



Receiving the Day: Christian Practices for Opening the Gift of Time

Dorothy C. Bass

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In this spirituality of time, Dorothy Bass invites readers into a way of living in time that is alert to both contemporary pressures and rooted ancient wisdom. The celebrated editor of *Practicing Our Faith* asks hard questions about how our injurious attitude toward time has distorted our relationships with our innermost selves, with other people, with the natural world, and with God. As an alternative to the rhetoric of management and mastery, *Receiving the Day* offers a language of attention, poetry, and celebration. Bass encourages us to reevaluate our understanding of the temporal and thereby to participate fully in the Christian practice of knowing time as God's gift. Embraced in this way, time need not be wrestled with each day. Instead, time becomes the habitation of blessing.

Receiving the Day: Christian Practices for Opening the Gift of Time Details

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Sandy H says

One of the better books on Sabbath that I've read.

Chris J says

My wife read this six years ago and recommended it to me. Ms. Bass has some thoughtful things to say on our attitudes toward time, embracing the church calendar (especially the lenten season) and keeping sabbath. I can't remember another semi-academic book written on such a personal and sometimes emotional level. At one point I was nearly brought to tears while reading on my deck one particularly beautiful Sunday afternoon. I give this a three because while I would never say someone must read Receiving... it is nonetheless a fine book that deals with important themes regardless of worldview.

Tim says

Dorothy Bass's book Receiving the Day is a book of promise that delivers on at least some of its promises. It provides an encouragement to reflect on time - the day, the week (including the Sabbath) and the Christian year. Her writing is gentle and unhurried - something that is both its strength and my biggest complaint about it. Too many good ideas are hid among paragraphs of more languid prose (some might call it reflective, but I just found it more difficult to read than it needed to be). That said, certain phrases and paragraphs are well worth reading - especially to overturn ideas of time management for ideas of time as a gift from God.

Chris Schutte says

Deep reflections on the nature of time, and its importance for our spiritual lives.

Marianna says

I was looking for more concrete ideas than this book provided.

Tamara Murphy says

I admit I speed-read, browsed each chapter of this book more than took it in word for word. The title piqued my interest even though I haven't had the mental stamina to engage deeply with non-fiction this month. I liked what I read on the ancient rhythms of Sabbath and the liturgical year. None of what I read added a

whole lot to what I've already learned on the subjects and the places where the author most had my attention were the sparse paragraphs she shared the beauty of Christian time as it related to incidents of pain and healing in her personal life. I wished I could hear more of her story. Still, worth reading for those seeking a spiritual appreciation of the gift of time rather than a temporal mis-understanding of time as a curse.

Jerry says

The stewardship of time is a core discipline in living out the Christian life. At the very heart of that stewardship is to receive the gift of Sabbath.

In the midst of a frantic approach to time this book invites readers to embrace the gift of Sabbath as a path that leads to a deeper relationship with God and one another.

RECEIVING THE DAY

A Guide for Conversation, Learning, and Growth

The author writes to engage two audiences.

First, it is for those who ponder the reality of meeting the eternal God within the ordinary life. She hopes to address those who know very little about Christianity as well as provide new insights to those who have been nurtured in faith for years.

The second reason is for those whose initial interest is practical--they want help with time management. She desires these readers to see that the predicament is more complex, deeper and of greater importance than mere technique. We need to get through our days not only with greater efficiency but with greater authenticity.

The author gives many illustrations and examples on how our experience of time changes when we receive it as a gift. She urges people to make time for Sabbath. Sabbath is a time of rest, renewal, worship and family time. It is a time to enjoy the freedom God intends for all people. It is time to rest from shopping, to rest from worry and to rest from work.

The author emphasizes two Sabbath practices. The first is "receiving the day" and the second is "keeping the Sabbath."

RECEIVING THE DAY

Receiving the day begins with setting aside a part of each day for attention to God. A central question for each day is to answer the question, "Where did you meet God today?"

Bass muses about the various ways this may occur. For instance, she reflects on how we will ask someone, "how is your day?" When asked by one who really cares, we often grope for an appropriate answer.

She then relates the practice of a mother she knows who asks the same question in a different way: "As she tucks her children into bed each night, their teeth brushed and their hair still damp from the bathtub, she asks them a question: 'Where did you meet God today?' And they tell her, one by one: a teacher helped me, there was a homeless person in the park, and I saw a tree with lots of flowers in it. She tells them where she met

God, too. Before the children drop off to sleep, the stuff of this day has become the substance of their prayer."

