

The Powerful Moments That Change Your Life Forever **By Dr. James W. Moore**

**As Presented at the Men's Summit
Christ United Methodist Church (Plano, TX)
April 5, 2008**

I am a collector of lists and I want to share with you my all-time favorite list ... It's a list of answers given by English school children on their religion exams.

- One student wrote this: "Noah's wife was called Joan of the Ark."
- Another one said: "A myth is a female moth."
- Another one said: "The Pope lives in a vacuum."
- Another one said: "Sometimes, it is difficult to hear in church because the agnostics are so terrible." (There's a sermon there somewhere.)
- And I love this one. One student wrote: "The Fifth Commandment is 'Humor your father and mother.'"

But my favorite is this last one. One student wrote: "Lot's wife was a pillar of salt by day and a ball of fire by night." I have no idea what that means.

The point is: right answers are important, aren't they? But have you thought about this – so are right questions! And what I want to do is raise with you what I think is a "right question" for us to be thinking about these days. And, the question is this: "How long has it been since you had a powerful moment that changed your life forever?"

We all know that the New Testament was written originally in common Greek and the Greeks had several different words for our one word *love*.

Agape is one. The means "unconditional love." It's the word used in the Bible to describe God's love for us. Every time that we are talking about the love of God in the Bible, the word "agape" is used ... unconditional love.

Eros is another one. It give us our word, "erotic" but actually if you go back and study the original Greek, you'll understand that it really didn't mean erotic love so much as it mean bargaining love. (I'll do this for you if you'll do that for me, which, if you think about it, is not really love at all.)

Philia is another one. It gives us our word "philanthropy," and refers to brotherly, sisterly love and humanitarian love.

And, another one is Storge, or family love.

We all know that the Greeks had lots of words for our one word, "love." But, did you know that the New Testament Greek also had two words for our one word *time*? *Chronos* and *kairos*. Let me define these quickly for you.

Kairos Moments, By Dr. James Moore

Chronos gives us our word chronology and simply put is “tick-tock time.” Each second is exactly like the one which went before it, exactly like the one which will follow it. *Chronos* time is boring time, humdrum time, drudgery time, meaningless time, empty time. Let me paint the picture of *chronos* time for you like this.

Imagine if you will a convict in prison cell crossing off dates on a calendar ... that’s *chronos* time. Imagine, if you will, a lawyer who has to argue her case the next morning. It’s very important that she be fresh, but she has insomnia and she cannot get to sleep and all she can hear is the persistent, unrelenting, incessant ticking of a clock. Imagine if you will an office worker who hates his job. He can’t wait until 5 p.m. comes, so he can get up and get out of there. Or, imagine if you will a college student who is in a three-hour biology lab that happens to occur right after lunch. And that college student is so bored ... just can’t wait to get of there and go do what college students do out on campus.

Chronos is empty time; it’s a void that must be filled; it’s time we must put in or endure; it’s what we talk about when we say, of all things, that we’re “killing” time. *Chronos* is tick-tock time, humdrum time, boring time, and routine time.

Thank God there is another kind of time; it’s called *kairos*. *Kairos* time is full time, vital time, crucial time, decisive time, God’s time. *Kairos* moments are those powerful, extra-special moments in life that are packed with meaning. *Chronis* is tick-tock time; *kairos* is when time stands still.

How long has it been since you had a moment so powerful that time stood still? *Kairos* is when God breaks into the routine and speaks loud and clear and you are touched so powerfully, so deeply in your soul, that you can never the same again. A cartoonist depicts *kairos* with a light bulb flashing over somebody’s head. It is the Voila moment, the “ah ha” experience. Theologians call it the moment of revelation.

Kairos is a key word in the New Testament. When Jesus started His ministry, He came into Galilee preaching and saying, “The time is fulfilled. The Kingdom is at hand. Repent and believe in the Gospel.” And the word for “time” there in Mark 1 is not *chronos*; it’s *kairos*. This was crucial time, decisive time, redemptive time, God’s time.

