

# Speak into the Moment

## Kairos Moments & the Word does the Work

### Jarred Awake

I was having a dream Sunday night about normal life. We were driving in our minivan and talking about the kids, things that we want to do, and teaching Eden how to swim. We were planning out our week, the next season of life, and just, well, living. In my dream, out of nowhere, there was a knee-high boulder in the road. By the time that I saw it, it was too late. We hit it full speed and I was, quite literally, jarred awake.

Now, thankfully Eden already knows how to swim and I am pretty sure there are no boulders in Cape May County unless you buy one for your landscaping, but when I woke up I sat down and started writing. Why? Because this dream is a perfect illustration of discipleship.

There are two types of 'time' in the Greek New Testament - *chronos* and *kairos*. Chronos time is your everyday marching and ticking of the clock. Kairos time is time as an event. We see this in Mark 1:15 where Jesus says, "The time (kairos) has come. The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news of the Gospel." A kairos moment can be disruptive, celebratory, exciting, or terrible. It is "time" as something that happened or is now happening - a fight, a death, a comeback win in a soccer game, the birth of a child, or a car accident. If driving around in your van and discussing life is chronos time, then the car accident that jars you out of your rhythm of life is kairos time.

In terms of discipleship we see a very clear parallel here. 'Chronos Discipleship' is embodied in predictable patterns. Predictable patterns keep marching on. They are part of your life, so much so, that you are passing them along without really thinking much about it. My kids know, for example, that when they stumble out of their bedrooms around 7am Gina and I are sitting at the kitchen table. Gina will have her ESV Study Bible, a cup of coffee, a journal, and a Revolve pen. Similarly, I will be there with a cup of coffee, my ESV Journaling Bible, and my laptop because I tend to pray in a digital journal and make scriptural notes in the margin of my Bible. This is Chronos Discipleship. It is the day in and day out rhythms of grace.

'Kairos Discipleship' is like that car accident. It jars you out of your rhythm of life and causes you to stop. Kairos Discipleship doesn't focus on predictable patterns but on moments and events. These events could be good or bad. Some of them are far more invasive than others (like being diagnosed with cancer). A kairos moment like that stops you in your tracks and causes you to reevaluate every part of your life. Other kairos moments are far more subtle. They should be a pause for discipleship and spiritual reflection, but they drift past until it is too late. As an example of that kind of kairos moment, it could be your child's first performance, a high school graduation, or an anniversary. Those should be moments to pause, reflect, thank the Lord for his faithfulness, and process, but instead we tend to treat them like any other day.

How do you know you are in a kairos moment? Lots of ways. Sometimes they can be opportunities for reflection because they will never come again (birth, wedding, etc). Other times they are markers to pause and thank God, reflect, and be thankful (like the New Year celebration or Thanksgiving). Sometimes you are jarred into a kairos moment because you come face to face with your sin in a terrible way. Other times you know that you are entering into a kairos moment because you have a disproportionate response of emotion to something that just happened to you (like getting in a fist fight at your kid's soccer game). All of these - the good, the bad, and the ridiculous - are discipleship moments.

Predictable patterns are discipleship through chronos time, but kairos moments call for something else. How do we grow as disciples and disciple others during kairos moments?

## Enter into the Kairos Moment

I first learned about kairos moments from Mike Breen in his book "Building a Discipleship Culture." Mike calls this the learning circle - discipleship in the midst of kairos moments.

The Learning Circle is centered on hearing from God in the midst of a kairos moment. The tool helps you to think introspectively and prayerfully about your kairos moment to hear from God and obey what he is trying to show you. The goal of this simple tool is to repent and believe the good news, to walk out the good works that God has for you to do (Ephesians 2:8-10), to put your faith to action (James 1:22), or to be like the wise man who built his house upon a rock (Matthew 7:24-27).

