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Time Limits



Though we usually think of time machines as a feature of the future, they're already a thing of the past. Humans have devised a vast array of clocks and other mechanical devices for thousands of years.

At first, people needed only follow the sun to know when it was morning, noon and night and how to organize their lives. But the first timepiece, the sundial, appeared in Egypt about 1500 B.C. and was

soon spread by the Greeks across the known world. It remained the only means of measuring time for a thousand years.

But measuring a shadow on a sundial face simply didn't work when the sun was blocked by clouds. So it was a big step when the Greeks invented the first mechanical clock, the clepsydra or water clock. It tracked time by dripping water at a constant rate from one bucket through a small hole into a second bucket, which had marks along its side indicating the time of day. In 250 B.C., a mechanical bird was added and it whistled when the water reached a certain height, making it the world's first alarm clock.

In cold climates, sand was used in hour glasses and the Germans tried unsuccessfully to make candles that burned at a constant rate. Eventually, lead weights, springs and toothed wheels were developed to move hands around a clock face, then the Dutch invented the pendulum clock in the 1600s. Minute hands soon became popular.

In 1714, the English parliament offered a huge cash prize to anyone who could invent an accurate sea clock because existing ones often took ships hundreds of miles off course with their faulty timekeeping. Forty years later, metal worker John Harrison invented a clock that lost only five seconds every six weeks, making sea travel safer.



*Jesus,
Happy New Year!
Happy. You. Near!*

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The first self-winding clock was built in the Connecticut during 1783. Four years later, the first truly mechanical alarm clock was developed, but it could only go off at 4 a.m. By 1886, Sears began making the first mass-produced wrist watch and it wasn't until 1957 that its spring was replaced by a battery, eliminating the need to wind the watch. In 1960, Bulova started marketing the first digital watch and, today — if you count computers, cell phones and devices like DVD players, more than a billion timepieces enter the world each year.

Too bad *keeping* time doesn't stop us from *losing* it. Though so much of what we do these days is time sensitive, we ourselves are not. Time is the world's most squandered resource. It can't be recycled or reused — the waste can only be reduced, and that takes discipline.

Like every other gift God gives us, time is something he expects us to use to honour him and serve others, and he wants his portion of your time, right off the top. Sunday worship should be automatic. It's about gratitude and stewardship; a command, not a suggestion (Heb. 10:23-26).

We need to make time for prayer, Bible reading, and going above and beyond for others. And since all of us have the same 24 hours daily, nobody can say they don't have time, especially when we have lots to spend on TV, Facebook and video games. It's all a matter of priority. Sadly, our traditions are time-honoured but God is not. Time sharing is something we do with condos, not Christ. And if God used time trials for us to qualify for heaven, most of us would be... guilty.

Think of it this way. Jesus could just as easily have said, "Don't store up treasure and time here on earth [because they don't last]. Store your treasure and time in heaven [for] wherever your treasure and time are, there also the desires of your heart will be... Seek the Kingdom of God above all else and live righteously, and he'll give you everything you need." (Matt. 6:19-22, 33). That includes the time and energy you need to do everything else, once you've put God first.

When the clouds of distraction obscure the Son, our proper perception of time becomes impossible. Faulty understanding of time will take our lives way off course. So, in the coming year, *how* you tell time won't be nearly as important as *what* you tell it. Simply put, we need to be more sacrificial in 2011 and, for most of us, it's about time.

Rick Gamble