

Now's The Time for What?

Cheryl Roth
September 20, 2016



What time is it? How often do you ask that question every day? Our lives are driven by time -- time for work, school, practice, appointments, deadlines, bed . . . the list goes on and on. In fact, time is so important in our culture that most of us have multiple tech devices all linked by the same satellites to tell us exactly what time it is 24-7, no matter where we go.

It's hard to believe that less than 150 years ago, standardized time zones didn't even exist. In fact, every town set their clocks by the solar noon -- which means it was a slightly different time in every town. This worked until people became more connected over longer distances. When railroad travel increased, schedules were impossible to coordinate and people kept missing their trains! In 1883, four standard time zones were set in the United States to

help solve the time dilemma. A year later, global time zones were adopted. And today we can't imagine life in a world that isn't ruled by time.

How Does God View time?

And yet this thing called "time" that seems so concrete to us is so much more mind-boggling than we consider on a daily basis. Physicists agree that time is really not so concrete -- it is dependent on gravity and speed. Even slight changes in the earth's rotation and orbit can and do impact time. And throughout history, our fascination with suspended time is evident in the many stories that tell of other worlds where characters can enter and then return to our own world without any time actually passing.

And then it gets really interesting when we look back before the Big Bang and the creation of the Universe. We are so immersed in time we can't really comprehend what it means that God is beyond time and space.

God's relationship to time is different from our own. There is a famous Bible quote in Second Peter 3:8 that gives us a glimpse of how God is most definitely outside of our time constraints, "*With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.*" That one always makes me laugh -- I have experienced a few thousand year long days!

Clearly, God is not controlled by our time systems. And yet, God works in our lives within the context of time. Paul, talking to the Corinthians, said, "*Now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation*" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

What is God's story and how does it relate to me?

This verse from 2 Corinthians tells us we are living in a time of favor. The *now* this refers to is a time period following Jesus's crucifixion. That *now* was important because it opened the doors to a whole new world or way of thinking. People no longer lived in the time of the Old Testament, where strict obedience to the law and sacrifices were required to come before God. Instead, the time of God's favor or blessing was opened up for humankind. Now we are living in a time when God's grace is offered freely and we can experience a realm of heart that goes beyond the law.

What time is it now?

Rev. Moon came to America to reconnect people to their spiritual roots and help us to understand that God's favor is with America. We are a nation that has been blessed for a purpose. We mustn't forget that purpose. It's time we realized God's hope for America.

Yesterday, on the 40th Anniversary of his speech, *God's Will for America*, his wife, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, gave an address at the Washington Monument that echoed the theme, now is the time:

"God is looking to us at this time. God has not given up on this nation. However, God cannot wait forever. The world is moving 180 degrees away from God's Will. God needs not only individuals but an entire nation to stand on His side, to be his agent of change and transformation, centered on True Love.

Therefore, let us pledge to work together for the sake of God's providence, and for the sake of 7.3 billion people on this earth.

There is no time to delay. It is time for us to purge ourselves of any attachment to individualism. It is time for us to live and work; to love, care, serve, and harmonize together as one family under God. If we unite centering on God and work together, we can build a world of true love, true joy and true harmony. This is America's mission! Let us build the Kingdom of God, right here in America, and let us spread true peace throughout the world."



It's important that we don't lose the opportunities we have been given to realize God's hope in us and the world.

Paying attention to the right time

Recognizing the time or moment is very important. Each of us has discreet opportunities in our lives. God is always trying to favor us or give opportunity and it's important to jump on it. If you let it go, God will not forget you, but it may take time to circle around and come back to the door that God wants to open in your life.

I grew up in a family that went to church at Easter and Christmas. But for various reasons I ended up in a series of Catholic schools where I was the only non-Catholic. God was calling me. I was in the *now*. One Christmas Eve when I was thirteen, I asked my mother if I could go to midnight mass. She told me I was too young; she didn't want me out that late. She tried to console me by saying I could go next year. Even as a teen, I was somehow, intuitively aware that the time was *now* and if I missed it, I would lose my chance. I replied, "Next year may be too late. What if I don't want to go?"