Imagine you are walking through life following a path. The path is symbolized by the arrow. Then you have an encounter with God. For example, you hear a sermon, you read a scripture, you find yourself in a challenging set of circumstances, or a friend challenges you. Encounters with God come in a variety of ways. God is at work all around us all the time, but we don't always see it. When we recognize that God is at work, that is an encounter with God (a kairos moment, marked by the x on the line). This is a moment when "the Kingdom of God is near." At this point in time, you can ignore it and keep going like nothing ever happened (take the straight line), or you can "repent" and "believe," and work through the circle. Put another way, you can "hear" and "obey" what God wants to say to you in that moment. Growth as a disciple is not very likely unless we learn to recognize and reorient our lives when we have kairos moments.

You might be thinking that the word for repent seems too strong. After all, what do I need to repent of on my wedding day? I'm not even married yet! The Greek word for repent is metanoia. It can also be translated turn or reorient. A Kairos is an invitation to stop and reorient ourselves to what God is doing. That could be to reorient our selfish heart to be thankful and reflect on his goodness and grace!

A classic example of a kairos moment in the Bible is when Moses stumbles upon the burning bush. In that moment, the presence of God is tangible. Moses could run away, but instead he

draws near, and in his drawing near he hears words from God that change the trajectory of his life and, indeed, all of history.

As a disciple, you have kairos moments all the time. When they come up, you need to learn to enter into them with a thoughtful and prayerful heart. I ask myself questions like, “What happened? What am I feeling? Why am I feeling this way? What is God trying to say to me?” When your child, spouse, or disciple is struggling or celebrating, you need to naturally walk them through this same process.

So here you are, sitting at the kitchen table with your teenager who just came in and asked you a question about the Lord or about life. What do you do?

## Let the Word do the Work

Isaiah 55:6-11 says:

*6 Seek the Lord while you can find him.*

*Call on him now while he is near.*

*7 Let the wicked change their ways  
and banish the very thought of doing wrong.*

*Let them turn to the Lord that he may have mercy on them.*

*Yes, turn to our God, for he will forgive generously.*

*8 “My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the Lord.*

*“And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine.*

*9 For just as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so my ways are higher than your ways  
and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.*

*10 “The rain and snow come down from the heavens  
and stay on the ground to water the earth.*

*They cause the grain to grow,  
producing seed for the farmer  
and bread for the hungry.*

*11 It is the same with my word.*

*I send it out, and it always produces fruit.*

*It will accomplish all I want it to,*

*and it will prosper everywhere I send it.*

In Isaiah 55 we see a kairos moment. The Lord is near (v6) and now is the opportunity to seek him and find him. In response to seeking and seeing him there will be a call to repent and believe (v7) - to hear from him and act in obedience.

Pay close attention to how God works. He doesn't work the way that you think he tends to work. He doesn't work primarily through good advice or having all the right answers. On the contrary,

the thoughts of man are very much unlike the thoughts of God. His thoughts are massively above and beyond our thoughts. His thoughts hold within them the global goal of his glory spread from sea to shining sea. His thoughts are entirely God-centered with man as a wonderful beneficiary. Our thoughts are often selfish and horizontal.

Isaiah 55 shows us that God works through his Word. We are fond of reflecting on Isaiah 55 and reminding people that God's Word never returns void. Here in the NLT it says that God's Word always accomplishes that which he wants it to accomplish, but look at the process by which God does this work, which Isaiah compares to precipitation.

Snow comes down, as does the rain, and waters the earth. The saturated ground receives this much needed precipitation, and as the snow melts and rivers are swollen from winter's thaw, God uses that moisture to begin the growing process. Seedlings begin to grow and flourish under the sun's rays. Eventually, they sprout and grow tall until harvest time. The farmer gathers the grain, threshes it, saves seed for next year's harvest, and grinds what remains into flour so that he can make bread. As he pulls that fresh loaf of bread from the stone oven, he feeds his hungry family, and anyone else who gathers at his table.

