

*It's time to...*



Stop, Pray, Work, Play & Love

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# It's time to...



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### IT'S TIME TO... STOP, PRAY, WORK, PLAY & LOVE

So much of our stress and anxiety derives from our pollution of time. God has given us the gift of time, and called it holy, yet we often experience time as a curse. In a series of short, daily videos over five weeks, the Brothers of SSJE invite us to recapture time as a gift. Join the Brothers as we wrestle with questions of time and discover how to experience the joy of the present moment.

This series is designed so that everyone in your community can participate. Everyone is busy. Time is at a premium. It is hard for all to come together to deepen our faith.

Each theme is introduced with a video of a Brother priming us for the week's theme. The theme is then explored in depth in six short reflection videos (around 2 minutes each). A compilation video is also available each Sunday.

Each reflection video ends with a thought-provoking question for you to ponder over the course of the day, then answer on the worksheet.

#### INTRODUCTION

Time - Priorities - Sabbath - Purpose

#### STOP

Stop - Accountable - Liberation - Being - Drawn - Contentment - Observe

#### PRAY

Pray - Place - Intercession - Gratitude - Unity - Becoming - Present

#### WORK

Work - Action - Return - Boundaries - Worth - Intention - Rhythm

#### PLAY

Play - Wholeness - Spontaneity - Consumed - Soaked - Adventure - Create

#### LOVE

Love - Authentic - Identity - Yippee - Respond - Gift - Beloved

All the supporting materials are available to download for free at [www.SSJE.org/time](http://www.SSJE.org/time)

# It's time to...



The monastic day is full of starts and stops as we navigate the many elements of this life: we take time to work and to play, time to be alone and to be together, time to study and time to pray. These activities are woven throughout each day, individual threads that make up the whole, the fabric of our days.

When we first arrive at the monastery, it can be hard to imagine that these diverse strands of experience will come together to form a beautiful tapestry. For many of us, our early days at the monastery felt more like a tangle of individual threads. Many of us especially experienced a struggle with time itself: Time seemed to slow to a crawl some days, and on other days it sped past! Despite all our expectations and preparations, it took time - and our intentional cooperation with God and one another - for the threads of this life to begin to come together.

Perhaps you know something of this challenge of bringing the various elements of your life into a harmonious whole. Whether you feel a sense of having too little time for all the demands of life, or whether you feel lonely amidst too much time, God is calling you to connection. God wants us to use our time not just wisely, but sacredly, in order to thrive. Learning to use our time well, as God intended, does require us to be intentional about how we approach our life, with all its diverse components. An important part of that intention is being willing to be changed, by allowing God to select and weave together the various threads of our lives.

Each new season of our lives will require us to adapt. Becoming a monk means laying aside certain tasks or opportunities we had previously enjoyed and picking up others. In the same way, becoming a parent alters what day-to-day life looks like compared to the freedom of being a young adult. A new job might require a new outlook or schedule. Retirement is another phase that brings changes, including a new sense of identity. Each new stage of life closes some doors and opens others. No matter what stage of life we are in, God's invitation is that we be intentional in how we use our time in order to discover the abundance of life God desires for each of us.

Over the next five weeks, we invite you to join us in reflecting on our use of time, focusing especially on how we might take time to stop, pray, work, play and love. Together we will ponder our use of time, asking God to help us weave together the various threads of our lives into a beautiful tapestry in which each part of our life informs and complements the others, and enlivens the whole.

# It's time to...



## Use this Series

### For Individuals

- \* Subscribe to the video series at [www.SSJE.org/time](http://www.SSJE.org/time).
- \* You will receive a daily email with a mobile-ready video and a question.
- \* Watch the videos: We suggest watching one each day to give it some time to sink in.
- \* On the workbook, answer the questions posed at the end of video.
- \* Share your thoughts, using [#ssjetime](https://twitter.com/ssjetime) on your preferred social media site.