Jesus’ life was packed with *kairos* moments. For example, remember:

- Zacchaeus: Jesus saw him in that sycamore tree. They connected; it was a *kairos* moment.
- Blind Bartimaeus: Nobody else was paying attention to him, but Jesus heard his cries, and He connected with him, and it was a *kairos* moment.
- And then there was that woman who came up behind Jesus and touched the hem of His robe and He turned around and he connected with her, and it was a *kairos* moment.

Jesus had so many of those. The question is, “How long has it been since you had a *kairos* moment in this *chronos* world?” How long has it been since you had a moment so powerful that it changed your life, turned your world upside down, or maybe better, put right side up and left you where you could never be the same again? *Kairos* moments are all around us if we have the eyes to see them and the ears to hear them and the hearts to feel them.

Now, let me share with you three *kairos* moments that changed my life forever. And, if you will forgive me, I am going to be very personal. I have to be; these *kairos* moments are very personal. So, I want to share with you three very special *kairos* moments that touched me so deeply in my soul that I could never, ever be the same again.

Here's number one.

1. The *Kairos* Moment of Encouragement.

First of all, there was the moment of encouragement, the *kairos* moment of encouragement.

The word encourage in French literally means, "to put the heart in." How long has it been since you had a *kairos* moment of encouragement where you put the heart in someday, or where somebody put the heart in you?

It happened on December 17, 1979. It was a Monday morning a week before Christmas. We were living in Shreveport at the time. It was in the master bedroom ... it was at 7 a.m. I was rushing to get to the office because it was the week before Christmas and we had so much to do, so many things to take care of, so that our people could have a great, meaningful celebration of Christmas. But at 7 a.m., the phone rang. June answered it in the kitchen and I could hear her talking, but I couldn't make out the words. Then I heard her running down the hallway toward the master bedroom, and I knew – I could feel it in the air – I knew something was wrong.

She ran into the master bedroom and said, "Jim, get on the phone quickly; it's your sister, Susie, calling from Winston Salem. Your mother was killed in a car wreck this morning."

I couldn't believe it. It was *déjà vu* all over again for us because we had lost our dad in a car wreck many years before. I got on the phone with my sister; we were able to conference in my brother from Memphis, and the three of us talked about what had happened.

Mother had gone with her neighbor to take her niece to the bus station in downtown Winston-Salem so that her friend wouldn't have to drive back home alone after they dropped the niece off at the station. The accident happened in a 20 mph zone in downtown Winston-Salem. Nobody else was even hurt, but my mother died instantly. We were thrust quickly and painfully into that grief experience. We went through the funeral on Thursday; we had to stay over a few days to take care of business matters and the next Monday, we flew back home and landed at the airport in Shreveport at 3 in the afternoon on Christmas Eve.

We had a big Christmas Eve service planned at the church that night – a Holy Communion Service. In that church, we only had one service on Christmas Eve. It was held at 5:30 p.m. and 1,200 to 1,300 people would come for that service. I had told the staff that I would be there to help with Holy Communion. As we were preparing to go to church, I decided to look through the mail. This huge stack of mail was there with all these wonderful letters and cards of love and sympathy and compassion and caring. And then, I saw it. I knew what it was. It was great big box with a Winston-Salem postmark on it. I knew before I opened it what it was. I was right. It was our Christmas presents from my mother, carefully selected and beautifully wrapped, and mailed to us the day before she died.

It touched me so deeply that I began to cry and I said to June, "I don't know if I can do this." She said, "You don't have to. I'll call the church and tell them you can't be there." I said, "No, I need to go, I need to help, I told them I would be there, and I need to get back into the stream of life."

So we went on to communion that night and I'm so glad we went because something happened that night that had never happened before or since. It was unbelievable. It was almost as if the whole congregation had rehearsed because every worshiper from the smallest child to the oldest adult did the same thing. As I walked down the communion rail serving the bread of Holy Communion, every worshiper, from the smallest child to the oldest adult, did the same thing. With one hand, they reached for the bread of Holy Communion and with the other, they reached out and touched my hand. Now, that was 1979. I've got tears in my eyes now because it was a *kairos* moment.

