it; consummation fulfills it. The steward of the clock lives between beginning and end—between Genesis and Revelation—aware that each hour participates in a larger story authored by God. Thus, to be a steward of the clock is:

- To receive time as gift.
- To hold it as trust.
- To invest it in obedience.
- To discern its *kairos* within *chronos*.
- To hope beyond it toward consummation.

The question that remains is not merely, how we schedule our days, but whether our days are aligned with the One who gives them. The faithful steward does not ask, “How much can I accomplish in my lifetime?” but rather, “How faithfully can I inhabit the time God has placed in my hands?”

In that question, theology becomes practice. The clock becomes altar. And time itself becomes an offering.”



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