

How a Congressional Retreat Turned Into a Holy Ghost Moment

There are two words for time in the New Testament. The first is *chronos*, and it refers to clock time or calendar time. It's where we get our English word *chronology*.

Chronos is sequential—past, present, future. And it is linear, moving in only one direction.

According to Greek mythology, Chronos was a short god with muscular legs and winged heels. He moved so fast that once he passed you, he was impossible to catch. To symbolize the transience of time, Chronos had a full head of hair in front but was bald in back. In other words, you can't grasp the present once it's past.

Finally, and most significantly, *chronos* is a human construct. It's how humans measure time, but God exists outside the space-time dimensions He created. So we have to be very careful not to put Him on our clock, in our box.

The second word for time is *kairos*, and it refers to the opportune time. Chronos is quantitative; it counts minutes. Kairos is qualitative; it captures moments. It's the critical moment or the appointed time—"for such a time as this" (Esther 4:14). It is *carpe diem*, "seize the day."

Kairos is an archery term that denotes an arrow fired with sufficient force to penetrate the target. Better yet, it's the archer's paradox. Logic suggests that an arrow be aimed right at a target. But if it's a long distance away, a seasoned archer knows a vast array of variables will affect the flight path. The arrow must actually be aimed off-target in order to hit the target. The ability to evaluate those variables is

kairos.

Time management, as in *chronos*, is important. The psalmist tells us to “number our days” (Ps. 90:12). And I believe in Vince Lombardi time: if you aren’t 15 minutes early, you’re late.! But the apostle Paul took the idea of time management one step further when he told us to “redeem the time” (see Eph. 5:16, NKJV). It’s not the word *chronos*; it’s the word *kairos*. And it literally means “making the most of every opportunity” (Eph. 5:16, NIV)

If you miss the opportunity, it’s an opportunity cost. It might even be a sin of omission. If you make the most of an opportunity, it can turn into a defining moment.

I recently spoke at a congressional retreat during a very tense political season. In fact, I had to weave my way through a thousand protestors and a police barricade to get into the hotel where the event was held. My rule of thumb is, if I have an opportunity to preach the gospel, I’ll preach to either side of the aisle. That’s the example Paul set in his “all things to all people” ministry (1 Cor. 9:22).

The devotional I shared was during the first session of the day, an optional session, so I was impressed that a few dozen members of both the House and Senate showed up. To be honest, I was a little nervous and had a difficult time figuring out what to say.

But as is often the case, the highlight wasn’t anything I said. It was a prompting that went past protocol. I felt impressed to ask everyone to kneel for prayer. I wasn’t sure how these national leaders would respond to it, but I took the risk that I felt the Holy Spirit was asking me to take.

In a way I never could have predicted or planned, it turned into a holy moment, holy ground. The spiritual and emotional response was visceral. Is kneeling going to solve all our political problems or resolve all our political tensions? No,

but it's not a bad place to start.

Chronos time may be measured in minutes, but life is measured in *kairos* moments. Discerning those moments is part of hearing God's voice. Hearing Him means discerning the holy moments when you need to drop to your knees. It's discerning the critical moments when you need to make a difficult decision. As a parent, it's discerning the teachable moments that can turn into defining moments for your kids.

I hate to admit it, but I miss more *kairos* moments than I seize. Sometimes I let fear dictate my decisions. I'm afraid of feeling awkward or looking foolish, so I fail to step out in faith. Sometimes I'm too preoccupied with my own problems to discern God's promptings. But listening to those whispers and obeying them can turn an ordinary day into the adventure of a lifetime! {eoa}

Mark Batterson is the lead pastor of National Community Church, known as one of the most innovative and influential churches in America. He's also the New York Times best-selling author of a dozen books, including *Chase the Lion* and his newest, *Whisper: How to Hear the Voice of God*. Visit him at .

Excerpted from *WHISPER*. Copyright © 2017 by Mark Batterson. Published by Multnomah, an imprint of Penguin Random House LLC.