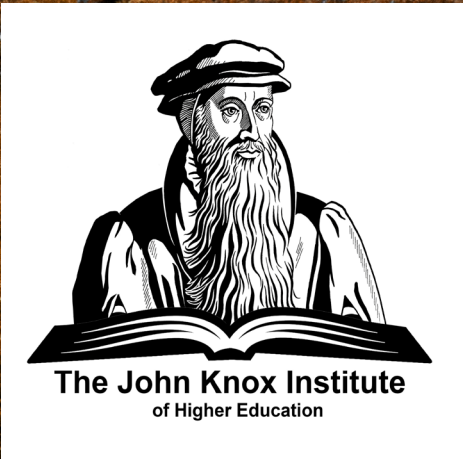
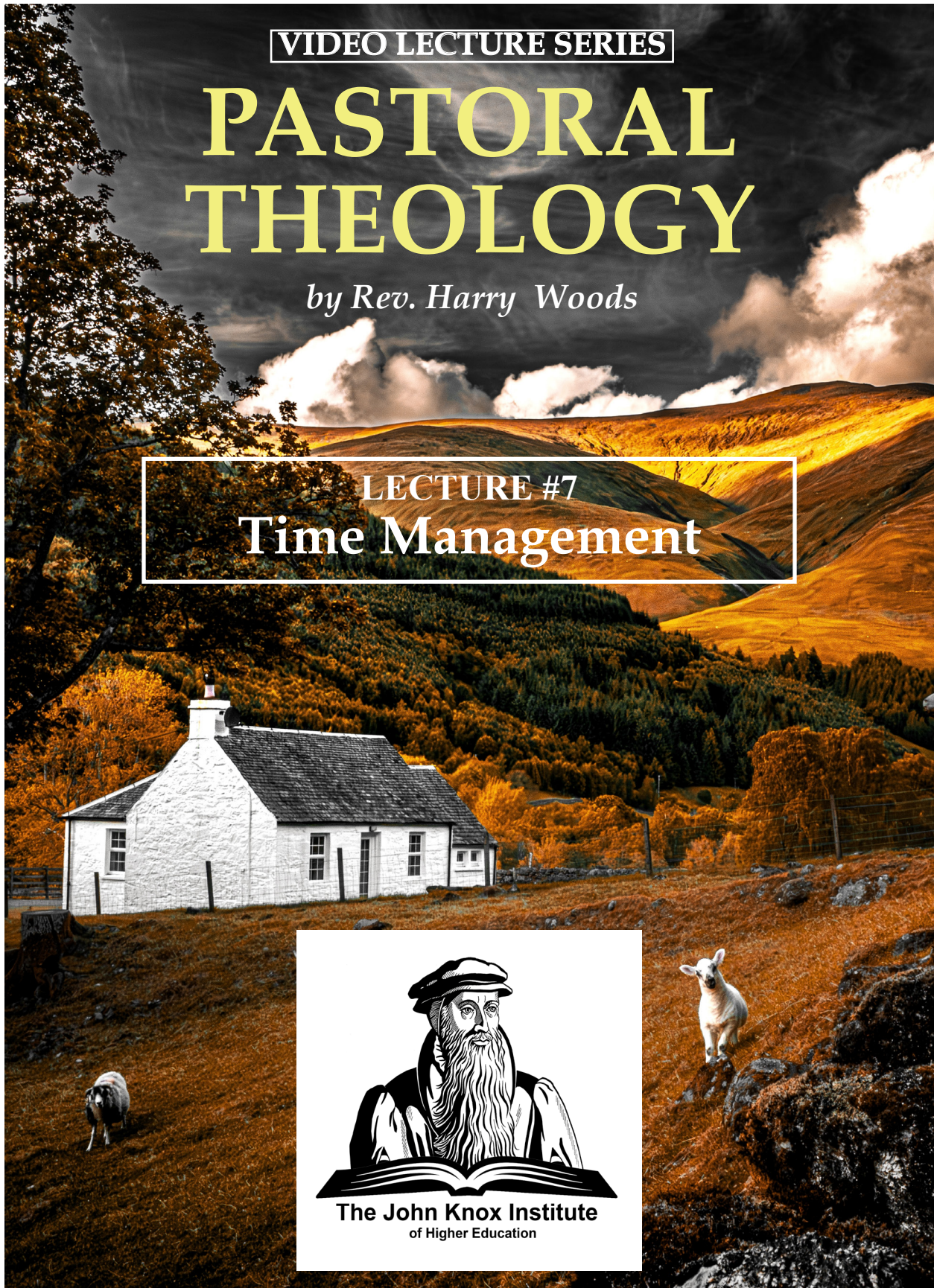


VIDEO LECTURE SERIES

PASTORAL THEOLOGY

by Rev. Harry Woods

LECTURE #7
Time Management



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Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

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Rev Harry Woods recently retired as minister of Kilmorack & Strathglass Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) in Beaulieu, Scotland, after having served as a minister of the Gospel since 1982. He was the editor of the monthly denominational youth magazine, *The Explorer*; for eleven years and taught Apologetics and Pastoral Theology at the Free Church (Continuing) Seminary in Inverness for eighteen years. He is married to Mairi, and has three adult children and three grandchildren.

