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Time-out

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times."

Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*

Time Out was first published as a listings' magazine in London in 1968. Since then, it has expanded into 333 cities and 59 countries worldwide. Its concept was simple – gather together in one publication all the "time-out" opportunities for people in a city, from theatres to cinemas, art-galleries to concerts, free events to expensive gigs, large venues to small outlets, city-centre to local community. The list is endless, for the availability to have "time-out" was more extensive than anyone could have imagined.

In 1999, Britney Spears launched a first "video album" entitled *Time Out with Britney Spears.* I'm not sure time-out with Britney would be my first choice for relaxation, though many will take a different view. But today I'm pondering the concept of "time-out", however it's used.

"Time-out" is common in many sports, when the umpire or referee (or even the team-coach, on occasions) calls for a break in the play. It's the universal signal of one hand crossed over the fingertips of the other hand to make a T-shape – time-out for an injury, consultation, water-break, or the like. It's a time to take stock, to sort things out, to prepare …

In the game of life, we all need a time-out. Jesus in his wilderness prayer-time is a good example. Some time for reflective, spiritual R&R … much needed, it seems. But it's not just about prayer, and it isn't only about religion. It's about switching off, making space, letting go of anxieties, relaxing. It doesn't have to be a place or an activity, an event or a planned time. "It's a head thing," someone once said. I like that …

So, what's your time-out, or where is the go-to place in your mind – or your body or your soul – for the R&R you need? Perhaps you'll find it in a magazine – because Britney Spears isn't available! But surely there is *something* that can make the time-out worthwhile for you.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, in a lecture to college students in 1837, said: "This time, like all times, is a very good one, if we but know what to do with it." If you know what to do with this time that's your time-out, I'm sure it will be a very good time indeed.

A prayer for today

If "there's a time for everything" as the writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes tells us, help me make sure that in the midst of all these times, there is time for me. Amen

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