### For Groups

- \* Pick a meeting time and location for five weeks and invite others to join the group.
- \* Use the Calendar on the opposite page to help plan viewing dates.
- \* Encourage each member to subscribe to the video series at [www.SSJE.org/time](http://www.SSJE.org/time).
- \* Have each member watch the videos and answer the questions on the workbook.
- \* *As a group:* You can watch the videos again together at the start of your meeting, playing the weekly compilation video as a refresher. Visit [www.SSJE.org/timeresources](http://www.SSJE.org/timeresources) if you would like to download the compilation videos in advance.
- \* Talk about the week's theme and invite different members to share their answers. Discuss how answers may have changed over the course of conversation.
- \* Share your group's experience, using [#ssjetime](https://twitter.com/ssjetime) on your preferred social media site.
- \* *(If you want tips on facilitating group conversation, go to [www.buildfaith.org/2013/07/31/facilitating-small-group-studies/](http://www.buildfaith.org/2013/07/31/facilitating-small-group-studies/))*

### For Leaders **INVITING THEIR WHOLE CONGREGATION TO PARTICIPATE**

- \* In advance encourage everyone to subscribe to [www.SSJE.org/time](http://www.SSJE.org/time) or enroll in a study group or an adult formation class. Please contact [friends@ssje.org](mailto:friends@ssje.org) if you want to add your whole community's email list to a planned daily email with a video.
- \* At [www.SSJE.org/timeresources](http://www.SSJE.org/timeresources) you will find a variety of different supporting materials including bulletin inserts, images for email and website badges.
- \* For each Sunday of the course, include a bulletin insert on the week's upcoming themes: Stop, Pray, Work, Play & Love. These can be downloaded or ordered from [www.SSJE.org/timeresources](http://www.SSJE.org/timeresources).
- \* Read comments on [www.SSJE.org/time](http://www.SSJE.org/time) that you might like to refer to in your sermon.

# It's time to...



<b>INTRODUCTION</b>			1 Time	2 Priorities	3 Sabbath	4 Purpose
Week 1 Day 1 <b>STOP</b>	2 Accountable	3 Liberation	4 Being	5 Drawn	6 Contentment	7 Observe
Week 2 Day 1 <b>PRAY</b>	2 Place	3 Intercession	4 Gratitude	5 Unity	6 Becoming	7 Present
Week 3 Day 1 <b>WORK</b>	2 Action	3 Return	4 Boundaries	5 Worth	6 Intention	7 Rhythm
Week 4 Day 1 <b>PLAY</b>	2 Wholeness	3 Spontaneity	4 Consumed	5 Soaked	6 Adventure	7 Create
Week 5 Day 1 <b>LOVE</b>	2 Authentic	3 Identity	4 Yippee	5 Respond	6 Gift	7 Beloved

# It's time to...



## Stop

Many people today experience their relationship with time as disordered or out of balance. There never seems to be enough time. Time bears down on us, hurries us along at a relentless pace, and demands that we keep up. Time can become a burden rather than a gift, something to escape rather than something to embrace and enjoy.

One solution to this perceived relentlessness of time is simply to stop: stop rushing, stop achieving, stop doing - at least for a time. A life without pauses is like a paragraph without punctuation; it runs on and on, leaving us breathless and overwhelmed. When we stop, we are able to see more clearly the moment we are in. We are able to notice things about ourselves, about those around us, and about the world in which we live. We are able to respond thoughtfully and sensitively to people and situations.

This will help immensely: claim times in your day, your week, your year, when you simply stop; when you say to yourself, "That's enough work for now"; when you intentionally disengage from technology; when you unplug your computer, turn off your phone, and walk away from your "to do" list. Claiming time to enjoy solitude and silence, away from the constant barrage of advertisements and news flashes, will make a world of difference to you. Consider taking a full Sabbath day each week and protecting it as a time when you stop working, stop achieving and producing, stop acquiring, stop running to and fro to meet the demands and expectations of those around you.