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PASTORAL THEOLOGY

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Lecture #7

Time Management

Well, gentlemen, we come to a new section of lectures, and I want to look with you at the notion of *Time Management*. *Time Management* in the ministry is crucial. If you don't manage your time, you're likely to be stressed; you're likely to overwork; you're likely to be discouraged; and you might wind up with crippling guilt. Managing your time is not easy to do, especially if you have already formed bad habits. We touched on that in the opening exhortation. With respect to *Time Management*, there are two things to consider. The first is, finding enough time to do all you have to do, and the second is, using the time you have efficiently and wisely.

1. Finding Enough Time

Think for a moment about some statistics. If you deduct the time that you need for sleeping and eating, it will work out at approximately fourteen hours a day. No allowance, of course, has been made for washing, going to the toilet, going shopping, spending time with the family, or getting exercise. No wonder ministers and students complain that they don't have enough time.

It doesn't help if we bring into the equation unrealistic and unhelpful comparisons. New ministers are often told that they are to be like Owen,¹ or Richard Baxter,² or Charles Spurgeon.³ The fact is, we are told, that they had the same amount of time, and yet they did a tremendous amount of work, and we should strive to be as productive as they were. But I think that we have to examine those claims. The times they lived in were very different. They often had servants, for example, to deal with the household chores. They were not expected, as ministers, to actually be involved in those household chores. I don't suppose Charles Spurgeon ever changed a baby's nappy;⁴ never lighted fires; the wife was not out at work all day. So these are things that we have to take into consideration. We don't live in same times. We live in a very fast-moving society. We live in a time when, at all hours of the day, our attention is being sought for this thing or that thing.

What happens if you don't manage your time? Well, you'll find that you're setting yourself goals in the ministry that are unrealistic and unachievable, you'll never be able to meet the things

¹ John Owen (1616–1683, was an English Puritan Nonconformist church leader, theologian, and vice-chancellor of the University of Oxford. One of the most prominent theologians in England during his lifetime, Owen was a prolific author and poet, still widely read by Reformed Christians today, and is known for his writings on sin.

² Richard Baxter (1615–1691) was an English nonconformist church leader and theologian, who has been described as “the chief of English Protestant Schoolmen.”

³ Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834–1892) was an English Particular Baptist preacher, who remains highly influential among Christians of various denominations. He is known as “Prince of Preachers.”

⁴ Nappy is a British term for diaper.

that you want to do. You'll never be able to achieve those goals that you set for yourself, because you have been unrealistic in the setting of the goals. What will happen is you'll become full of guilt and frustration when those goals that you made for yourself are not realized.

2. Repossessing the Time

Well, how are we to repossess the time that Christ has given to us? I've relied heavily on Jay Adams⁵ for some of what follows.

You've got to, in the first place, recognize that you do have the time to do all that the Lord expects you to do. His expectations are reasonable. They may be hard, but they are feasible. And he has prepared work for you, knowing that we are as dust, knowing that we are weak. Conflicts of time often arise from confusing human desires with the duties that God has laid upon us. Time is repossessed by becoming an orderly man, instead of a confused or chaotic person. There may be confusion in our ministry, in our bad timekeeping, in our bad time management, and that will carry on into the congregation. You will have people who have promised to do things and never achieve them. You will have people who are forever saying to you, "I don't have the time." Repossessing the time is to be achieved by planning and by scheduling.

And one of the keys, as we consider *Time Management*, is to know when we are most efficient, and apportion the tasks that we have accordingly. You'll remember the Lord's word to Martha, "Martha, Martha," thou art cumbered with much serving, "but one thing is needful" (Luke 10:40). There are many, many things that are necessary in the Christian experience, but there's only one thing needful. And if we want to most efficiently apportion our work to the time that we have, we have to plan ahead, if we want to be effective with our time. Well, here are some suggestions for *Repossessing Your Time*.

The first is *to record*. You can't reassess without knowing where you are. You've got to set a baseline. You've got to analyze how you presently use your time by keeping a record for, say, a typical week. Just jot down what you do in the morning, afternoon, evening; jot down how long you spend on this, that, or the next thing. And then, once you have done that for a week, look at the record, and assess what you have done with your time.