There are numerous memorable quotes throughout the book:

"If we could comprehend what time is saying about us what would we discover? ...Our ancestors, most of them farmers, worked to the rhythms of the sun and the seasons. Our children do work that is by the round-the-clock rhythms of the World Wide Web."

"How we live in time shapes the quality of relationships with our innermost selves, with other people, with the natural world and with God."

"How can I offer attention to God and to other people in the midst of days that seem to be shredded into little fragments of time I cannot control?"

"Time is a given, and time is a gift."

"We delude ourselves into believing that if we can just get everything done, if we can only tie up all the loose ends, if we can even once get ahead of the crush, we will prove our worth and establish ourselves in safety."

"Those who can let go of the day, including its slights and its sins, enter the next day forgiven and free. Those who fear the grave as little as their bed become available for bold and creative living....to receive this day as a gift...and to receive it as a day that bears gifts, including the gift we become when we lose ourselves in faithful living."

KEEPING THE SABBATH

Bass claims that "when we keep a Sabbath holy, we are practicing, for a day, the freedom that God intends for all people...trying on a new way of life...changed in response to God's promises."

Keeping Sabbath means:

- Rest from commerce (no shopping)
- Rest from worry (refrain from paying bills, doing tax returns, making lists)
- Rest for creation (allow our love for the earth to be rekindled)
- Rest from work (restore vigor for life)

Community worship is a central part of Sabbath. Joyful worship restores us to communion with the risen Christ and our fellow members of his body, the church, is an essential part of a Christian Sabbath." Worship needs to be crafted in such a way to make plain that it is "a foretaste of the feast to come."

However, "contemporary culture militates against this...by insinuating that worship is not a very efficient use of time and by importing habits of clock bondage into a gathering where the clock has no place...the problem lies not with the service but in the distorted dispositions we bring to it."

Among the practices, Bass suggests that we leave our watches at home. "I find that doing this increases my capacity to hear the Word, to enjoy the feast, and to notice the new creation coming into being...it also eliminates my capacity to deliver an informed opinion that the preacher went on too long."

The author wrestles with issues like how one can find Sabbath when you work on Sundays, the value of the seasons and the church year, ritual, feasting and fasting.

The final paragraph makes an excellent summary of this fine book, "When we enter practices like these, we do not so much open the gift of time as find that the gift of time has been opened for us. And what we receive, we discover, is not only this gift but all the other gifts time bears as well."

My wife found this book helpful in several ways. For her, it reinforced the reality that time is a gift. Like money, once it is spent, it is gone. She said, "It forced me to think about how I spend my time."

She appreciated the examples Bass gives from both her own life and the lives of others. Our lives are enriched when we find time in our busy schedules to stop and receive and savor the gift.

I believe that the stewardship of time is a core discipline in living out the Christian life. At the very heart of that stewardship is time for Sabbath. Sabbath time is a time to receive the gift.

This book's value lies in its contribution to that end.

Jean says

This book is a gift to those of us in the world who struggle with the pressures and limits of time. Whether the reader comes from the Christian tradition or not, this tradition has some valuable insights into how to make time a friend, rather than an enemy. Regardless of our age, whether we see time as endless, as we tend to in our youth or if we have reached retirement and actually understand that time is finite. Bass expresses thoughts and ideas based both in the Jewish and Christian traditions that help us to embrace time as a gift rather than something to be managed, overcome, or feared. There are practices that help us find rest and peace, even while living within the confines of time. A worthwhile read.

Jeremy says

This book serves as a good reminder that while we live in time, we need not be slaves to it. Bass talks about the concepts of greeting the day, keeping the Sabbath, daily prayers, and the liturgical calendar as God-given tools for accurately wielding the tool that is time. It was a good book, but I would first recommend Randy Frazee's *Making Room For Life*. His book has many more practical suggestions for shaping one's life in a healthy way, whereas Bass' work speaks mostly from a conceptual standpoint.