God commanded the people of Israel to "remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy" for two reasons: first, God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh day, thereby setting an example for us to imitate. We need this weekly day of rest; we have been created for work and for rest (Exodus 20:11). Secondly, we are to keep the Sabbath to remember that God has delivered us from the tyranny of work (Deuteronomy 5:15). In Egypt there was no rest; the Israelites worked endlessly to satisfy Pharaoh's insatiable desire for wealth and power. But God freed them, and brought them into a new land where they were allowed to rest, and where work resumed its rightful place in the ordering of their lives. Whether the taskmaster is our employer or our own sense of obligation or ambition, God wants us to be free from the tyranny of overwork.

What should you do when you stop? Nothing at all. Simply stop and be still. Or you can pick one simple thing and do it with all your attention. For example, at a coffee break, try taking your mug of coffee in your hands, smelling it, feeling it, sipping it, savoring it. Resist the temptation to carry on working or typing or checking your emails during your break. Be fully present to the moment. This is a reordering of time, for it teaches us not to dwell in the past or yearn toward the future, but to be really present to life, in the present, which is where we will find God's presence.

Taking time to stop brings order and balance into our lives. Try it. Try it now.

# *It's time to...*



## Stop

*Sit in total stillness for five minutes today.  
How does it feel?*

## Drawn

*Where are you drawn when you follow your heart?*

## Accountable

*Where is your invitation to stop during the day?*

## Contentment

*Are you content right now?*

## Liberation

*What taskmasters do you need to be liberated  
from to reclaim your dignity?*

## Observe

*Schedule a day of complete rest: What does it help  
you realize about your life and heart?*

## Being

*How do you picture a day spent "being" - as  
opposed to "doing"?*

# It's time to...



## Pray

Prayer is about our relationship to God. Like any relationship, it requires time. Some of us are used to praying on the run, but our relationship with God cannot flourish unless we find time to be fully present to God: speaking and listening to one another, sharing silence or beauty, delight or sorrow. Intimacy grows when we invest in this kind of quality time - both in human relationships and in our relationship with God. There is truth in the familiar phrase, "If we're too busy to pray, we're too busy."

We must pray for no less a reason than our life depends on it. Jesus promised to give us life, abundant life, yet we will only realize this promise when we live in sync with God on God's terms, on God's time. Talking about God and time is a paradox: Time is created by God, yet God is not subject to time. God is timeless, however we can only experience God in time. And, miraculously, we do! There are moments in our life when we actually get in touch with the timelessness of God. Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote, "The world is charged with the grandeur of God." God comes to us in time and space, in the now. This is why moments of prayer and worship are so important: In the midst of time, we actually perceive the Timeless that intersects the now. Prayer opens the space needed for that encounter.

You don't need to live in a monastery to set aside time for prayer. In fact, the busier we are, the more we must not let our schedule get in the way of demarcating sacred time. Francis de Sales, the great 17th century spiritual director observed: "Half an hour's listening is essential except when you are very busy. Then a full hour is needed." The more the tyranny of the urgent demands your time, the more time it will take to stay centered in the ground of your being, to remain rooted in your relationship with God.

Try this: On a daily basis, set aside some time when you will be simply and fully present to God. There is an ancient monastic phrase, *vacare Deo*, which is about being empty for God, being at leisure or available to God.

In the morning: Many people find it most meaningful to *vacare Deo* first thing in the morning, perhaps even before getting out of bed. (Resist the urge to turn on your phone or check your email first!) Decide how much time you will spend each day, and stick with that time every day. You might light a candle, or start the day with a prayer of praise, gratitude, self-offering, or intercession. If you read from the Psalms, or make your way through a passage of Scripture, jot down a word or phrase that stands out to you, and keep it in your pocket throughout the day. You might find journaling a useful way to connect with God. Write a few sentences to capture your thoughts, fears, hopes, desires, thanksgivings.