Do you know how long that process takes from beginning to end? In Israel, we are talking about six to nine months. There is a season for sowing, a season for watering, a season for growing, a season for harvesting, a season for threshing, and a season for eating. It takes time. It doesn't happen immediately. It isn't overnight unless you come into the story at just the right time.

So it is with the word of God. The Word of God is heard. It ruminates. It saturates. It grows. Eventually it is ready for harvest. But it is the Word that does the work by the Spirit of God - the Spirit who was sent to teach, convict, illuminate, and to help us in this life. The work of God doesn't happen overnight, and it often doesn't unfold as we think that it would, but it always is accomplished in accordance with God's desires and will. His plans are never thwarted and his Word always achieves HIS desired results.

When you sit at that table to encourage, challenge, or disciple someone, when you enter into that kairos moment, you don't need expert answers - you need the Word. The Word of God has always been used throughout the Scripture to create life, to maintain life, to bring order to chaos, and even to unmake God's enemies in the end. The Word uniquely, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, lays us bare before God and ourselves because, *"For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account (Hebrews 4:12-13)."* So, when we encounter the Word of God, it cuts to the heart of the issue and speaks the truth we need to hear into our situation.

Let me give you an example. Someone comes to me and says, "I want to divorce my wife."

I say to him, "Why?"

He says, "I just don't love her anymore. Nobody had an affair. I just don't want to be with her."

Now, at this point in time I could say, "No you aren't. Christians shouldn't do that." The problem with that approach is that if he follows through on my advice he won't be doing it out of a conviction of repenting and believing what the Scripture says or what God told him to do. Instead, he will be doing what Pastor Bill and Christianity told him to do. Instead of doing that, this is what I do. I say, "Okay. Here is what we are going to do. I am going to give you a few passages of Scripture to read this week. As you read each passage, I want you to write down what this passage teaches about God, what it teaches about you, what it teaches about marriage, and what you need to do to obey Jesus regardless of the consequences. Let's debrief in a week."

A week later we call and I ask what the Lord showed him that he needs to do regardless of the consequences because, after all, disciples are people who are obeying Jesus and keeping his commandments (according to the Great Commission). He says to me, "Well, I know what I need to do but I don't like it."

At that point in time we are in a fantastic place. The Word has done the work. God has convicted him. It is no longer Bill giving advice, but the Spirit giving commands. We are at a crossroad of obedience and disobedience. If the person at hand is a true believer, and has given the Spirit bandwidth to engage with his soul, the hound of heaven will chase him down.

This process of speaking the Word into the moment is how I do my counseling, my coaching, and my discipling. I let the Word do the work because that is - quite honestly - what I have to give by the Spirit of God. As a disciple-maker, I haven't acted as an expert, but as a shepherd. I lead to the Word, I point to the Word, I give tips on how to consume the Word, but I don't try to be a replacement for the Word. If I can teach someone to value the Word, and how to hear and obey on their own (and in community with others), that is the best thing that I could do.

## Some Practical Advice

So to summarize up until this point, discipleship happens both in the day to day predictable patterns and rhythms of life as well as in those unique moments when God is near. Those moments can be anything from celebrating Thanksgiving dinner together as a family to talking your young adult through a break up with his girlfriend. In those moments, when our hearts are tender and vertically focused on the Lord, we can point to the Word and draw near to God as he draws near to us. Like Moses drawing closer to the burning bush in that very special kairos moment, we can draw near to God to hear from him and obey his prompts.

If you want to learn how to grow in "Kairos Discipleship," here are some tips.

**First, have a simple method of engaging the Word.** Last week we talked with you about the Discovery Bible Study, which is one such method, but it isn't the only one. If there is another simple, reproducible method that you prefer, that is fine, but make sure it is something that you

can sit down and do in a moment's notice without a table full of commentaries, scholarly journals, and podcasts. If you can't engage the word in a coffee shop on the back of a napkin, chances are your methods are too bloated.

