

Chapter 1 (Time)

Keith Urban *"Ain't it funny how the best days of my life was all that wasted time."*

An infant's cry is heard by the world as a baby is born. That's where time begins for each one of us. In our youth, we may have played in the dirt or climbed a tree. Some of my teenage years were spent crying over lost love. Eventually (into my 50's), I visited my grandmother in the hospital. She was sinking fast. As the elevators opened, I was treated to a vision of the modern-day war triage. Sick people filled the rooms and hallways. On display was an ocean of humanity in its last days while nurses and doctors spent their time swimming in-between all the patients. There was not much room to work either. Yet, I could not help seeing the eyes of the sick. Many of them were old and dying. You could see the sadness on their faces. A sea of despair. Why? There was no way, in that moment, to take back all the wasted time.

As I read descriptions about the word time, I can see it so clearly. Time is many things. Yet, it's mostly described as something that is fluid, changeable, and distant. It's fluid in the fact that we are sinking in it. Time is a vast sea to which many things float. I find that time changes us constantly. Last year was not that great. My wife's cancer changed our time from holidays to hospitals. This year would be better. Then came Covid-19. Time is also seemingly distant. We had better days in the distant past. Clearly, there are better days in the distant future as well. Time is many things to many people.

Is there wasted time? Of course, I think it's a yes and no answer. Nice answer, eh? Let's face it, time at a bar could be better spent working at a food bank. However, those bar memories are usually good ones. Time spent laughing with friends is invaluable. Playing in the dirt is fun as a child. Is math homework more productive? Imagine someone working in a munition's factory. All they do is make bullets and bombs. Productive? Wasted time? Yet, at night, dinner is

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served in their home by the fruits of their labor. Military personal has fired with those very bullets and bombs (at the enemy) to keep us safe. Wasted time is very subjective.

It's all in how we use it. Use what? The time we are given. I can remember two different summers as a teenager. The first was spent swimming in the river. We were lucky that our river was small. How many days did we spend floating down the water from the dam? Laying around spread out on a small island in the sun. We hadn't a care in the world. It was summer break and life's only meaning was wrapped up in soaking wet towels. It's left me with warm feelings and happy times. It was not wasted time!

The second summer was different. Again, I walked out of the school doors in late June: it was time to head down to the river. A friend of mine was applying for a job as a busboy. Work in the summer? I tagged along for fun. While sitting in the lobby of the restaurant the manager approached me. "Are you waiting for an interview?" he queried? "Na" I replied, "I'm waiting for a friend." The manager looked me over and asked "come apply." A half an hour later we are standing outside the restaurant. I got the job and my friend did not. River floating adventures were about to change.

My time in the summer changed that year. I do believe I have worked somewhere ever since that day. I had such fond memories of swimming in the river. There were also fond memories of walking home from work in the stillness of the night. It was so warm, silent, and satisfying with a wallet full of cash. Clearly, you can see it can't you? Which one is wasted time? It's tough, isn't it? They are both times well spent making wonderful memories. Yet, Keith Urban is ringing in my head "these were the best days of my life "all that wasted time."

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I do believe in the song by Keith Urban above. What is perceived as wasted time to some is a golden treasure of memories to another. I spent over half my youth with my first wife. Some of it was terrible. Yet, within the tragedy of divorce are sprinkled a few wonderful memories. None of it was wasted time, was it? The dating, the wedding, and the birth of my boys. All along we were trying to make a go of the life we were handed. A joyous, wonderful, tragic tale of wasted time.

It's a tide of time. What? The tide changes the land. It makes us wait for it or draws us in. Somehow the moon and the ocean work together, and we are affected by the pull of the moon. The earth is forever changed by the tide while the moon watches. Our landscape is forever changed by this dance between the moon and the ocean. Does the moon notice? Do the fish notice? Does time notice? This thing called time is made to feel long, short, happy or sad. Yet, each day I pass people in this thing we call time. Their day is not my day. Does time really notice either of us? The land and sea are changing as we speak. Time passes on. Are we noticed within this thing called time? Who is noticing us? The moon? The sea? People? Is the tide shaping the earth as time shapes us?

I want to dive deep into what exactly is wasted time. Our time should be spent learning, changing, and growing. However, many of us have done very little of it. Some people never learn. How many individuals refuse to change? Did you grow as a person in the last twenty years? I hope to open our eyes into seeing time in at least three terms. Let's take a look at fluid, changeable, and distant time. What are these three words (to you) in the context of your time?