At the midday: Claim some moments in the middle of the day to once again give God your full attention. This need not be elaborate. You might sit for a few minutes, consciously being still in the presence of God. Pray with your breathing. Breathe in what you need - hope, strength, joy, love - and breathe out anything that is clogging your soul - fear, despair, anger, temptation. Or if you wrote down a word or phrase in your morning meditation, return to it again. This midday connection will reawaken what you received from God in the morning. Enter again into that experience of grace in the middle of the day, whether you're full of light and joy, or when you're stressed or distracted.

In the evening: Save some time to reflect on the day that has passed. Claim and name your gratitude; acknowledge where you missed the mark; ask God to take whatever residue may be weighing on you, and then rest in peace.



# *It's time to...*



## Pray

### Pray

*Where do you find God in the ordinary?*

### Unity

*How might being attuned to those around you shape your prayer today?*

### Place

*Where and how do you pray outside?*

### Becoming

*What desires are shaping who you're becoming right now?*

### Intercession

*What is the "arrow prayer" in your heart right now?*

### Present

*Listen: what is God presenting to you in prayer today?*

### Gratitude

*Can you name out loud what you are most grateful for?*

# It's time to...



## Work

In Western society, the area in which we are most prone to develop a disordered relationship with time is in our work. Many of us are working too hard and too long. In his book, *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putnam notes, "For many today work has supplanted community life and this has had an adverse effect on happiness." For many of us, the case is even more extreme: our overworking is killing us.

How should we, as Christians, think about our work? First, we can recognize that work is a gift from God, a gift which God shares with us and an essential part of the rhythm of human life. In the story of Creation in Genesis, the crowning achievement of God's work was the creation of human beings to share in the responsibility of ordering and managing the world. It is natural for human beings to want to work, to enjoy working, and to experience the natural satisfaction of a job well done. Work contributes profoundly to our sense of dignity.

Herbert Marcuse, a 20th century philosopher, claims that our difficulties with work arise because we are dominated by the "Performance Principle." We have an inner compulsion to perform, and what we feel about ourselves - our sense of identity and worth - is directly related to how well we perform. But as he notes, we can never really rest with this mindset, because there is always more to be done, and more to be achieved. When our sense of value as a human being is determined by our performance, it often doesn't feel good enough.

This was true of Saint Paul. Though he had achieved much living under the Law, he still had the feeling of falling short. But in Christ, Paul encountered grace. In Christ he came to know that he was loved and accepted by God - as a result of grace, not because of his own performance. When he realized this - that nothing could separate him from the love of

God in Christ - he experienced a profound sense of freedom. His work became an expression of love and gratitude as he strove to "do everything to the glory of God."

Like Paul, we are invited to live not as people burdened by life's demands, but as people of grace. But how do we do this? How can we keep alive the sense of work as a gracious gift, rather than as drudgery or toil?

First, we can exercise discipline. Work requires discipline, but stopping work also requires discipline! We can learn to set limits on how much we work, so that work doesn't devour everything else (particularly our relationships). Modern technology poses a tremendous challenge to our ability to create and maintain healthy boundaries around work. When we are accessible by cell phone or email at all times of the day, when we carry our work with us wherever we go, we run the risk of allowing work to infiltrate our entire lives. We will need discipline to limit our easy access to work-related tasks, and to resist the lure of our cell phones and computer screens.

You might find it helpful to learn to put 'frames' around your work. When we work, we want to give our full attention to the task at hand. When we are at ease, we want to be fully present to the activities and relationships appropriate to times of leisure. It's important that one task doesn't just bleed into the next. When we complete a piece of work, we can stop, reflect on what we have accomplished, and give thanks before we move on to our next task. Learning to pause can help.

# *It's time to...*



## **Work**

### **Work**

*Is replenishing your being a priority in your life?*

### **Worth**

*By what measuring stick do you gauge your worth and the worth of others?*

### **Action**

*Consider your routines - where is God?*

### **Intention**

*Make a list of three intentions for your work life today. What difference would these make?*

### **Return**

*How does your work serve others?*

### **Rhythm**

*How is the pace of your life?*

### **Boundaries**

*What limits would give you life?*

# It's time to...



## Play

Think back to your childhood and try to remember a moment of playful delight: a game you invented, a fort you constructed, a friend with whom you "goofed off". When did you giggle until you could not stop? What made you want to dance or turn cartwheels (and when did you go ahead and do it)? What kind of play made you forget to eat lunch, because you were having too much fun to go inside?

