

TIME

UNSELFIE

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 // Craig Smith

August 13, 2017

CRAIG: Good morning. Hey, welcome to Mission Hills. So glad you're here and joining us for this week, number two of our Unselfie series. If you weren't here last week, let me just get you caught up a little bit, so we're on the same page. Well, what we were talking about last week was Jesus's command in John 15:12, where he said, "My command is this, to love one another as I have loved you." As we kind of dove into that, what we realized what that meant was it means to love others selflessly. It means to live, what we called, an unselfie life. An unselfie life is a life that takes the self out of the frame in order to put the focus on other people. And what we're gonna be doing today and for the next few weeks is pushing into what does that mean practically. And we're gonna be talking about, over the next few weeks, what it means practically in terms of three main categories of resources that God has given us, our time, our talent, and our treasure.

So we're asking the question, what does it mean to live an unselfie life with our time, our talent, and our treasure? Today we're talking about time. And I'm just gonna go out on a limb here and bet that most of you feel like you don't have enough time. Am I right? There might be a few of you here going, "Not me, I got way more time than I know what to do with." And that's okay. Seriously, I mean, there are probably a few people that are thinking exactly that, you think you have more time than you know what to do with. And that's great, you don't need to feel guilty about that. There's something in our culture that almost, you know, we almost deify busy-ness, right, we almost make an idol out of busy-ness, so that if somebody's not super busy they're like, "I must be an inferior person then."

You're not. If you're here today and you have more time than you know what to do with, that's awesome. Now I'm gonna tell you what to do with it. Here's what you're gonna do with it. Take that overabundance of time and start connecting it to Jesus's invitation to love others as he's loved us. Find some way to really start pouring your life into some other people, that's what you need to do with it. So if you're here today and you got more time you know what to do with, now you know and you can leave.

Nobody's moving. Okay. So I'm gonna assume that we're mostly all on the same page, which is to say that we feel like we don't have enough time. And we're gonna find out the same thing is probably true for all the resources we look at in the series. We feel like we don't have enough time, we don't have enough talent, we don't have enough treasure. And I believe that that feeling is one of the greatest obstacles to using what God has given us to serve others. And so, I wanna deal with that feeling before we go any further today. See, when we feel like we don't have enough of something, we do two things. Number one, we go into hoard mode, we go into hoarding mode, we start to hoard what little thing we have because we feel like, "I have to protect this, I can't give this away because then I really won't have it. I don't have enough to start with. If I give any away then I will be really and utterly impoverished in that area," so we start hoarding it. The second thing that happens is we start filling our time with wishing we had more of it. And it begins to occupy more and more of our attention. And neither one of those things are helpful in terms of thinking about what it means to live the unselfie life that Jesus calls us to.

So I'm gonna speak two truths into your life today. The first truth is just this, everything that we have is on loan from God, it's truth number one. Everything that we have is on loan from God. So instead of thinking, you know, "I don't have enough of this," what we should be thinking is, "I don't have any of this because it's not mine. I don't have any money, I don't have any time, I don't have any talents...It's all God's, it's all on loan from him." I think King David probably said this about as clearly as it could be said. Psalm 24, right off the bat, he says this, he says, "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it. The world and all who live in it." The earth is Lord's and everything in it, everything. That means me, it means you. And it means the stuff that we call my time, my talent, my treasure, my money. It means it's not called your talent, and treasure, and time. It's all God's.



And there's something very important that happens when we begin to shift our thinking. Instead of thinking about this stuff as my stuff, we think about it as His stuff that's on loan to us. Then we can ask the question, "Why have you loaned this amount of it out to me? Why have you loaned this out to me? What's the purpose of it?" We become interested in the purpose for which God has entrusted it to us. So that's the first truth. Everything we have is on loan from God, we got to get a handle on that.

The second truth is just this, it's that we have precisely as much of any resource as God has entrusted to us. We have precisely as much of any resource as God has entrusted to us. And because of that, we have to stop wishing we had more of something and we have to start working to put whatever it is that we have to work in the way that He intended. We have to stop wishing that we had more time. We have to stop wishing that I had her talent, to stop wishing I had his money. We have to stop wishing that we had more of something and we have to start working to use whatever we have been given and to whatever extent we've been given it for the purpose to which God has entrusted it to us.