Life is fluid in regards to time. In the dictionary "fluid" means "*a substance that has no fixed shape and yields easily to external pressure.*" That's what people are. People are born and the pressures of this world begins to shape us. We are a fluid creature because were affected by

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many external pressures. Within the first-year of being a baby, people go from being coddled continuously potty trained, told “no,” and given new clothes over and over. We cry, laugh, learn, and grow. Nothing is ever the same once the first baby clothes don’t fit anymore. Parents change in time too. It begins with cooing and loving your little baby. In time, parents get tired of changing diapers and eventually driving us all over the place. We are certainly very fluid creatures from baby to adult and beyond.

Why can’t things just remain as they were? As a boy, I never considered time playing in the dirt as wasted. I loved those rainy days swishing water around in the mud with the other boys. We climbed trees and collected tadpoles. It was so cool watching those creatures change ever so slowly into frogs. Wasted time? I can still feel how it was to walk to the mall listening to Fleetwood Mac “Rumors” on cassette tape. All the time I was carrying a large cassette machine in my hand by the handle. It seems so ridiculous now that I’m listening to those songs on my tiny iPod. Yet, I have incredibly special feelings associated with those days so long ago.

I can appreciate time. It’s never that wasted to me. I loved the forest and the mud as a boy. Equally, I loved that cassette machine. There is nothing like spending hours and hours making a cassette tape full of songs. I still love music, but something seems missing just making a digital playlist. Within the fluidity of time, we change too. Our memories lap at us like a tide coming in. We are like the land being reshaped and carved into something else. Yet, the tide recedes and we are left standing in a place where memories held special meaning like making cassette tapes.

Some of those special memories (within our lifetime) are spent with others. For better or worse people are all around us. Much of our time is spent interacting within the lives of these people. They make up the memories we have. Sure, I love playing in the mud. I can see my boots

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and feel the water between my soaked toes. Those good memories are accompanied by friends. We worked together making dams and rivers in the mud. Recess was time well spent with my friends getting wet and dirty. Do I remember the teachers and parents freaking out over our clothes? Were they calling it wasted time? I can't remember. All I know is that it was the best of times in the rain with my friends. They are my wonderful memories that I cherish.

My first friend was Kenny. Who was yours? My first kiss was Wendy. Was it the first? To me, hers was. I can remember standing behind my first wife's garage late at night all by ourselves as teenagers. That moment is cemented in my heart with a kiss. Equally, I loved doing puzzles while dating my second wife. Across the unfinished puzzle came another first kiss. None of it (to me) was wasted time. Walking across the University stage. Looking at my mom while holding my first boy. Life is fluid. Friends and lovers are more than just ships passing in the night. They are our time memories. Although they have given us joy and heartache, they are my wonderfully wasted moments.

Time is indeed like an ocean. So many memorable events are bobbing along, floating within our lives. Sometimes they bump into us. Who affected you the most or the least? I remember a man who was a childhood friend. He is not that fond of me now. Yet, that man's love of science fiction and music changed me forever. My kids say that they love music and jokes directly because of their dad. I never thought I affected them that much. Yet, I did. We are fluid as people. How many people, experiences, and feelings changed us over the years? We are constantly changing and developing. Being fluid is essential. Living a fluid life is too. We need people. We need life's triumphs and hardships. They all are those things that bump into us on the ocean of time.

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What does it mean to be fluid? Is it found swimming in time? If we were honest, we are going to bump into change more than anything else. Change is a terrible word. It means she is moving on. Change means you're looking for a new job. On the flip side is hope. We feel hopeful it's time for a change. Can we say anything is a waste of time if it drives us to seek change? Hope can be found in a new life. There is nothing better than changing everything in search of hope. Time is all about embracing change.

Like sands in the hour glass so are the days of our lives. I loved that soap opera line. Isn't that what we are? A soap opera in the sea of change. It's all the hope, joy, conflict, and trials thrown together in an episode. Our lives played out for all to see.

"I can see that you are destined for big changes."

"Just accept it, change is good for the soul."