Well, next year came around and ironically what I predicted came true. I didn't feel like going. The moment was gone and it took a full nine years for the right time to come around again. A lot was lost in those nine years. Tomorrow is not guaranteed, and so today, *now*, is the time for us to turn to God.

What time is it in your life?

I invite you to make today the day you reach out to God. No matter where you are in your spiritual journey, *now* is a good time for the next step. The urgency of *now* is not because there is an important box on the to-do list to check off so we can move on. *Now* is an invitation to be present with God; to live in relationship with God and to constantly grow in our knowledge of and love for God and others. Now is the time to walk through the door and experience

God in a deeper way.

What this means is going to be unique to each person. I invite you to consider that *now* is the time for four things:

1. **Now is the time for Hope.**

We place our hope in a lot of things. Politicians, exercise plans, self-help books and money. If I only had more money.... But the truth is, there is only one hope for us all -- and that is our Heavenly Parent, the one who created us. We need hope in our lives. Hope for our pain, hope for those we love, hope for our country, hope for peace. But all those hopes rest on the larger hope that God is working to liberate us and our world. We need to know that the hope we see and feel today is not the end of the story. And this is not just a longing or a passing feeling, but a strong hope that allows us to step out in faith.

Where is your hope today? Or maybe you have given up on hope. Maybe you feel you have just suffered too much to have hope. But suffering and difficulty don't mean you have to give up hope – it's not a done deal. There is a verse in Romans that speaks to this:

"....But we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us." Romans 5:1-5

We often expect hope to look and feel good. But true hope doesn't come from a feel-good movie. Hope is the result of something real. Hope is brought about through suffering, perseverance, and character. It is a hope that sustains us through the hardest moments of life because it is grounded in the amazing love God has for us. There is something bigger than just what we are going through in any one moment in time.

Our hope is in God. He didn't create this world to be like this. We have access to God's world in the blueprint etched in our hearts – we have hope in what this life is meant to be like. If hope were absent inside of us, things wouldn't matter anymore and even discontent would not exist. But it does because we do have hope. Our spiritual DNA is God's DNA. We come from God. Without God, we are hopeless. But because of His amazing love, *now* is the time for hope. The Divine Principle says that love is the most powerful force in the Universe. This is our hope!

2. Now is the time for Grace.

Grace is a hard word to fully understand but you can think of it as undeserved favor. Where does undeserved favor come from? It comes from a parent's heart. I wondered what is the deepest parental love? I imagine the love a parent whose child is incarcerated might approximate such love.



One mother's story made me think: motherswithsonsinprison.com/soulofamother.html

A Mother's Letters

I pour my heart and soul onto the paper. I tell my son all the things that had happened during the past week. I hope that he will be happy to receive the stories. I mention every little detail so that he can picture the week's activities. I describe how his sister has been acting and what she has been wearing. I also tell him a few silly jokes wishing that he would laugh. I feel that every detail counts.

I tell him how proud I am of him because he's doing so well and taking good care of himself. I offer up hope and remind him to focus on the light at the end of the tunnel.

In my closing statements, I write a prayer for my son to recite before he goes to bed. I reference a couple of encouraging scriptures and where to find them in his personal Bible.

"God still loves you, even as much as I do and more," I say. I sign my letter with kisses and hugs.

I feel extreme satisfaction in sending my son another letter filled with my unconditional love for him. I know better than to remind him of why he's in prison. I see no purpose in writing a letter of condemnation. My letters are meant to provide my son with a sense of safety and security. I strongly

believe that mother's letters are to be filled with hope, joy, peace, laughter and love.