You know that you are not supposed to talk at Holy Communion but those wonderful people were speaking volumes to me. Here's what they were saying: "We are going to get you through this. We are going to put the heart back into you." Holy Communion had never been more holy for me than it was that night as those wonderful people put the heart back into me in a *kairos* moment of encouragement. As I was moving down that communion rail serving Communion, and people were touching my hand, one after the other, time stood still. How long has it been since you had a *kairos* moment of encouragement like that?

2. The *Kairos* Moment of Love.

Jesus had so many of these. We get so caught up in the *chronos* that we miss so many. I'm haunted by that question, "How many wonderful *kairos* moments of love have I missed because I wasn't paying attention?" Let me tell you about one I didn't miss because God was with me.

I had preached one Sunday morning at the 11 o'clock worship service. After church was over, I was down at the communion rail and 11 people had joined the church. The organ was playing loudly in the background, people were visiting, and it was 'happy chaos.' I was trying to make the new members feel welcome and wanted, and take care of them, and somebody over here was trying to get my attention to tell me about a friend in the hospital. Somebody over here was trying to get my attention to introduce me to some visitors to the church. Some former members of the church had been away, they had come back and they were trying to get my attention to speak to me. All of this was going on when all of a sudden, I felt a tug. I turned around and looked down, and it was Jeff Moore, our son. He was five years old at the time. He had come around behind the communion rail and was tugging on me urgently.

And I have to tell you that my first response was ... how shall I put this ... "parental." I thought to myself, "Jeff, couldn't this wait until we get in the car? I'm doing big stuff up here!" But God was with me in that moment and He helped me to realize that there was something special and precious about that tug. So I just closed everything else out and I dropped down on one knee to get eye to eye with five-year-old Jeff Moore. And here's what happened.

He was standing there and he had one hand behind his back. When I dropped down, he just beamed! I will never forget that expression on his face. He just beamed. He was so happy that I stopped. He pulled his hand out from behind his back. He had a white paper cup with black dirt in it and a little green plant was shooting up out of it.

He said, “Daddy, this is a tomato plant. God and I have been growing it in Sunday School for several weeks now. We’ve been studying how God makes things grow and how we can help Him, and God and I have been working on this tomato plant. It’s my tomato plant, but I want to give it to you and Mama this morning.” He said, “You’re always giving me things, but I don’t have any money to get anything for you, so I want to give you this tomato plant this morning because I love you so much.” He handed me the tomato plant and his little arms went up around my neck and I hugged him tightly, and in that moment, nothing else in the world mattered. In that moment of love, time stood still as we hugged each other tightly. How long has it been since you had a kairos moment of love like that?

3. The *Kairos* Moment of Inspiration.

When I was in my middle year of seminary at the Methodist Theological School in Ohio, I took a course called Pastoral Care. In addition to the academic study, they also assigned us to be interns in a nearby care facility so we could get practical experience along with our classroom work. I was assigned to be the student chaplain on the 8th floor of the Riverside Methodist Hospital in Columbus, Ohio. That was really exciting to be the chaplain for the neurosurgery ward.

Every Thursday at one o’clock, I would show up on that 8th floor and I would check in with the head nurse, and she would tell me about the patients. “This one had surgery two days ago ...” “This one is going home tomorrow ...” And I would go visit them. I would write up what the professors called “verbatim” and take those back to show the professor what the patient said and what I said. The professor would always write, “You talked too much.”

One Thursday afternoon at one o’clock, the elevator doors opened and the head nurse was standing there waiting for me. She said, “Jim, we need you today. We’ve never needed a minister more than we need one today. Mrs. Davis, in 858, is supposed to have brain surgery at 8 in the morning. She may not even make it off the table. There is a 50 percent chance she won’t even survive the surgery. She is so ill. And she has quit on us. She won’t let anyone come in the room. She won’t let family come in, she won’t accept any gifts or flowers, she won’t answer the telephone; she is just lying there trying to die. If anybody ever needed a minister, Mrs. Davis in Room 858, needs one ... please go to her.”