We're talking today about time, and time is, in many ways, our most precious resource, isn't it? I mean, there's not that much of it and you can't do anything to get more of it. No matter how hard you try, you're never gonna squeeze more than 60 minutes into an hour. You're never gonna get more than 24 hours in a day, you're never gonna get more than 365 days in a year. Now some people have more years than others, but that's not really under our control either. And here's an interesting and kind of a sobering realization, you will never know how many years you have. You will only know how many years you had. You with me? At some point you're gonna go, "Oh, that's how many I had." But you're not gonna know that until you've already had them. It's always gonna be a past knowledge which means that there should be a tremendous sense of urgency in the way that we think about our time. Should be a tremendous sense of urgency in the way that we think about using the time that God has entrusted to us for the purposes to which it has been entrusted. And yet, I find that time is probably the most mismanaged of all of our resources.

Before you get too nervous, I'm not gonna call out your Netflix addiction. I'm not gonna say anything about binge watching anything. In fact, I'm not gonna do what you kind of expect that I'm gonna do in a message about using our time to love others. What you probably expect that I'm gonna do is I'm gonna start saying you need to add some things to your schedule, you need to start using time in a different way. You might even think that I'm gonna teach on tithing time and maybe you've heard a sermon like that, you know. In the same way that we're supposed to tithe our money or treasure, we're all supposed to tithe our time. And I'm not gonna do that, I'm not gonna tell you that you need to start spending 10% of your time involved in church work. I'm not gonna say you need to spend X amount of time going to Bible studies, or going on mission trips, or serving in a Life Center down with the kids. I'm not gonna do that.

What I wanna do this morning is, actually, I wanna give you a different way of thinking about your schedule. I'm gonna give you a biblical way of thinking about your schedule. It's probably gonna be new, but it's old because it's right there in God's Word. And what I hope to do, what I've been praying for God to do, as you begin to understand a biblical perspective on our schedules, it's two things. First, I hope, honestly, to free some of you from some guilt, because my guess is that a lot of you are laboring under a burden of guilt right now about time. You're constantly consumed with, "I know I should be this and this and this and this," and for whatever reason, you're not able to do what you feel like you should be able to do. And so, the should've's have turned into just tremendous guilt, and I hope that what I share today will actually be freeing for you. Second thing I hope will happen is that you'll begin to find that when we think about our schedule this way, it actually creates some space in which we can begin to join with Jesus in his mission of loving others as he's loved us, in ways that we didn't think were possible.

I'm gonna ask you to turn with me to the Book of Ecclesiastes. If you don't know how to find Ecclesiastes, grab your Bible, grab one from seats in front of you. Basically, just open it to the middle and you'll probably find the Psalms. Just page forward a little bit, you'll get to the Proverbs and just after that you'll get to the book of Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes is a book written by a man named Solomon. Solomon was known as the Wise King of Israel, the wisest of all kings. He's the son of David who's, you know, we all know as the Giant Slayer, right, Giant Killer. Solomon was known for a very different thing because, at a certain point in



his life, God did something really unusual for him, that is that God came to Solomon and said, “I’m gonna give you any one thing that you ask for, but you only get one. Tell me what it is and I’ll give it to you.”

What would you ask for? I’ve thought about this a lot. And I’ll be honest, I think if I’m really being realistic about myself, I would not have asked for what Solomon asked for. What Solomon said was, “Lord, I want to be wise,” and God said, “Done,” and he poured wisdom into him, he put insight and understanding into him. And Ecclesiastes is a book of some of that insight. In Ecclesiastes chapter 3, Solomon tells us something that I think is critical for thinking about time. It’s critical for thinking about our schedules. This is what he says, he says, “There is a time for everything. There is a season for every activity under the heavens. There’s a time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant and a time to uproot. A time to kill and a time to heal. A time to tear down and a time to build. A time to weep and a time to laugh. A time to mourn and a time to dance. There’s a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them in. There’s a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing. There’s a time to search and a time to give up. A time to keep and a time to throw away. A time to tear and a time to mend. A time to be silent and a time to speak. There’s a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.”