Yet, we usually hate change. My Ex left, and I was broadsided with massive change. It wasn't all that long ago that we were two young kids painting my son's first room and decorated it with toys. It could have lasted yet change was coming. On the open ocean a sailor can read the sky. "Red sky at night, sailors delight." "Red sky in the morning, sailors warning." Isn't it funny that saying works in the open prairies too? You can feel change just as well as see or smell it. How can you smell change? We can distinctly smell that fall is coming. The air of spring tingles our senses. I think that from baby to adult we are prepared and bred for change. Deep down we know we're fluid people waiting for things to change.

Through one time to the next is some sort of change. The coast of our lives is withered away over the years. We change and become almost unrecognizable. How could all those markers in our lives be wasted time? People come and people go. Each one of them has added something to us. Sometimes people claim that someone stole their life. No, they changed it. You

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can read the weather patterns from days gone by within tree lines. The lines on our face show life's changes too. Old age is just a library of recorded lines telling us where we've been and how we got there.

To be old is a unique experience. Sure, at fifty-five, I'm not that old. What is middle age? What if time could be measured? It's the distance between where we began and where we end up. Yet, there is more. It's also the middle of our road. Somewhere between who we were and what we will be. Is there more in the future? That is where distance comes in. We have changed over time. I can see into the distant past. Turn the other way and I still dream into the distant future, hoping there is more to come.

How can the past be wasted time? What's the point of having bad memories? Yes, I regret. Should I? I mean really, should I? I can remember my youth. I have the ability to walk my path. To see the ups and downs. Is it wasted time reliving those memories? They made me. Yes, I wish I could have done things differently. It's the paradox. Change one thing and all you are now could be undone. Do we really want to take that chance?

Then there is the distant future. What does it hold? Isn't it true that we can use the past to create a better future? Unfortunately, we can't really grasp that until we're in mid-life. Did you know that many of the greatest inventors and writers did their best work after mid-life? We could take all the perceived wasted time from our past and use it for good in our future. It's how humans roll. We can't see into the distant future. We can; however, dream or project it by learning from our distant past experiences.

I have plans. I have learned to love in my (slightly) old age. I now know that I love travel, music, and cooking. Could I envision that while playing in the mud or while crying over a girl all

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those years ago? Sure, I know now. With that said, I am planning ahead. Will I travel to Italy? Will I read my next book? God only knows. At thirty-three, I found myself divorced and unmade. No wife, house, or kids. Just me. I made a pact in those days. I will not live one year without doing something special. I have held true to that too. Nothing is now wasted time.

Do you believe in God? How about fate or dumb luck? What do you believe in? I can imagine that time could be taken two ways. One is to say there is no time. It's a human concept. We just live and die. How, when, and where will you happen to exist is not important. That is all we know. The other side says time exists. We are constrained within it. There is a beginning and an end. Either way, this thing called time must be held preciously.

For God, the whole idea of time is different. He allots time but God does not need time. We find ourselves within a certain amount of time. However, they say that God exists outside of that time. He can easily move a piece in history to satisfy the future. What is eternity really? It's existing before and after us in a state of forever. Did God allot us a certain amount of time? If that is true then time must not be wasted. For most people, they exist within their own time. I think the term "wasted" comes from just existing. Could it be wasted time just existing? What if we were planned and have an eternal future? What if we were made to use that time in amazing ways? Don't you want to be more than just existing?

Do we just exist as if time has no meaning? I know we worry about it. I also know that we waste it. However, waste is subjective. Being careful with the time you have is prudent. Guarding what little time we have is smart. I feel that not living life to the fullest is wasteful. People claim we should slow down and smell the roses. I for one, have tended to fill my time with as much as I can. I suppose I'm trying to grasp time by the throat to own it. Am I wasting my time trying? Time and fate seem to have their own agenda no matter what I do.

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The overarching concept in this book is using time effectively. Yet, I don't want you to miss what time really is. An ant is born and assumes a role within the collective. They could be the queen, drone, hunter, gatherer and many more important jobs. None of what they do is wasted time. The common ant lives between six months to a year. Yet, they assume their role and fulfil it. What is time to an ant? To me, time is the ability to live. A rock is a small part of something greater. No matter whether you're an ant or a human we are all a part of everyone. Time spent does mean something in the bigger picture. I'm sure the ant thinks so.