Children play. All of them. Play is an innate, God-given inclination, which we can spot in the youngest of babes. From our earliest age, we play: we delight, savor, frolic, laugh, fool around, and romp for sheer silliness and bliss. Our imagination lets us create endless possibilities in the world around us. Toys are not required. An empty box often inspires more inviting possibilities than the toy it contained, for a simple box can become a train, a hovercraft or a castle. Blankets draped over furniture become forts, hideouts, and imaginary new worlds. True play does not depend on the world beyond us, but comes from the world within us.

Imagination and playtime and daydreaming are not just for kids. We hear now about how the most successful companies build play time and play spaces into their offices and schedules: ping pong tables in the break-room; corporate zip-lining retreats. The reason for this shift is as fundamental as it is necessary: Often the best ideas come to us as we play with opportunities, when we collaborate on innovations, and when we think "outside the box" to create something new. Play renews us.

Play can revive every part of our selves and our lives: from our work life to our relationships, including our relationship with God. You are a beloved child of God, safe and free. Creativity—which we all have—is a way to tap into our

intuitive, inner voice, and hear God anew.

Here are some suggestions to springboard your play. (And if the word "play" doesn't work for you, find a synonym that fits: delight, enjoy, savor, relish, adore, revel in, recreate, love... )

Draw on your memory. Remember what you used to enjoy, what you found fun, what you did alone with perfect contentment, or the play you shared with a sibling or friend. How can you reclaim that fun, now?

Experiment. Give yourself permission to try something, with no judgment or evaluation. Keep perfection at bay and just "fool around" with something that intrigues you, and just for the fun of it.

Experience. Allow yourself simply to experience something delightful, freed from the need to make rational sense of it. Watch birds frolic in bathwater, dogs play with their toys, cats chase a ball of string, sunshine play on the rocks. Read fiction or watch movies to experience other worlds, for sheer enjoyment. The Russian ballerina Ivana Pavlova once was asked what a particular dance meant. She answered, "If I could have said it, do you think I would have danced it?"

If you need permission to play, just remember that Jesus invites us to be children of God: "Unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3) Play your way back to the childlikeness of the Kingdom of Heaven.

# *It's time to...*



## **Play**

### Play

*Play for at least half an hour today.  
How does it feel?*

### Soaked

*What activities take you outside of yourself?*

### Wholeness

*What is your favorite project?*

### Adventure

*What has surprised and delighted you most recently?*

### Spontaneity

*In play time today risk getting lost.  
What happened?*

### Create

*Book yourself a play date.  
What did you do?*

### Consumed

*What helps you relax and be fully present in the moment?*

# It's time to...



## Love

It's time for love. (It's always time for love.) Love is the beginning and the end, Alpha and Omega, and everything in between. Love is the message, the messenger, the meaning of it all, because God is love.

We Brothers take the name of "The Society of Saint John the Evangelist," because we find in the Fourth Gospel the inspiration for our own life and mission. Above all, we are inspired by this Gospel's testimony that God is Love, its conviction that Jesus is the revelation and revealer of God, its insistence that the Christian community is to be a community of love, bearing witness to what they have seen and heard and experienced. We have come to know what that original community held to be true: The beginning of all love is God.

And God's love is very revealing. Martin Buber writes, "You know always in your heart that you need God more than everything; but do you know too that God needs you?" Many of us might find this truth hard to accept. But it is true. God does not need us in order to be eternal, or infinite, or omniscient. But God created us and does need us, like an artist needs to create in order to be an artist. In creating, artists express their own nature: who they are, and what they are, and for what they give their life. And so with God. God needs us because love is of God's very essence. And love does not exist unless it is given away.

