

1) Common to many successful undertakings is one important factor:

- It's essential in how stand-up comics pull off the punch lines of their jokes
- In how advertisers grab market share for new products
- In how generals win victories, and athletes make great plays
- It's critical in how therapists foster breakthroughs for their patients
- And how educators lead students into teachable moments

The common element? You guessed it: A SENSE OF TIMING.

Timing isn't EVERYTHING—you've gotta know WHAT you're DOING.

But achieving the result you're after often depends on knowing just WHEN to try.

2) *The hour has come*, says Jesus, today.

And, having tracked his moves thus far in the Gospel of John, I'm thinking: *About time!*

Because, up to now, the focus of his behavior has seemed curiously indecisive.

He's had several clear chances to make a major difference, and each time He's let them pass.

- The wine runs out at a wedding feast in Cana.
His mother nudges Him: *Do something! Fix it!*
He puts her off: *Woman, my hour has not yet come.*
He then appears to reconsider—arranges for the wine—but covers his tracks—only his disciples and the servants see what He's done.
Missed Opportunity, Number One.
- A festival approaches, His brothers urge Him: *Go and show your stuff!*
I won't, He says: *My time has not yet fully come!*
Mid-festival, however, he DOES show up—incognito at first.
Then— suddenly—He seizes center stage—starts teaching—raises a ruckus—
but leaves folks guessing as to who He is—Missed Opportunity, Number Two.
- Refusing to condemn, much less to stone a woman caught in compromising circumstances, Jesus veers off on a seeming tangent—staking a claim as “The Light of the World”—Pharisees, not surprisingly, push back—He pushes back against THEIR push back.
Tensions escalate—but nothing happens.
Missed Opportunity, Number Three—because, in His view, “His hour has not yet come.”
Come on, Jesus! I want to tell Him, *Time's a wasting—make Your move!*
Perhaps He heard me—He just did—*The hour HAS COME!* He says.

3) Here's the question, though: If all those other “hours” weren't the right time, why is THIS one?

The answer is clear, but it's VERY confusing: Some Greeks show up—

and they ask Philip and Andrew if they can see Jesus.

In the grand scheme of things, on a significance scale, this would seem to rank at the bottom. In the time since Jesus passed on the LAST chance to make the most of the moment:

- He's brought sight to a man born blind—and sparked yet another fruitless controversy.
- He's called forth Lazarus from the tomb—and driven the religious establishment crazy.
- He's been greeted by a crowd waving palm branches as he enters Jerusalem.

All these, taken together, finally catalyze a plot to kill Him—THAT, at least, should force His hand!

But NO, it's just Greeks asking to see Him—using Philip and Andrew as messengers.

Well, this much, at least, is evident, Jesus will NOT be moved by threats.

In response to an appeal for connection with Him, He makes a deliberate choice.

And the choice He makes is to offer Himself—not just to these Greeks—but to the whole world.

But could this be just an impulse move—a spontaneous expression of human compassion?

Unlikely! The Gospel writer's narrative implies it's a deliberate, calculated, well-timed call.

The sense of timing Jesus exhibits certainly isn't mine.

But that may call MY sense of timing into question more than it does HIS—Why so?

4) Let's rewind the story back to its start:

Philip and Andrew are among Jesus's first disciples—invited to follow by “coming and seeing.”

Having done so, Andrew and Philip then make connections with Peter and Nathaniel—friends finding friends—a very good thing—as far as it goes.

Yet Jesus has more in mind than simply cementing connections among close companions.

He has His eye set on a far wider circle; but He's stuck, for the moment, with who He's got—fledgling disciples, with lots yet to learn about seeing beyond themselves—lots still to learn about taking risks—about facing resistance.

But, bless his heart, Philip makes a tentative first try when he sets about to recruit Nathaniel—

- *We've found the One of whom Moses and the prophets speak*, he says to Nat.
- *Can any good thing come from NAZARETH?* Nat snorts.
- Undeterred, Philip responds: *Come and see.* And Nathaniel DOES.