When I read this story I realized this is God's relationship with us. He too sees no purpose in reminding us of our mistakes and why we are trapped. He wants to provide us with a sense of safety, unconditional love and hope for our future. He doesn't intend to hold us back with recriminations.

During his time on earth, Jesus was constantly reminding his disciples that his love was based on grace, not merit, and that grace was for everyone. The disciples told little children not to bother Jesus and tried to send them away, but Jesus called them to himself. The disciples didn't want to be seen with the prostitutes and tax collectors, but Jesus shared meals at the same table. He did not grant healing to people based on whether they were good enough. He healed those who had been cast out of society and were undeserving.

Jesus didn't have to give these people his time and attention, but he gave it . . . *grace*. And it is that same grace that is offered to us. We may feel unworthy and constantly remind ourselves of past mistakes but we are invited into relationship with the Creator of the universe who cares about our unique nature and personality and who loves us for who we are. We can love all of our life because all we have experienced has made us who we are today – the *now* of our lives, the wisdom we have, the love and understanding that is uniquely ours.

3. Now is the time for Connection.

The same technology that keeps us all on the same time connects us in many other ways. And yet there is research that says despite the nonstop tech connections, we are also becoming increasingly socially isolated. There are a lot of people who blame technology for the loneliness and isolation so many feel today. But loneliness and isolation have been around since the moment our first ancestors separated from God.

The good or evil of technology is not the issue. Ultimately, technology does not isolate us -- separation from God does. The answer is not to discard technology; we need to embrace a true connection. Now is the time to connect to our spiritual roots and each other as one family under God.

Today, a lot of people feel they don't need religion and prefer to identify themselves as spiritual. While I get the rejection of institutions and all the baggage they bring with them, we do need to find a way to connect to a larger spiritual family because family is the school of love and the place where we grow our hearts. God wants to show us His love but He needs people to work and love through. Having friends of faith matters and helps to keep us moving forward in our journey.



We belong to each other. We are connected for a purpose. We are not meant to live in isolation -- from God or from each other. We need each other. We need love, support, encouragement, challenge.

I believe church offers an amazing opportunity for connection. None of us needs just another thing on our calendars, but we all need encouragement and relationship. I invite you to consider that *now* is the time in your life to invest in

true connection with the people of God.

I want you to be able to say "I love Sundays" – because it's a time for connection.

4. Now is the time for Compassion.

I find myself drawn to Psalm 145:8, which says, "The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love." Despite an undeniable urgency for us to respond to God, He is not in a hurry. He is slow to anger, rich in love. The Gospels are full of Jesus's compassion for the sick, the poor, the outcast, and the lonely. His compassion inspired His actions, which were rich in love.

God's unfailing love for us is rooted in compassion -- and that is solid ground in a troubled world. Isaiah 54:10 says, "*Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,*" says the Lord, who has compassion on you."

From that solid place, we have the power to turn and show compassion to others. Colossians 3:12–14

says,

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Compassion brings us full circle. It helps us to show forgiveness and grace to ourselves and others. It solidifies the connection between us, giving wings to "Forgive, Love, Unite." Now is the time for people of all faiths to become known by their love and compassion.

Hope, grace, connection, compassion -- these are the reasons we welcome each one of you to Back to Church Sunday. Not just because you have walked through the doors of Faith Fusion but because, by coming, I trust that you have taken a step toward allowing God to release your "now."

That's what church is all about. Church is so much more than these four walls surrounding us. As a church, we are a body, a group of people who come together to collectively turn our attention toward God and remember who we are. We come together to be transformed by God. We share our hopes together. We extend grace to one another as God has extended grace to each of us. We connect with each other in our joys and pains, our highs and lows, our hard times and blessings. And we offer compassion to each other and to the world around us as living reminders of God's love.

This is who we are. And we welcome you all among us, today and every day. If God has anything to say, I think it might be "It's about time!" He is grateful we walked through the door this morning.

Don't let this time pass you by; join us on the journey!