Now, just so we’re on the same page, understand that this is poetic language. He was writing what we would call poetry. Now when you write poetry, that doesn’t mean what you’re saying is not true, but it means you say it in a particular way. And we kinda know this is poetic because we see these words show up in a lot of, sort of, artistic poetic places, don’t we? We see them show up in songs by the birds. We see them show up on plaques that you can get at, you know, Hobby Lobby. They show up in, you know, quilts, they get crocheted into things and needle-pointed into things. It’s poetry, we get that. And here’s the important thing to understand about poetry, poetry communicates truths about principles. It communicates principles, not precision, you hear me? Poetry communicates principles, not precision. That’s important because if you don’t remember that, you’re gonna have problems. And we do it naturally, right, you know, if somebody says, “Hey, I got a poem for you. Roses are red and violets are blue,” we don’t go, “Stop. Clearly, you’re an idiot. Violets are not blue, they’re violet. That’s why they’re called that. And don’t even get me started on roses, roses aren’t red. I mean, some roses are red but you got white roses, you got pink roses. You clearly are a moron.” We don’t do that because we’re like, “Oh, I know, we’re communicating principle, not necessary precision.”

It’s important that we bring that to here because if we’re going for precision, when Solomon says things like, you know, “There’s a time for healing and a time for killing,” we’re like, “Okay, that’s my marching orders. You know, my busted ankles feeling much better. Time to get the shotgun and slaughter something.” Okay, we know that’s not what he’s saying. What he’s communicating is a principle. And then, the principle is this, what he’s saying is this, “God designed life to be lived in rhythm,” that’s the principle, “God designed life to be lived in rhythm.” Which is interesting to me, because we don’t talk about living life in rhythm. You know what we talk about living life in, don’t you? Balance, right? That’s the catch word, right? It’s all about, you know, it’s living the balanced life. Which is to say, you know, that’s a healthy life. A balanced life is a healthy life. And so, we try to help people find health in life by finding balance. But it’s interesting to me that I don’t think balance and health necessarily go all that well together. I mean, if you think about balance for a second, what is balance? Balance is about getting all the pieces in exactly the right place in relationship to each other, and then hands off, right? It’s about getting everything in its right place and then trying to avoid anything disturbing it, which means that the search for balance is really the search for stasis. It’s a search for stasis. Get everything in its right place and then don’t let anything move it. The search for balance is a search for stasis, but where in life is stasis a sign of health?

I’ll play a musical note that’s in balance. It’s in perfect stasis. Pitch, volume, right up against each other, nothing moving it, nothing messing with it. Perfect balance. Perfect stasis. Anybody feeling healthy? No, because when was the last time you heard that noise? That’s the sound of a heart monitor when the heart has flat-lined This is the sound of a brain monitor when there’s no more activity going on in that brain. This is the sound of death. Stasis isn’t life. And yet, that’s what we talk about all the time, right, gotta find balance. Don’t think so.

What Solomon describes here isn’t balance, what Solomon describes here is rhythm. In some ways, what I’m sharing with you today is something that I think Coletta and I...we’ve been stumbling our way towards for several years. Even early on in our



marriage, we kinda realized that there's something about this talk about balance and the balanced life that just doesn't ring true to us, it just doesn't resonate in the way that it feels like it should. And we've been kinda working our way towards this for years. It's just in the last couple years that some understanding of God's Word connected with some people that God's put in my life, in particular a guy named Bruce Miller who wrote a great book that I'll recommend, it's called "Your Life in Rhythm". Those things, as I understand, from God's Word and from other people who God's put in my life, have kind of given language to what we've been feeling our way towards awhile. And it's this idea that balance is not what we're supposed to be pursuing, we're supposed to be pursuing rhythm.