It scared me to death. I didn’t know what to say to Mrs. Davis in Room 858 who was facing surgery the next morning that she might not even survive, might not even make it off the operating table. So I started walking down toward her room – strategizing. I was young and thought I was supposed to strategize. I’ve learned since then that you don’t do that. You just go love people. But I didn’t know that then. I started strategizing.

Then I remembered non-directive counseling. I’d learned that in school. Non-directive counseling is when you let the other person talk and you just grunt every now and then. Or, you repeat back what the persons say: “I don’t feel so happy today.” “Oh, you don’t feel happy today.” And they just talk and talk and you just grunt and listen and repeat and after awhile, they just think you’re great because you let them ventilate and they go away happy – and you’re happy! So I decided I’ll use non-directive counseling on Mrs. Davis in room 858.

Kairos Moments, By Dr. James Moore

I went on down the corridor toward her room filled with confidence like a combination of John Wesley, Martin Luther and Mother Teresa all rolled in one. I was ready to do it! However, when I got to the door, I heard the pitter patter of little feet behind me. I turned to see the head nurse running after me and she said, “Oh, Jim, wait a minute, wait a minute. I forgot the most important thing. Mrs. Davis is so critically ill that the doctors want her to be perfectly still and she is not allowed to speak.”

Now, are you familiar with the word discombobulated? I was discombobulated. I promptly went into the room and did everything wrong. I pushed the door open too hard and it slammed against the wall. I went over and kicked the bed. You are not supposed to do that! I tried to talk to Mrs. Davis and everything came out wrong. In desperation, I tried to pray and botched up the prayer. I left that room totally humiliated. I went straight to my car and I sat in my car and I felt so defeated. As if it were yesterday, I remember vividly taking my fists and hitting them on the steering wheel and screaming at God, “Why did you get me into this? I can’t do this. I don’t have what it takes to be a minister.”

I drove back to the seminary campus. I went to see Dr. Fred Gealy who was my advisor. Dr. Gealy was a real smart man. I started telling him I needed to drop out of the ministry and he said, “Jim, I’m real busy. Can you come back and see me next week?” He was buying some time. The next Thursday, I went back to the hospital, I went up to the 8th floor of the neurosurgery ward, and I slipped into the nurses’ station. I went a little early because I knew they would be giving out the lunch trays at that time. I slipped in and looked down the list to see if Mrs. Davis had survived the surgery. I couldn’t believe my eyes. There was her name! Mrs. Davis, Room 858, Condition: Good. I was amazed!

I went down to her room and knocked on the door. Now, let me tell you, the week before, the room reeked of death; the drapes were pulled, no flowers, no cards, no gifts. This time, it was the total opposite. I heard somebody say cheerfully, “Come in.” I opened the door, sunlight was streaming in, music was playing softly, and gifts and cards were all over the place. Mrs. Davis was sitting up in the bed writing thank-you notes.

I went over to her and said, “Mrs. Davis, you probably don’t remember me.” And she said, “Don’t remember you? How could I ever forget you? You saved my life!” I turned around; I thought maybe someone else had come into the room! I said, “I don’t understand. I felt so terrible. I did everything wrong.” She said, “That’s just it. I felt so sorry for you!!!” She said, “You were so pitiful that I just wanted to hug you.” She said, “I felt compassion for you and it was the first time in months that I felt anything but self pity; and that little spark of compassion made me want to live again.” She said, “And now the doctors tell me it made all the difference.”

I walked out of that room inspired! Here’s why: I learned a lesson that day that changed my life and turned my life around. Every Sunday morning when I walk toward my pulpit, I think of Mrs. Davis. Every time I have to go with a family to tell somebody that we got a bad report, I think of Mrs. Davis. Every time I sit down to talk with a couple who are having trouble in their marriage, I think of Mrs. Davis. Here’s why: The lesson I learned from that experience with Mrs. Davis was that I don’t have to be perfect. I don’t even have to be good. All I have to be is faithful. Just do my best and trust God for the rest.

If that doesn’t inspire you, I don’t know what would. The *kairos* moment of encouragement, the *kairos* moment of love, the *kairos* moment of inspiration. If we will just tune in to the spirit of Christ, He has so many wonderful *kairos* moments for us.