

A few thoughts on time

I'm not a Whovian (google it), but I am a Dr. Who fan and recently, as I've been thinking more about the concept of time in this self-isolation state, a Dr. Who quote keeps coming back to me:

"People assume that time is a strict progression of cause to effect, but actually from a non-linear, non-subjective viewpoint, it's more like a big ball of wibbly-wobbly, timey-wimey stuff."

Yes, I am aware that Dr. Who is a fictional story but don't you think that this wibbly-wobbly, timey-wimey description of things reflects the last few months of our lives? It has been both marvelous and difficult and everything in between -- and I, for one, am having a bit of trouble reconciling everything I think and feel about coming out of isolation and 'returning to normal'.

These last few weeks there have been a lot less burdens on my time. I've set an alarm only twice, otherwise my body has woken me up when it was ready for the day. I've had only a few dates to remember plugged into my calendar. I've taken more time to talk or create or sit. Being has been activity enough for long stretches of minutes each day. But as the world begins to shift again, as the gears of 'normal' start to turn, I feel something heavy in the pit of my gut. I feel time pushing against me again – no longer friend, but foe. Judge and jury. Betrayer. Warden. Enemy.

Why? Why this shift? Why do I now feel anxious when I think about time? Why does discussing our 'restart program' make my heart race and my blood pressure rise? There are no more minutes in the day today than there were last week or last month or last year.

The seconds are constant but the expectation has changed. Time will soon no longer be mine any longer. At least, this is the fear.

With isolation, I gained a slower pace. I regained absolute ownership over the moments of my day where I once forfeited this role to society at large. Honestly, nothing changed but me. The world said *stay home*, and so I did. The world said *be kind to yourself*, and so I was. The world said *let go of expectations for this moment*, and so I could simply be me. And I've liked it. But now...when the world sees how I have used the time I was given, what will they say? And who are *they* anyway?

Here's the truth: these last few months, I've wasted my time with long walks and quiet moments and stopping to really see what a tree budding actually looks like. I've squandered my time on laughing often and looking out the window at the birds and appreciating simple things like sunshine on my face or the sound of the wind. I've taken time to think and pray and talk about important things and silly things and hard things and new things. I've watched the candle burning and finally wondered if cleaning the house and meeting a self-inflicted deadline and racing to the next event had ever been important? What if just being is actually enough? What if I don't have to fill *my time* with things someone can mark down on a list, accomplishments that can be noted and checked off – what if there's value in just living?

Charles Francis Potter in "Time in Bible Times" states: "You move into a different time-world from ours when you open your bible. You find yourself in a much more leisurely atmosphere, where exact time-measurements are unknown and the calendar a very casual affair...the patriarchs of the Old Testament and even the disciples of Jesus were time-wealthy and had no use for such small change..." I love this term 'time-wealthy'. Perhaps that's the thing I don't want to give up – this experience of being so

relaxed with the concept of time that minutes and hours and even days don't actually define me. To be moved through each timeframe by people and stories and moments instead. Real moments that affect my heart but can't be logged on a calendar or crossed off a list.

So how do we, I, re-enter society now that I've slowed down so much I'm no longer interested in the rat-race? How do I still have a work ethic and make a living and be dependable when I've grown accustomed to not paying any attention to a clock? What am I really afraid of?

I turned 50 in the fall. This seemed like such a pivotal number -- the halfway mark. And I had been really questioning the purpose of my life in this new season for months before COVID-19 changed our day to day. Maybe this is one of the gifts I've discovered in this isolation period: I have time. And I get to choose how I move in it, how I use it and how it uses me. Maybe in the days and weeks and months to come, I'll be slower to say 'yes' to things even if they might be good things, and quicker to stop and wait and just be. And maybe you'll join me.

"For we are what He has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to *be our way of life*." Ephesians 2:10 (emphasis mine)

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