And rhythm and balance are very different. If the search for balance is a search for stasis, the search for rhythm is a search for appropriateness. It's the search for what is appropriate now. It's a search for what is right right now, does it make sense? That's rhythm, it's a search for what's appropriate in this moment. And what happens is, often what we find is appropriate in this moment, in the next moment, like, that's not appropriate anymore, so it needs to be something else. And then this moment, like, well, what we did in that moment is actually appropriate again, we can do that one again but not what we did there. And you might go, "Whoa. That's so much more complicated. That's so much more chaotic." Yeah, but it's not. It's not more complicated, it's not more chaotic. It's rhythm. You know, what's happening here is now but not now. Now, no, now, no, now, no, now. There's space.

And what's interesting is that when you begin to realize that, you know, rhythm is the search for what's appropriate now but not now, other things can fit into that not now. It becomes now for them, you can start adding some stuff on. But it still works because it's all about what's appropriate now but not now. And the interesting thing about rhythm to me is that you can layer a lot of stuff on and it doesn't become chaotic, it doesn't become draining. Come on, you wanna do it, you know. You can get a lot going on. I honestly believe that you can run really hard for a long time if you're living in rhythm without burning out, because it's always about finding what's appropriate in the moment that you're in, the space that you're in. You may find that there are times that you got to pull some things back because they're not appropriate for that particular moment. Sometimes you have to go down to the basics. But this doesn't drain the life out of you, does it? If anything, it really makes you feel like, "I need to move." I know. And that's what I'm saying. A life lived in rhythm is a life that drives you forward with joy. But a life that's lived in balance, if there's even any such thing possible, is not a life that moves us. What Solomon says in this passage in Ecclesiastes is, "God designed life to be lived in rhythm." Beyond that, Solomon gives us what I think are four keys to finding rhythm in life. And again, I believe if we start to live life as we're told to live it, two things will happen. Number one is we'll find ourselves freed from some guilt. And number two, we'll find that there is space to join Jesus in his mission of loving others that we didn't think was possible.

It's four things that Solomon gives us about learning to live in rhythm. Thing number one is this, the first thing we have to do is to identify the season. You notice he says that there is a time for everything. He doesn't say, "There is everything all the time," he says there is a time for everything. He says there is a season for every activity. The question we need to be asking is, "What season am I in," and, "What activities are appropriate to this particular season," right? That's the first thing, we identify what season I'm in. Now, here's the problem. When we think about seasons, the most natural thing we think, of course, is, you know, winter, spring, fall, and summer. And those are fine, actually, that's not a bad place to start, because that immediately begins to help us understand this concept that there are certain things that you do that are appropriate to those seasons. It's appropriate to plant in the spring, it's not appropriate to plant in the fall. It's appropriate to sing Christmas songs in the winter, it's not appropriate to sing them in June. My family does this but we have a little bit different rhythm, okay. You see what I'm saying, that we immediately go, "Okay, yeah. There are things that are appropriate to a particular season."

That's a good place to start, but I also want you to think bigger than that. I want you to think that there are seasons to life. You know, if you're a student, if you're heading back to school right now, you're in a new season. And there are gonna be things that are appropriate to that season and things that are not appropriate to that season. Sleeping in until 10:00, which may have been appropriate in the summer, that's up to you and your folks, but it's not appropriate when you gotta be in class. Maybe you're an empty-nester, maybe your kids are out of the house. Okay, you're in a new season. Maybe you've got kids coming into the



house and your life is changing, you're in a new season. And there are things that are appropriate to that season that are not appropriate to other seasons. We ask the question, you know, "God, where am I in life and what's appropriate to this particular season?"

We also need to do it on a much smaller scale, because there are also seasons of the month, there are seasons of the week. There are things that are appropriate on the weekend that are not appropriate during the week. You know, I don't have much of a weekend, to be perfectly honest. I take Fridays off. But Friday is a different season for me and I don't read email. I'm not perfect about this but it's what I strive towards. I don't read email, because it's a different season of the week for me. There's seasons of the day, there are things that are appropriate in the morning and the afternoon and the evening, that are not appropriate at other times. It is appropriate for me to read my emails and get back to people quickly when I am in the middle of my workday. It is not appropriate for me to be taking my family time to be answering emails that could be answered the next morning. It's about rhythm, it's about the season. So there's very big rhythm, there's medium rhythm, there's little...but the first question is to go, "What season am I in?" And then, "What activities are appropriate to that season?"