Many of us love movies about time. One of the themes in those movies is altering time. If I did not get up at 6 am but chose to set the alarm one hour later, what are the consequences? I could avoid an accident at 6:30 am. Work could fire me for being late. Another person then inadvertently gains my job. I starve while they will eat. Did any of this happen because I moved time by one hour? Did I waste an hour sleeping? The struggle is with the past and future. What have I done or not accomplished and how did any of it affect my life? Will I get out of bed and make a difference? Is getting more sleep productive, healthy, and soothing for the soul? That never enters the mind of an ant. I'm betting (to an ant) all time is productive. Yet, many of us call some amount of time, wasted.

Most people try and remain busy. My grandmother quit smoking. How? She spent a certain amount of time each day holding a pencil. Smoking was one thing. Being addicted to holding a cigarette was another. Instead of wasting time smoking, she wasted time avoiding it by replacing a cigarette with a pencil. My grandmother baked a lot. We watched a ton of late-night shows. Grandma loved bingo. She was busy as a beaver. Yet, in reality, she never built much. She did however build a nice little life. While holding her pencil, it was not wasted time.

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Imagine planning a trip to Australia. You go on-line and put money down. That afternoon you are diagnosed with cancer. You thought you had time to travel. Does the trip to Australia seem like wasted time now? Why alter your plans because of bad news? It rains on an ant while they work, doesn't it? We can adjust, change, and persevere. I think it's wasted time to retreat, backtrack, and quit living in the mist of bad news. My wife and I built that trip to Australia. Yes, she did get cancer. So, we adjusted the timeline to deal with cancer. The question all along was "do we cancel?" We decided to move it forward. To make new plans. Then, a few months later she was healed it and was time to travel. Then the darn virus covid-19 hit. The trip was bombed yet again. We have put some of the parts of the trip on credit for a year. We are not giving up. Was it wasted time trying?

Why have hope at all? Why live life to the fullest? Isn't life just working, eating, and sleeping? We experience success and tragedy along the way. That's life, isn't it? I keep coming back to my divorce. It jolted me out of that reality. I was left standing in the mirror realizing I had never truly lived. I can tell you straight up that my wife has changed due to cancer. She has picked up the pace. Why waste time existing when you can grasp time now. How certain are you of next week? Don't waste a minute. I want hope of a future to drive me. How many seconds do we own in our finite life? Since my divorce I have tried to not waste one second.

In the Bible are a few concepts like the fool, the prudent, and the sluggard. Each one treats time differently. Who are you? Is living with people a waste of time? We interact with them like a broken record. Around and round, we go laughing, loving, and crying. People will build us up and break our heart. Many of the pivotal points in our life center on the feelings we have with people. I loved playing in the mud with my friends. I hated that night my Ex told me

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goodbye. Oh, I have lived with people! Some of my time was spent being the fool, very prudent, and the sluggard. It's impossible not to appear wasting some amount of time.

Was I a fool to waste time loving? I do feel that it was prudent of me to wait five years to marry again. I needed time to heal. I think my second wife needed a fixed husband. A fool might remain damaged as they head heart-first into another relationship. I knew a guy that stayed in his parent's basement for eight years after his divorce. Another person lived their life past fifty doing little with it. Is the sluggard just a lazy bum? Maybe it's people not making an effort to heal, or an effort to try again. We have so little time. You would be a fool to not be prudent with what we have been given.

One of the reoccurring statements in my books is "people are people." Humans do tend to act consistently. Yet, one can never tell. Are people a waste of time? Of course, it's also a yes and no answer. With over seven billion people on this rock, we will encounter people. Seriously, just try and avoid anyone for along. I think it would be a waste of time trying. So, we can either fight against them or join them. Much of who we become is because of people. How did your parents, friends, and co-workers affect you? Sure, there are plenty more examples like teachers and pastors. Many of us have met them all. We are the sum of those encounters. It's never wasted time. Yet, at times, it sure felt like it.

There are; however, a few things we could avoid. I have heard about having fun in a casino. Equally, I have read about addiction. I have never rightfully gambled. I can't see the point. In one show, a guy was playing the same slot for thirteen hours straight. Wow, wasted time? Not if he was happy. The casino was happy too. We invest time in people. We invest time in things like slot machines. Are they a waste of time?

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There are those who regret living in a certain country. Canada, for me, is different. I am Canadian. Yet, within our borders are people of heritage from other countries. Why live in Canada if you're from China, America, or Ukraine? Is it a waste of time identifying as one culture within another? Do they waste any time dreaming of the fatherland? You live, here, don't you? In that same frame of mind, you are where you are. It just might be a waste of time to wish you were somewhere else?