God is love, and love can only be realized and expressed in relationship: the give-and-take of love. Julian of Norwich said there is in God "a desire, a longing, and a thirst from the beginning," and this longing is for relationship. With you. God, if not loving you and if not loved by you, is somehow incomplete. Jesus says, "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love." (John 15:9.) The God whom Jesus calls "Father" loves us - loves you - just as the Father loves Jesus. You are

loved that much! You have been created by God with love, for love, to love. It's of your essence. Love makes you real.

I wonder how you hear this. Do you nod or shrug or shake your head? Some of us—many of us—might discover some resistance within our own souls at the promise of God's love. We think, 'God doesn't love me, couldn't love me, can only partly love me, cannot completely love me.' But in that assumption we are thinking only about ourselves. Think of God. You have probably known the best of times and worst of times, and sometimes the muddle in the middle. God is well apprised of the goings on of human beings. You do not have to change to know the love of God, but the love of God will change you, will make you real. St. Catherine of Siena wrote, "What is it you want to change? Your hair, your face, your body? Why? For God is in love with all those things and he might weep when they are gone." God's relationship with you is one-of-a-kind, beloved that you are. There's no one like you. You make God's day. This is God's love on God's terms. Nothing, nothing, nothing will ever separate you from the love of God. You need only say "yes" to that.

We read, "Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God . . . if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us." (1 John 4:7) We are created to be in relationship: with God and with one another. Our attention and care to reordering our time has the goal of freeing us up to deepen and thrive in our relationships. Jesus shows us that to be human is to love: "Love one another" is his parting command to the community he drew around him. Beloved, let us love one another. Make time to love.

# *It's time to...*



## Love

### Love

*How might you love someone you may not necessarily like?*

### Authentic

*Are your expectations too rigid?*

### Identity

*How are you a lover?*

### Yippee

*Do you greet the day with a growl or a yippee?*

### Respond

*How does your love bubble up in response to others today?*

### Gift

*What is the greatest experience of love you've ever had?*

### Beloved

*What is it about you that God delights in?*

# Catch the Life!

## More from the Society of Saint John the Evangelist

### ONLINE RESOURCES & MONASTIC WISDOM:

Subscribe to *Brother, Give Us a Word*, to start your day with a short devotional text sent by email each morning. Sign up now or share today's Word with a friend who might need to hear it:

[www.SSJE.org/word](http://www.SSJE.org/word)

*Monastic Wisdom for Everyday Living* is a continuing series of sermons, workshops, and teachings from the Brothers that seeks to distill the collective wisdom of the past and offer practical, timeless counsel for living in today's world. For additional resources, visit [www.SSJE.org/monasticwisdom](http://www.SSJE.org/monasticwisdom). You can also hear the latest sermons and subscribe to our printed magazine, *Cowley*.

### COME ON RETREAT:

Silence, sanctuary, retreat, and a chance to recharge: The Brothers would be happy to welcome you to our homes, for worship, for prayer, or for retreat. At home and wherever we minister, we accept and welcome all who come, including them in our worship, meals, and fellowship.

### SUPPORT:

Celebrate with a gift: the Brothers rely on the kindness of friends. [www.SSJE.org/support](http://www.SSJE.org/support)

### WHO WE ARE:

The Society of Saint John the Evangelist (SSJE) was the first stable religious community of men to be established in the Anglican Church since the Reformation. The SSJE Brothers came to Boston in 1870. The Brothers now live at two monasteries: an urban monastery near Harvard Square in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and a rural monastery - Emery House - in West Newbury, Massachusetts.

The Brothers gather throughout the day to pray the Daily Office - Morning Prayer, Noonday Prayer, Evening Prayer, and Compline. Six days a week we join in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. Our common prayer and worship sanctify the work of the day, interrupting it so that we can direct and offer it all to God in thanksgiving.

Visit [www.SSJE.org](http://www.SSJE.org)

## THE SOCIETY OF SAINT JOHN THE EVANGELIST

*SSJE is a monastic community of The Episcopal Church, USA  
& The Anglican Church of Canada*

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