What we often find is that, you know, we fill our lives with things that are not appropriate to the season that we're in. When I came to Mission Hills, I had to ask the question, "Okay, what season am I in?" One of the things that I'd been doing in previous seasons of my life is I'd been teaching at the seminary, I've been writing books, and I love both of those things. But I looked at what it was gonna look like to really be able to invest what God had called me to invest here at Mission Hills, especially in these first few years where we're getting started together. And it became very clear to me that writing books and teaching a seminary was just not appropriate to the season. And so, I called the seminary and I said, "I can't do it," and I stopped. I got a couple book projects that have just been put on hold. There may be a season where it's appropriate to deal with those again but now is not it. What season am I in and what's appropriate and what is inappropriate to the season. The problem is that a lot of our lives are full of things that are inappropriate to the season that we're in. And they're taking all of our space.

Now, here's the problem. Identifying the things that are inappropriate to the season is not the biggest challenge. Those are obvious, we go, "Yeah, I'm doing this and this and this. It's not appropriate to this season," that's not the hardest thing. The hardest thing is to release ourselves from the expectations of those things. And that's the step number two that Solomon gives us, it's to release expectations. It's interesting to me how many of the things that he talks about are seasons and activities that come with certain expectations. For instance, he says, "There is a time to weep, there's a time to laugh." It's expected that when we're weeping, we're sad. It's expected that when we're laughing, we're not sad. When there's a time to mourn, it's expected that we're going to be grieving, that we're going to be experiencing sadness, and it's expected. The problem is, what happens is that we find ourselves in a new season and we really struggle to release ourselves from the expectations of that previous season.

When I came here, one of the hard things for me was that God called me out of a church that I loved dearly. You've heard me say many times, I didn't leave there because I was ready to get out. On the contrary, God had to make it very clear that he was calling me because I would not have left because I love them that deeply. And one of the hard things for me is that I can actually see that church from my back porch. And for this last year when they've been without a pastor, it's been a challenge for me to release myself from expectations. Because I look at the church and I know they're struggling, I know that...you know, it's just this in-between time is difficult and I hear things that happen. And I wanna reach out, I wanna be involved. You know, maybe I need to do it but, the thing is, if I didn't release myself from those expectations, I wouldn't be able to embrace the season that I'm in here. So I understand that I feel that, but I also know the power and the importance of releasing ourselves from expectations.

See, when we don't release ourselves of expectations, two things happen. Number one, we feel guilty. And God never wants us to live out of guilt. I'll give you the worst compliment Coletta has ever received. You ready? We were in a season, we were doing some international conferences and we were busy. There was a lot going on, there were a lot of drums being beaten. But we were still trying to find those spaces to invest in other people. And God led us to invite a couple over, and they came over and, as I recall it, we were kinda in the middle of this meal and Coletta was a little distracted. She was kinda looking over here and she was looking back at me, and so I'm looking over there and I'm like, "What's going on?" Well, it turns out that there was a laundry basket full of laundry that was on the stairs. It hadn't been hidden. And the guys are like, "Yeah?" And the woman



are like, “Oh.” I think it was several months later that the woman that had been at our table that night gave Coletta the worst compliment she’s ever received. She said, “I love that you can invite people over to your house when it’s messy.”

And what you need to know is that she meant as the highest compliment possible. Because God used it, because what God taught her and that was, “You know what, I don’t have to make my house look like Martha Stewart’s house before I can practice hospitality. I don’t have to live to this false standard.” So it was a tremendous compliment because it actually inspired this woman to go, “You know what? I can be hospitable, I can have people in my house even if my house isn’t perfect,” and that was a huge compliment. But what Coletta heard was, “Messy,” because she hadn’t released herself from the expectation of a season where she wasn’t as involved in some of the things that she was involved in, and so she felt guilt. When we don’t release ourselves from the expectations from previous seasons...or from seasons that are coming. Sometimes we import guilt from other seasons that were not even in yet, like, “I should be doing this, this, this and this.” We go, “No, no, no. You’ve got little kids at home. You’ve got an aging parent that you’re taking care of. You’ve got a special needs child. Your job is in a crazy...” I mean, there’s all kinds of things that we go, “I wanna be doing this and we can maybe see the season but we import the expectations,” and so we labor under guilt. We gotta release the expectations.

