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# The Gift of Time-Children Spell Love... T - I - M - E

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## The Gift of Time

CHILDREN SPELL LOVE . . . T-I-M-E

BY SUSAN E. MURRAY

**W**hat an interesting phenomenon, this thing called “time!” It “flies” when we are having fun, and it “crawls” when we’re bored. We “make” time, “lose” time, and “give” time. Yet, we don’t earn it, own it, or control it. In fact, sometimes it seems to control us!

The reality is that when God created the world, there were 24 hours in a day. There has never been more. There has never been less. There will never be more. There will never be less! I choose to see that as a blessing!

The challenge is to find time for the right things, those things we say we value. Individuals and businesses make good money telling people how to manage their time. Men and women who try to balance the many obligations, responsibilities and desires that clamor for their attention have created these demands, resulting in a professional organizing industry with certified professional organizers in many countries around the world.

Families are caught in what’s called the “time trap.” If you are a parent, you know that when children start school their calendars and daily schedules become part of our schedules. It’s not unusual to be in a family with little ones and school-age children at the same time. Whew! It’s a lot to manage!

Perhaps Christian families feel an extra burden because we have church responsibilities, and value taking time for personal and family devotions. We all know that developing and nurturing faith in a home requires preparation and study, which involves time. Sometimes it just seems to be an overwhelming task! It’s easier to skip these things we say we value now and then, or even most of the time, even though we recognize our sense of uneasiness.

A young mother tells of a morning when her son, Joe, watched quietly and patiently as she attended his baby sister. Occasionally, he toddled off to see or do something else,



but then returned to her side to watch. This morning, he seemed particularly attentive as she went through the ritual of bathing and feeding his little sister. Finally, the baby was settled down for her morning nap. Feeling a tug on her leg, the mother looked down to see Joe’s smiling, expectant face looking up at her. “Our time?” he asked.

“Yes,” she replied. “It’s our time!”

This toddler had come to expect that at this time of the day he had his mom’s undivided attention. Already he was learning the rewards of patience, and she observed how important this time was to him. He also was learning that he could count on his mother, part of the process of learning he also could count on his Heavenly Father.

This incident reminded me how important it is that we “take” time, in a consistent way, with our children, no matter their age. I also was reminded of God. He watches us and waits patiently for us while we are engaged in the busyness of our lives. How delighted God must be when we pause to acknowledge “our time” with Him!

Spending time alone with God each day, in our own way, and planning for times together in worship are two major challenges of Christian parenting, but oh, how sweet the rewards!

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Susan E. Murray is a professor emerita of behavioral sciences at Andrews University, certified family life educator, and licensed marriage and family therapist.

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P.S. I encourage you to consider removing the phrase “I didn’t have time” from your conversations. Bottom line, it’s really about priorities.