5) Clearly, there's discipleship material worth cultivating here, so, not long after,

when Jesus is accosted by a hungry crowd, he enlists the services of Philip and Andrew—to assess the situation, to scope out available resources (just a few loaves and fish), and to distribute fish and bread abundant to thousands of people—important work, indeed.

Because IF—after being multiplied—the food just SAT there, it wouldn't feed a soul, would it?

6) Philip and Andrew—these two are making progress—but time is short.

And now, late in the game—a cross on the horizon, getting closer by the day—all at once—seemingly from nowhere—here come some Greeks.

Will this teacher and wonderworker share His wisdom, His healing, His God-connection with fellow Jews only—or would He, will He invite others into His connection?

The Greeks want to know—and so they go—not to Jesus—but to Philip and Andrew.

Not surprising, really—and not just because, as disciples, they surely have an inside track.

Philip and Andrew have Greek-rooted names.

And Philip comes from Bethsaida in Galilee—a place with a Greek population.

These Greeks see possible connections with those who ARE connected

to the One with whom they want to BE connected:

Philip, Andrew, you have come and seen Jesus; can YOU help US come and see Him too?

And Jesus says: *Now! At last, my disciples are starting to get this Community Connecting thing!*

The HOUR has COME for the Son of Man to be glorified.

7) GLORIFIED—meaning just about the opposite of what GLORY often seems to mean—such as:

- What so surrounds a person, that in his shadow, all others pale.

A “glory zero sum game” in which—if Jesus has glory—no one else can.

- Or, GLORY—that which precludes, prevents, protects from risk, vulnerability, suffering, loss.

Glory as a shield, making all deep connections with others impervious to anguish.

NO, the counterintuitive, costly glory Jesus says is that for which His hour has come—

A glory SO counterintuitive that a Voice from Heaven breaks in to underscore it—

THIS glory is the glory of a community whose members are deeply connected to one another, because this community is deeply connected to Jesus.

Making that connection really stick will cost Jesus a lot—a crucifixion, in fact.

But, in this lifting up that Jesus will undertake,

the world-ruling forces of division will be driven out,

and all in the world will be drawn to Him.

This strategy of making connection through “coming and seeing”

has been the modus operandi of Jesus from the outset.

Now, at last, as Philip and Andrew connect with those outside their own circle.

As they foster a connection for those Greeks with Jesus—

the hour HAS come for Him to be glorified;

because, as He will tell his disciples in the supper they will shortly share:

Greater works than those I've done, are works you now will do.

Good teacher that Jesus is, He knows a teachable moment when He sees one.

Teachable moments don't get any better than when students begin—

not just to track with what the teacher THINKS, but to follow what the teacher LEADS.

8) Timing—for most of us, a sense of timing comes neither naturally nor easily, no matter what the undertaking we engage.

Even practiced professionals can't always count on getting their timing right.

There are always all sorts of factors beyond our knowledge, beyond our control.

If that is the case for comedians, marketers, generals, athletes, therapists, and teachers,
how much more it is for those of us for whom following Jesus
is both a deep-down desire, and a never-ending work in progress?
We learn—by turns—watching, listening, trying, missing, discerning, trying yet again.
One thing, for sure, a good sense of timing is not a skill we can develop all by ourselves.
We all need each other to figure out how best to appropriate and strategically deploy
the glory of the One to whom we all are drawn.
It's well to remind ourselves, again and again,
that getting our discipleship timing just right is not a one-time, now-or-never call.
But sometimes things do seem to come together with relative clarity.
Like the march in DC this coming Saturday,
precipitated by high school students—as unlikely a set of change agents
as a group of Greeks who precipitate unexpected moves from Philip and Andrew—
moves that, in turn, provoke this response from Jesus: *The hour has come.*
A march in DC—taking place one day before we reenact here, with our words and our bodies,
a palm waving march—one that said back then, and says right now
that The Powers That Be are NOT the Powers That HAVE To Be.
None of these marches were then, are now, or will be any time soon
a “fix,” either instant or decisive.
But in cases such as then—and now—they are occasions, fit and necessary,
to say, by word and action: *Come what may—cost what it will—The hour has come.*