Look for the times when you've done nothing useful, when you've wasted time, when you have just, as it were, scrambled about in your study on insignificant administrative tasks. Look at the wasted time. Look at the unnecessary activities. Look also at the time when you were best using your time. Was it the morning? Was it the afternoon? and so on. More productivity may not be revealing the time, if we are simply avoiding harder things. And what I mean by this is this—if we leave all the difficult things, we may have our time filled with busyness, but what about the important things? So we have to be careful that we don't fill our days with busyness. We need to seek to be doing the work.

Some people will tell you, "But I work better under pressure." But it's more likely that it's just a bad habit that's been acquired. I remember a friend who, for years, most of his ministry as I'm aware, never finished his sermons for Sunday until maybe four o'clock on Sunday morning. And he stayed up all through Saturday night, through to the early hours of Sunday morning. Friends, I think that was a bad habit that he had acquired. What is more likely is that he would go into the pulpit jaded, that he would go tired, and not fresh. So this idea that we work better under pressure may have an element of truth under it, but often it's just laziness, and an unwillingness to put our

⁵ Jay Edward Adams (1929–2020) was an American Reformed theologian and author, known for developing a counseling approach known as nouthetic counseling (from the Greek word "noutheteo", to confront or admonish).

shoulder to the wheel,⁶ as it were, to give attention to the things that are necessary.

So, we record where we are, we assess what we're doing, and then, in the light of that assessment, we have to reschedule. We have to draft up a new schedule for using time. We see what, in our old way of working, was good, what was bad, and seek to work around these things.

3. Things to Guard Against

There are certain things in this repossessing of the time, this scheduling, this assessing of our time, that we have to guard against. The first is this—*don't become a slave to the schedule*. That sometimes happens. We draft up, for example, a wonderful detailed visitation system; we've got three visits we've got to do every afternoon, or some such thing, maybe two visits every evening, and we've got it all planned out. And then someone in the congregation dies. We're suddenly thrown; we find that we are having to prepare a funeral service. These things will knock our schedule out of kilter.⁷ So we've got to have a schedule that can be flexible.

Another thing to guard against is *spending time on the phone*. Very often, you find men in their study, in the ministry, and they're hours on the phone. I would suggest that this is an inefficient way of working, and I would suggest that an email is much more efficient; unless we are on the phone to avoid becoming a recluse. Of course, there is a balance to be struck. We must use our time on the phone, but use it efficiently, and not spend an hour just chatting about something or other that doesn't actually bring us any farther forward in the obligations that we have. Use an email—you get an answer, usually fairly quickly; you can answer in a few words.

The third thing to guard against is *failing to allow your time for your family*. Don't be too busy for them; don't be annoyed at their interruptions. We've already dealt with that in a previous lecture.

Fourthly, allow yourself breaks in your schedule. Take frequent breaks. They don't need to be long, maybe five to ten minutes, but take frequent breaks. Our concentration span is not endless. We might find that an hour's reading taxes us; maybe even half an hour's straight reading of some hard topic taxes us. So take breaks in order to refresh your mind.

Again, *when you are reading, set reasonable goals*. Don't expect to read through the whole of Calvin's⁸ *Institutes*⁹ in a morning or in a couple of days. We need to ask ourselves, "How much time do I have for reading each day?" You have to ask what kind of subject matter you are reading. Some books need long, intense thought as you're reading through them. Others might be light, and you can skim through them quite quickly. So make sure that you are factoring into your schedule the kind of book that you are reading. And also, ask yourself, "Will I be taking notes in this study when I'm reading these books?" Because if we are taking notes, we're going to almost double the time that it will take us to read a chapter or so.

Again, at a practical level, *don't have a stuffy*¹⁰ *study*. Now, some men have to study where they can, and that might be in a little closet; it might be at the dining room table; it might be something that is not particular conducive to study. But if you have a study, make sure it's comfortable and well ventilated, especially when you are reading. Obviously, much of our reading will be done at the desk, but for general reading, consider having a comfortable chair nearby, where you can read

⁶ "Put your shoulder to the wheel" is an idiom meaning to work hard, apply maximum effort, and focus on a task.

⁷ "Knock out of kilter" means to be thrown out of balance, out of proper working order.

⁸ John Calvin, aka Jean Calvin (1509–1564) was a well-known French theologian, pastor, writer, and leading Reformer in Geneva during the Protestant Reformation, after whom many Reformers patterned their teachings.

⁹ *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

¹⁰ Stuffy, in this context, means lacking oxygen, stale air.

in that comfort, and this will help as you seek to implement a time schedule.
And I think I'll leave it there. Thank you.