Marci says

I enjoyed this book, but I learned a lot about one thing it discusses: the Sabbath; what was it in Biblical times, why God gave it to us, why we are to keep it holy and unto the Lord, how it has changed in Christianity, and how it is still relevant today. It got me to thinking that I am not good at all at keeping the Sabbath, sure I go to church every Sunday, I worship and serve the Lord through out my week, but I do not keep a day set aside for rest (neither Saturday or Sunday). The author is quick to note that we don't need to feel burden by the Sabbath in rules and regulations, Jesus himself said, "The Sabbath was made for man, not

man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

However, I feel like we tend to abuse this and don't allow ourselves to receive the full measure of blessing that a Sabbath's rest can have for us and more importantly what God intended for the Sabbath. Out of the Ten Commandments the longest most specific command is that of keeping the Sabbath. It tells us a few things: 1. to remember the Sabbath, 2. to keep it holy, 3. that we work 6 days, but the 7th is to be kept for the Lord, 4. no one in our house or in our employment is to work on the Sabbath, 5. that the Lord modeled the Sabbath in creation, 6. we are reminded again that the Lord blessed the Sabbath and made it holy. It also amazes me how seriously God takes this command in the old testament. Much of the reason the Lord sent Israel into bondage was because of their failure to keep this simple blessed command. In the book of Nehemiah he realized this and after re-building the walls and leaving for some time he returns to find work being done on the Sabbath this is his response, "I rebuked the nobles of Judah and said to them, "What is this wicked thing you are doing—desecrating the Sabbath day? Didn't your forefathers do the same things, so that our God brought all this calamity upon us and upon this city? Now you are stirring up more wrath against Israel by desecrating the Sabbath." (Neh. 13:17)

It got me to thinking that in many ways we aren't trained as children to keep the Sabbath, just like it had been in Israel for several generations. We don't know what a day of rest even looks like. Is it a day watching TV or playing sports all day? Is it worshipping the Lord and sitting in candle light twiddling our thumbs? This is a question that Judaism has pondered since well, probably before Nehemiah's time, but the general consensus is that any thing considered work isn't to be done from sundown of one day to sundown of the next day. Work is most commonly defined as commerce (any buying or selling), changing of the natural course of nature, and doing anything that is tiring of the mind or body. Somethings are actually encouraged on the Sabbath in Judaism tradition: light exercise (like walking), enjoy the fruit of the marriage bed :), games and fun as a family, fellowship with others, and worship of God. Still, the Sabbath isn't easy to keep.

Just today I tried to keep the Sabbath as a day of total rest, yet two things kept nagging at me, first all the work around me that needed to be done, and second that straying from my normal routine to rest isn't at all in my nature. I felt lazy or unproductive not being able to do my normal daily routine of work. One quote in the book, really struck me, "Show me a person that can't get their work done in six days and I will show you a person that can't get their work done in seven." It is true, it must be a priority and something that is intentionally set aside to the Lord. Also, the author noted that it is a common Jewish thought that the Sabbath is one of God's ways of reminding us to hand our burdens to the Lord; that the one day we cease to work the work of nature and of the Lord is taking our place. Fields still grow, rain still comes, the Lord never slumber or sleeps and in that we must place our trust and be humble enough to lay down the tools of our trade in faith of a God who works for us. What an encouraging promise!

The author closes her discussion on the Sabbath with these words, "Beyond the weekly refreshment it provides, this kind of time also nourishes an alternative vision of how things could be. It sows seeds of resistance to the unjust arrangements that deny freedom both to those who must work without respite and to those who chose to do so. It lets us see that things could be otherwise than they are. Just as society challenges Sabbath, so Sabbath challenges society." I had never thought of the benefits that the Sabbath brings to all in our society. All are even somewhat effected by it, even if they don't fully observe it.

So, here is to another week of work, another Sabbath to enjoy and to practice resting in the fullness of the Lord's blessings and promises!

Katie says

I would give this book 3 1/2 stars. Some chapters I loved(!!!), and some chapters I was not too enthusiastic about... like the chapters about the seasons and the years. Nevertheless I am so glad I read it, and I hope to start putting observing the sabbath into practice as soon as possible. :)

Susan Sevier says

To prepare for the work and the new year ahead, I spent my vacation reading a book recommended to me over a year ago — Receiving the Day by Dorothy C. Bass. I could not have chosen a more wonderful book to read as I try to wrap my brain about my post-surgery life and thereceivingtheday opportunities that lay before me.

The book is a wonderful reminder about the gift of time and, to put it bluntly, the many ways in which we misunderstand that gift and squander it. Oh yes, and some ways we might be able to change that, at least in our own lives. If you are interested in these questions, you should read it yourself...

To read the rest of my reflection on this book, click here: <http://www.sevierlybaptist.com/2013/1...>

Hope says

Bass challenges us to stop rushing and to rediscover that time is a gift to be savored. An excellent book.

Mike says

Very thought-provoking book. I have found in my own life that when I pause from the hectic pace of life, that I am at peace and actually more productive. This book reminded me to pause more often.
