

THE GIFT OF TIME

Not long ago at my church, a visiting priest shared a poem I hadn't heard before, and it really stuck with me. It's called "Time's Paces," written by Reverend Henry Twells and carved into the clock at Chester Cathedral in England. The poem beautifully gets at how time seems to change speed as we move through different stages of life.

*"When as a child I laughed and wept,
Time crept.*

*When as a youth I dreamed and talked,
Time walked.*

*When I became a full-grown man,
Time ran.*

*And when older still I daily grew,
Time flew.*

*Soon I shall find, in passing on,
Time gone."*

Those words stuck with me, not because the idea was new, but because it names something we all feel but rarely pause to recognize: our relationship with time changes, and that shift influences how we live, plan, and invest.

In our work at Sigma, we talk constantly about time horizons. One of the first questions I often ask new clients is "When will you need this money?". The answer to that question drives nearly every other investment decision.

Defining the time until retirement, time until college, and time until large purchases is paramount to our planning. When thinking about investments, our conversations are typically around long-term versus short-term goals, staying steady or reacting to the moment, planning for retirement or figuring out the best way to pay for college. But the truth is, time horizons aren't just about money, they are personal. They reflect where we are in life and what matters most to us. Our clients ask us, "How long do I need to work?" "At what time can we afford to take our dream vacation?" "Am I at risk of outliving my portfolio?" Time horizons represent what we hope for in the future or worry about losing too soon.

When someone tells me they're nervous about their investments, they usually are concerned that their money isn't correctly matched up to their time horizon. It's often easy to think of your portfolio as a single number. However, in reality it can work much better if you view it as a series of buckets. Money needed in the next couple of years should be stable. Money needed a little farther out can be invested conservatively. Money intended for longer-term can be invested for growth. When you view it this way, a market dip in the longer-term bucket shouldn't be anxiety inducing, knowing you have the time to wait it out.

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In financial planning, we often remind clients that true long-term success isn't about reacting to every market swing. It's about keeping perspective, staying disciplined, and remembering what their money is for in the bigger picture. The same lesson applies in life: when we realize time speeds up and slows down (creeps, walks, runs, then flies) we make different choices, set our priorities, and show up more fully for those who matter.

This past year, many of us have felt the passage of time more sharply. We've seen kids grow up faster than we imagined, welcomed new babies into our families and communities, and said goodbye to loved ones often before we were ready. The juxtaposition is striking, new life begins as others leave, and nothing brings home the fleeting nature of time quite like that.

Time is our most precious resource. As we approach the holiday season which, let's be honest, can fly by unless we're intentional, it's worth remembering that the most meaningful thing we can give to those we love isn't something bought or wrapped. It's our presence, our attention and our time.

As the year winds down, I hope each of us can take a moment to ask ourselves: Am I spending my time on what matters most to me? And if the answer isn't yes, the good news is that right now is a chance to do things differently. After all, as the priest at church pointed out, time may fly but we're still the ones who get to decide how we use the hours we have.

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