When we don’t, the second thing that happens is we find ourselves unable to seize the opportunities that are unique to that particular season. And that’s principle number three, is simply to seize the opportunities. Seize the opportunities that are unique to that particular season. You know, there’s a number of things that Solomon says here that clearly are activities that only make sense at that moment. They don’t make sense at any other moment. Some of them, if you don’t take advantage of, if you don’t seize the opportunity, you’re not gonna be able to seize other opportunities. He says that there is a time to plant and then there’s a time to uproot. Listen, spring is the only time that you can do the planting. That’s the opportunity that’s unique to this season. If you don’t plant in that season, when fall comes around guess what? Not gonna be much harvesting going on. Sometimes seizing the opportunities unique to the season set the stage for other opportunities that we will only have if we’ve seized the earlier ones. He says, “There is a time to search, there’s a time to keep, there’s a time to invest ourselves in holding on to something.” And if we come to a season where God says it’s time to let that go, that’s fine. But in that moment, we need to seize the moment because if we’re supposed to save it, if we’re supposed to find it, if we’re supposed to keep it and we don’t do that work then, we might find that it’s gone and can never be regained because we didn’t seize the opportunity that was unique to that season.

I realized just recently that there’s an opportunity that’s unique to this particular season. My oldest daughter Rochelle [SP] is... she’s shadowing the communications team here, she’s kind of an unpaid intern. And so, she’s here a lot during the week and I realized, “Huh, there’s an opportunity here that I have never had before and I probably won’t have going forward,” and that is we can do lunch on Mondays. And that was a little bit of a change in rhythm for me because Mondays is my, like, the office door’s closed. I don’t do appointments on Mondays, I don’t do lunches with people, I try not to do breakfast. I just, I work on the message, I pour into it. But I realized this was a unique opportunity. And so, for the last few weeks, Monday I don’t have lunch by myself and think about the message, I have lunch with my daughter. Just seizing an opportunity that’s unique to that season. When you go home at night, you have an opportunity that’s unique to that season, to connect with your wife, to connect with your kids, or your neighbors, or whoever. But if you’re still living in the expectations of the day, if you’re still checking email, if you’re still texting with your boss or your employees, you’re gonna miss those opportunities.

And Coletta has realized that she’s got a unique opportunity right now. Our youngest daughter is going off to high school, she’s been home-schooled up to this point. She’s gone off to high school now which means that we don’t have kids at home during the day, which means that she, Coletta, has a unique opportunity to continue to increase her opportunities to pour into staff women and staff wives here and women from the church. She has a unique opportunity right now. You have to seize those opportunities.

And then the fourth step is just this, we have to anticipate the next season. That’s the fourth step for beginning to live in rhythm. We anticipate the next season. I think it’s interesting how many of these seasons that Solomon talks about here begin negative and then, and only then, do they move to positive. He says, you know, “There is a time to kill and a time to heal, to tear down



and to build, to weep then to laugh, to mourn, to dance, to tear and then to mend.” So many of them begin, kinda, what we would call negative, and they move to a positive. And I think there’s a powerful truth there that we often forget in the midst of a difficult season, and some of you are in a difficult season right now. And what we recognize is that the season that we are in is not the season that we are confined to forever. Hear me? The season that you are in is not the season that you are confined to forever, there is another season coming. And there can be tremendous power in saying, “Okay, that’s not the season that I’m in but I know that it’s coming,” which allows us to push in and to do everything that needs to be done in that season, to release ourselves of expectations and to seize the opportunities. But there’s another season coming.