Dreaming is cool. I have wasted many hours dreaming of being a Jedi knight. I have wondered what it would be like to be Irish. I wish I had true heritage. I'm just Canadian. It's not as cool as Australian. Sometimes I have dreamed of not marrying my Ex. How many mistakes could I have fixed? Is this sort of dreaming a waste of time? If we only have a certain amount of time to live, why waste it dreaming of different outcomes. Different scenarios? What could you do with your current time? Are you stuck in the past? Do you dream of the future?

As a side note. My mother died about three years ago. As long as I can remember she always talked about the *what if*. She hated what my father became after their divorce. A divorce that she initiated. My mom talked about being skinny and winning the lottery. I have never met someone so consumed with the past while living in the moment. One day she had dizzy spells. She went to the hospital and they told her to go home and monitor it. My mom died that night. In so many ways, she lived a wasted life of wishing, hating, and dreaming. She was never content with what she had in the moment. There were gobs of wasted time spent wishing she was somewhere else. Yes, she touched lives. She made a difference in mine. Yet, somehow it feels like wasted time. What was her defining stamp on her own life?

We need dreams. I do feel that dreams are wasted if you don't use them. Inventing yourself should involve your dreams. Didn't Colonel Sanders dream of being more than he was?

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He was around sixty-five when he created Kentucky Fried Chicken. Was it wasted time trying? Not! I love that chicken. Humans need hope, dreams, and success. Failure should drive us forward. Who wants to sit in the regrets of the past? How long is wasted time? That might depend on how long ago you gave up on your dreams.

I have been on a torrent pace of planning and living. There is no way I will go down quietly. The other day I posted about planning a trip to Italy. A friend said they too hoped to go there one day. I figure she is about sixty. Exactly when? How many more trips does she have left? I like the saying “you can’t” because really the statement is “you won’t.” It’s like people are spending their limited time waiting on others to make their dreams happen. It’s wasted time waiting for tomorrow because Jesus was right “tomorrow never comes.” Get on your dreams today.

Why waste time waiting for love? I feel it’s wasted time trying to catch love (we’ll get into that later). However, we can make a life worthy of being caught by love. It’s about character building. You have time for that. Are you working on being a better you? Is it more important to add someone to improve your life? To be right all the time and look smart? Yet, we spend so little time being ourselves and inspiring others to be great. So many people are doing anything they can to look fancier than they need to be. Being you is pretty special without adding extras.

People spend time judging us. They tend to see us by what were not and what we could be? Yet, do they encourage you as who you are? Do you spend time encouraging the person in the mirror? We have been given time. Use it wisely. You most certainly don’t want to be lying in the hospital bed dying while looking at the living as they visit you. Unfortunately, we all will die. I wish it wasn’t so. With that in mind, I repeat most sternly, we need to use time wisely. Make the most of it. Chasing dreams is ok but don’t forget life around you. Chasing relationships is ok

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but what about those within your mist? Don't spend your time looking for the next special moment. Don't spend time with people who tear you down. Instead, strive to be the best person where you are. Just maybe your death bed will be more satisfactory if you used time well.

We are going to dissect wasted time. This concept has many sides to it like a Rubik cube. I suppose I want to get philosophical about it. Philosophically speaking who are you and how do you matter? Why do we exist? I want to dialogue about wasted time. Let's debate it. Is longing for someone wasted time? Should an abused wife hope for better days in that abusive relationship? Is there wasted time in a casino, a sports game, or by getting drunk? Are dreams ridicules? What is time to you? Should we eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die? Are we just ants fulfilling a role? What if we could turn potential wasted time into productive experiences?

We still have some amount of time left so let's make the most of it. Time can be better served "serving others." Let's leave a positive stamp on their lives. We just might leave a better mark on our own lives too. People are connected whether we like it or not. I have been spending my time working on three things recently: body, mind, and soul. Reading and working out are never a waste of time. Working on the Spiritual is never wasted time either. This world has spiritual connections. If humans are sick spiritually then the earth tends to suffer as well. A sluggard that wastes time tends to be mentally and spiritually off center. Is it possible that some amount of wasted time is changing us for the worse? We need to take a good hard look at wasted time. Let's tackle it before one more second drips into the past, and the sands of time wither us away. Like Scrooge told Bob Cratchit "*You do that Bob Cratchit, before you dot another "I."*"