

A Time to Keep

Theology, Mortality, and the Shape of a Human Life

By Ephraim Radner

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"Ephraim Radner is one of the most profound and creative theologians of our day. *In A Time to Keep* he examines some fundamental questions that lie at the root of how we understand ourselves as human beings. Every careful reader will come away from this book with significant new insights as to where the human project sits in the modern age."

—**Gary A. Anderson**, Hesburgh Professor of Catholic Theology, Notre Dame

"*A Time to Keep* is a dizzyingly learned biblical and natural theology of human existence in which the mystery of humanity reveals the scriptural figure of Christ. We have forgotten that we will die, forgotten that our days are given in, and limited by, a context of divine generosity, generation, and death. In the cacophony of debates over the beginning and end of life, over marriage and sexuality, over the very future of humanity, Radner calls us to the patient discipline of numbering our days."

—**Matt Jenson**, Associate Professor of Theology, Torrey Honors Institute, Biola University

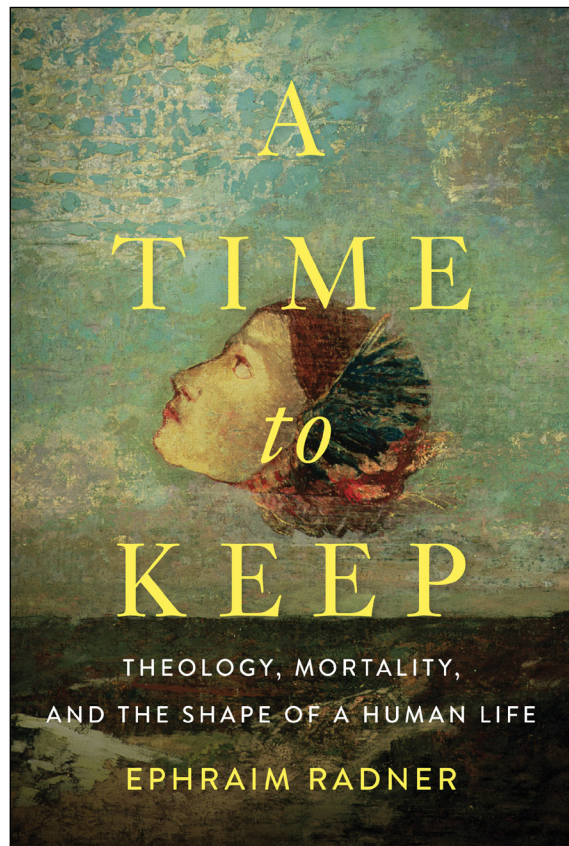
"This book is, among other things, one of the richest and most compelling Christian theologies of human sexuality to appear in decades. It should be ranked alongside works by Karl Barth and St. John Paul II as an indispensable touchstone for ongoing Christian reflection on the meaning of our embodied, procreative, and variously fruitful vocations as creatures of God."

—**Wesley Hill**, Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies, Trinity School for Ministry

The miracle of birth and the mystery of death mark human life. Mortality, like a dark specter, looms over all that lies in between. Human character, behavior, aims, and community are all inescapably shaped by this certainty of human ends. Mortality, like an unwanted guest, intrudes, becoming a burden and a constant struggle. Mortality, like a thief who steals, even threatens the ability to live life rightly. Life is short. Death is certain. Mortality, at all costs, should be resisted or transcended.

In *A Time to Keep* Ephraim Radner revalues mortality, reclaiming it as God's own. Mortality should not be resisted but received. Radner reveals mortality's true nature as a gift, God's gift, and thus reveals that the many limitations that mortality imposes should be celebrated. Radner demonstrates how faithfulness—and not resignation, escape, denial, redefinition, or excess—is the proper response to the gift of humanity's temporal limitation. To live rightly is to recognize and then willingly accept life's limitations.

In chapters on sex and sexuality, singleness and family, education and vocation, and a panoply of end of life issues, *A Time to Keep* plumbs the depths of the secular imagination, uncovering the constant struggle with human finitude in its myriad forms. Radner shows that by wrongly positioning creaturely mortality, these parts of human experience have received an inadequate reckoning. *A Time to Keep* retrieves the most basic confession of the Christian faith, that life is God's, which Radner offers as grace, as the basis for a Christian understanding of human existence bound by its origin and telos. The possibility and purpose of what comes between birth and death is ordered by the pattern of Scripture, but is performed faithfully only in obedience to the limits that bind it.



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Ephraim Radner is Professor of Historical Theology at Wycliffe College at the University of Toronto. His books include *A Brutal Unity: The Spiritual Politics of the Christian Church*, *The End of the Church: A Pneumatology of Christian Division in the West*, and *Hope among the Fragments: The Broken Church and Its Engagement of Scripture*. He lives in Toronto, Ontario.

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