As I think about this, one of the things that I think about a lot is that many of you probably, even right now, you’re in a season of grief. You’re in a season of loss. You’ve lost a parent, or a spouse, or a child even. Maybe you’ve lost a marriage or a career, there’s some grieving that’s going on, and you’re in a season right now where, honestly, you’re just sad. And I want you to understand, it’s okay. It’s expected that you’d be sad when you’re in that season of grief. It’s necessary. It’s necessary to experience all of it, so that you can begin to move past it. But I also want you to hear that there’s another season coming, the season you’re in is not the season that you’re confined to forever. But here’s what begins to happen sometimes is, you know, we go through this period of grief and then, one day, maybe it’s months, maybe it’s a year, maybe it’s more...one day, you wake up and you realize, “I’m not quite as sad as I was yesterday.” And maybe even, as you go on, you begin to go, “I actually had a moment today where I felt happy.” But then what happens? You feel what? You feel guilty. Because you haven’t released yourself from the expectations of that season of grief, you begin to feel guilty. “How dare I feel happy when my husband is dead? How dare I feel happy when this has happened to my family? How dare I...” Yeah, no. Anticipate the next season, and find hope in it. But move through each season, day by day, and move through each season asking, “What’s appropriate to this season?”

I went into my oldest daughter’s room Saturday and she had a bunch of clothes and stuff out, she was putting them in boxes. And I looked at those boxes and I was like, “You’re gonna pack those in a car on Thursday. You’re gonna drive those to Greeley and you’re not gonna come home.” She’s going off to college. It’s a little sad. We’re not one of those families that can’t wait for the kids to be out of the house. It’s a little sad. But I also know there’s opportunities that are gonna be unique to this season. She’s off at college, my youngest daughter’s gonna be at high school. There’s some opportunities that are gonna be unique to this season, and there’s another season coming. The season that I’m in is not the season that I’m confined to. There’s gonna be weekends and there’s gonna be Christmas. And the strength that we find in that hope allows us to make the most of whatever season we happen to find ourselves in.

As I said, I don’t wanna say today that, you know, you’ve got to join Jesus’s mission of loving others by adding these things to your schedules. No, I want you to rethink the whole schedule. I want you to throw out the notion of balance, balance is impossible. And even if you could find it, you wouldn’t want it. Start thinking about rhythm, what is appropriate in this moment. Find yourself freed of the guilt, and find yourself finding space to join Jesus and his mission of loving others that you didn’t even think was possible. I mean, what it really all boils down to is just this very simple idea, is that when we begin to live appropriate to the seasons we’re in, big picture, middle picture, little picture, when we begin to live appropriate to the seasons we’re in, we find that we have all the time needed to love those that God has called us to love in that season. Rhythm’s way better.

Four questions. Question number one, what season are you in? Start thinking this way, what season am I in? Big picture, middle picture, little picture. “What season am I in?” And, what activities are appropriate to this season? And what are not, “What can I let go of because it’s not appropriate to this season?” Number two is expectations. “What expectations can I let go of? Not just the activities we let go of, but what expectations can I let go and release myself from because they’re just not appropriate to this season? What expectations am I carrying over that are killing me? What expectations am I importing from the future that are burdening? And what expectations can I let go, to release myself from, because they’re not appropriate to this season?” Third question is, “What opportunities to love others are unique to this particular season that I’m in? What opportunities to join Jesus’s mission of loving other sacrificially are appropriate to this season that I’m in?” And number four, especially if you’re in a season



that's hard, "What joys can I anticipate in the next season that will sustain me through this one?"

Would you pray with me? God, we thank you for rhythm of life that you made for us, we thank you that at the core of it is your heartbeat. Your heart that beats for us, that longs for us not only to be freed from guilt but to be free for the opportunity to define the space to join you in your work of loving others as you've loved us. Thank you for your heartbeat for us and for others. Would you help us to begin to rethink our schedule, so we think of our time in the way that you call us to? And in that process to find that space, to join us in this mission that you invite us to. Take ourselves out of the frame and experience that freedom to put the frame and the focus on others, and so to love others with this time that you have entrusted to us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

