

Christian Time Management (From Newsletter, February 1, 2021)

For most of my life, my thinking about time management has centered on being disciplined, efficient, and balanced. I still believe these are important, but I no longer think they are the most important. I now definitely believe a person could do well in these aspects but still fail to be truly Christian in regard to time. I'm pretty sure I have done just that.

Greek words can help us here, although I'm going to oversimplify. *Chronos* generally has to do with a point or span of time, while *kairos* sometimes refers to a decisive time, as in an opportunity that God gives. Thus we are told to make the most of every *kairos* (Colossians 4:5), redeem the *kairos* (Ephesians 5:16), and to do good to all people as we have *kairos* (Galatians 6:10). Translating the word as "opportunity" captures the idea of the word in these passages, if we recognize that those opportunities are not mere chance but instead come from God.

So, for most of my life, I have thought I needed a *chronometer*, which is an instrument for measuring time, especially one that will do so accurately in spite of motion or other variations. I now realize I have a great need for a *kairometer* (kai ROM e ter), which is something I just made up but would love to have to help me see when God is giving me an opportunity. I tend to focus so much on things that can be measured with a *chronometer* that I can miss opportunities that I only wish could be identified with a *kairometer*.

Yesterday I was in standard chromometer mode. I worked all morning, because that's when I do my best work. But I had calculated and set an alarm on my *chronometer* for what time I needed to stop working so that I could exercise, shower, grab a quick snack and still make it to my doctor's appointment on time. This felt like good time management to me. After 30 minutes on my elliptical, I was tired, but thankfully I had even built in a few extra minutes to step out of the garage and rest against my car.

Suddenly, a strange thought intruded. What if one of my neighbors were to pass by, see me in my driveway and stop and want to talk? I had gone around the neighborhood a couple weeks ago to try to meet everyone and see how they were doing during the pandemic (I had scheduled that for a Saturday afternoon!) So what if now, without it being on the schedule, someone wanted to talk some more? Yikes! I might not have time to shower, grab my snack and make it to the doctor on time.

Having just worked out, I was also thirsty, and that turned out to help me. Somehow my thirst jogged my memory of Someone else who had plans

to go somewhere, had stopped to rest, and was thirsty (John 4). So he asked a woman he saw there for a drink. But then he did something I'm still trying to learn—he recognized *kairos*. God was giving him a significant opportunity with that woman at the well, and he made the most of it. Jesus' *kairometer* was always working well. As a result, both she and much of her village came to believe in the Savior, and we have one of the most beloved and helpful accounts in all of Scripture.

It turns out none of my neighbors stopped to chat yesterday. If they had, hopefully my memory of what Jesus did with the woman at the well would have helped me recognize *kairos*, even if it was just to connect with them a little bit. (Whether I would have continued the connection even if it meant forfeiting food, like Jesus did in John 4:31-34, is unknown but doubtful.)

I can't solve all our time management problems, but one truth I know is that we must get our Father's work done (John 4:34) even if some of our agenda is delayed or even left undone. I'm learning now that God seems to schedule things by *kairos* more than *chronos*. I also now realize that if we are obsessed with *chronos*, we will miss God's *kairos*.

That lesson goes down hard for a highly scheduled person like me, and I expect I will continue to struggle with it. But I do believe I am a servant of the King, on call 24/7. And I do now believe that truly Christian Time Management includes giving up my relentless devotion to *chronos* so that I can see and make the most of God's *kairos*. If we make the most of the opportunities God gives us today, we can feel good about how we have managed our time, even if we didn't get to all our own agenda.