**Second, know the Word inside and out, and have trusted leaders on speedial who you can call for direction.** After decades of reading the Word devotionally as well as academically, I have a fairly good handle of the Bible. I am still learning and growing each year, but I have enough of a background that I can run through the Scriptures like a card catalog and think of narratives, poems, and wisdom literature that speak to a variety of circumstances and questions. This only happens after years of reading the Scripture.

I strongly encourage you to have a habit of Bible reading in two ways - slowly and pensively as well as quickly with broad brush strokes. There is great benefit in both slowing down to study a paragraph as well as reading or listening to five chapters at a time. You will never have a strong grasp of the entirety of Scripture if you only read a paragraph a day, but you will also never have depth of understanding if you are constantly reading the Bible enmasse as you would read a magazine. You need to do both.

In addition to this, please note that this is what your elders are here for (as well as DG leaders, parents, and trusted spiritual mentors). Don't just google for answers. If you want some passages that relate to marriage, simply text us and we would be glad to help.

**Third, take comfort in knowing that you don't need to have all the answers. Just let the Word do the work.** A good example of this is looking at Genesis 1, the Bible's description of the creation account. You may be faced with a question from a family member or friend about creation and evolution and what the Bible has to say about all that. In those moments, you don't need to feel the immense pressure to debunk every scientific opinion and view. If you are able to have that conversation, great, but most people cannot. What you can do, however, is this: Read Genesis 1 together and simply ask, "If this WERE true, what would it teach about God's character?" If the person with whom you're reading responds that they don't think it is true, all you need to remember is that you are not God's defense attorney. He does the work by his Spirit and with his Word. Simply point them back to the text, "I didn't ask you if you think it is true. It is meant to be read as if it were true, so, if it were true, what would it teach about God's character?" Have confidence that God will use his Word, as he promises, to accomplish his purposes. You don't need to know everything. Point people back to the Word. After all, "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence (2 Peter 1:3)" and he has revealed this knowledge to us in his Word by his Spirit.

**Finally, don't press the issue.** When we want someone to learn something or to change, it is all too easy to become a master manipulator, but that rarely works. Once someone has encountered the truth, it is okay to remind them and point back to it, but it is a far better use of your time to pray for the Spirit's conviction than to twist someone's arm. You can't convince them, but you can point them in the right direction. Think of it through a lens of parenting.

Parenting is not (regardless of what your friend's social media post suggests) about correcting your child one time and then having them obey you forever. On the contrary, parenting is like herding cats a little at a time down the lane. Discipleship is the same. Change is incremental. God doesn't microwave sanctification. He uses life, circumstances, pain, suffering, wisdom, and the Word, by the powerful working of the Spirit, to slowly make us more like Christ. It's okay if that one conversation you had didn't seem to do anything. The Word never returns void. Sometimes it takes from winter to harvest to see a change, but God always accomplishes what he sets out to do, but make sure to include the Word in those conversations!

## Conclusion

Throughout your days you will have discipleship moments that seem to interrupt life. They might be a child's question about the rainbow in the sky or a co-worker breaking down in tears over a lunch break. When those opportunities come, we must seize the chance to speak the Word into the moment in a natural way. We don't need to twist their arm. We don't need to press for a decision. We can trust the process. The Word never returns void. But, rather than commiserating over a brew with a friend who is struggling, or telling your child to stop asking questions, we need to speak truth into those moments and allow God to work.

See the moment. Seize the moment. Speak the Word into the moment.

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## Discussion Questions:

1. Do you feel like you have a relatively strong handle on the Word of God so that you would know where to go if someone had a question about something? If you do not, we encourage you to download the ReadScripture Bible App and start working through it. This app has overview videos for each book of the Bible from the Bible Project embedded into the daily Bible reading so that you can grow in your overall understanding of the Word.
2. Can you think back to a recent kairos moment that you missed with your family, friends, or co-workers? Without beating yourself up, what might you have done differently?
3. Do you know someone who is in the midst of a kairos moment right now? When will you sit down with them to pray and look at the Word?