

**THE
HEAR AND OBEY
TOOL**

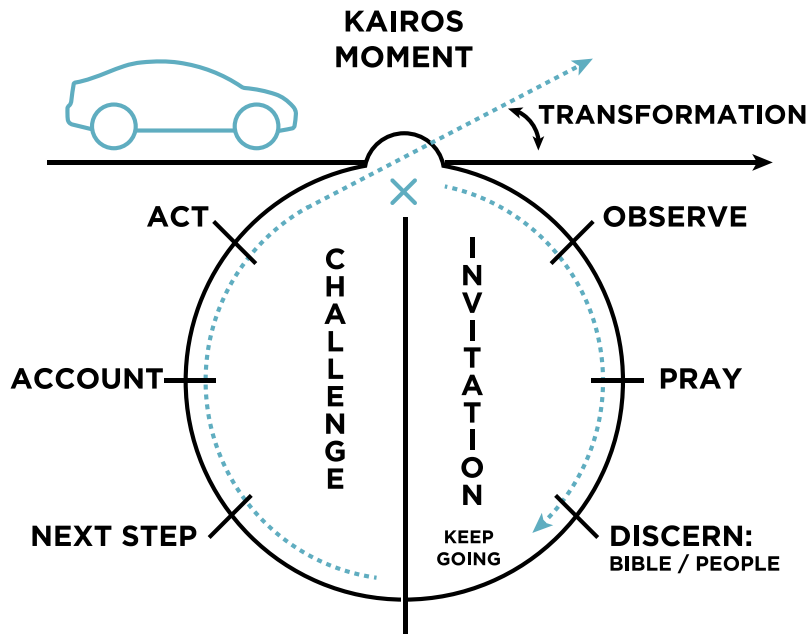


THE HEAR AND OBEY TOOL

HOW DO I HEAR THE VOICE OF GOD AND RESPOND IN LOVING OBEDIENCE?

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

-Matt. 7:24-27



FOUNDATIONS + FOOLS

At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, concluding the greatest sermon ever given, Jesus closes with a parable about a Wise man and Foolish man.

Both men are building houses, but they are building them on different foundations. The Wise man builds his house on the foundation of a rock. The Foolish man builds his house on a foundation of sand. Of course, as was bound to happen, a storm comes and wipes out the house built on sand, but the house built on a foundation of rock withstands the storm.

It's a simple and memorable story. But what is Jesus getting after?

Well, Jesus' use of the Wise man and Foolish man is actually quite interesting because in the Old Testament, the 'Wise Man' is the person you want to model your life after. Whole books of the Bible are dedicated to discussing how to be this wise person. They are the golden standard for a life lived with God and for God's glory. What Jesus is doing is saying that those who follow him, his disciples, are the new Wise Man.

The answer? Matthew 7:24.

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.”

A follower of Jesus isn't someone who just hears the words of Jesus. They are someone who puts them into practice.

Notice that the foolish man also hears the words of Jesus. Both the wise man and the foolish man leave fields, farms and families to hear Jesus teach. So what is the difference between the two? One of the two guys actually does what Jesus says.

It's in this parable that we truly discover the two central questions of the Christian life:

- **What is God saying to you?**
- **What are you going to do about it?**

But this might raise a very practical question for us. Namely, ***“How can I hear the voice of God and respond in loving obedience?”***

Because the fact of the matter is that very few people know how to hear the voice of God. And few things could be more heartbreaking because it is the birthright of every Christian to hear the voice of their Father.

IT'S TIME

Over and over again in the Bible, we see something called 'Kairos' events happening. That word Kairos is the Greek work for 'time.' But it's not speaking to sequential, chronological time (that's 'chronos' time). We're not talking about your friend asking you what time it is, you looking at your watch or phone, and then saying, "It's 4:05 in the afternoon."

No. Kairos is referring to time as an event. Like when we say, "I had a great time at the wedding today."

When we say we've had a 'God moment,' we are describing one kind of Kairos moment. In the Bible, a Kairos moment is describing a time that God has set apart. It's an appropriate or opportune time. Something's been appointed or available that wasn't before.

“Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”
Ephesians 5:15-17

KAIROS MOMENT:

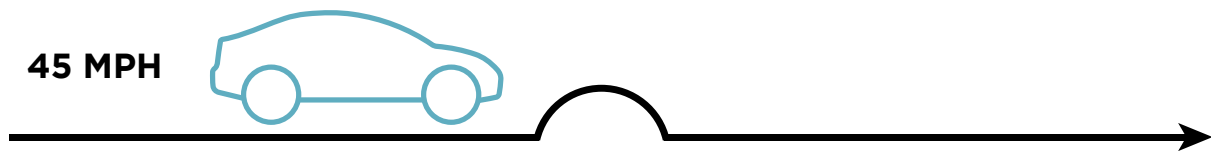
An event that God has set apart where his world and our world are intersecting. God is trying to get your attention.

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

You've had a Kairos moment. You sense that God is trying to get your attention. How do we go from that to being able to hear what he's saying to us?

Let's see if we can understand these Kairos moments in a more practical way.

Say you're driving a car down the road at 45 MPH. Suddenly, out of nowhere, you hit a speed bump. Now if you do that, there's a reasonable chance that something's happened with your car. Did you lose a muffler? Break your axle? Pop a tire?



The smart thing to do is to pull off the road, check out your car, take stock of what's happened and see if you should even keep driving at all!

That speed bump is a Kairos moment.

Here we are, driving down the road of life and all of a sudden...something happens! It grabs your attention. It could be a huge thing, it could be a small thing. But on the heels of that moment, you sense that God is trying to grab your attention and show you something. It's not necessarily that God created the event so much as he is using something in the event to say something. Your world and His world have collided.

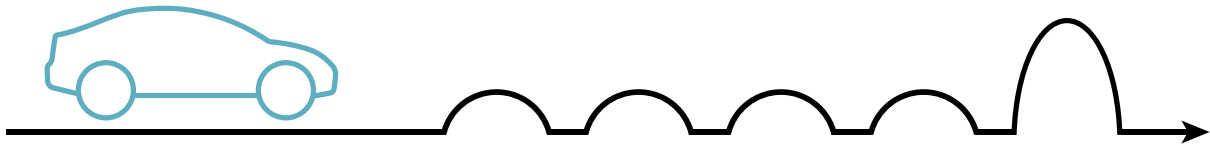
Here are some examples of events that God might use to provoke a Kairos moment:

- You read something in the Bible and something in it hits your soul like a 2 x 4.
- You have a baby and are overwhelmed with joy.
- Someone you're close to dies.
- A line from an email someone sent you keeps nagging you.
- You celebrate an anniversary and it produces great sadness or great thankfulness.
- You're reading the Bible and it occurs to you that lately it seems like its doing nothing for you.
- You lose your job and you feel a deep shaking of your identity.
- Your son or daughter hears about a sick friend, immediately prays for them and you note their bold faith compared to yours.
- A lyric to a song keeps rattling around in your head for days.
- You lead someone to faith in Jesus and you're surprised.
- You realize you don't care much for people who are less fortunate than you and you can't let it go.

We could go on and on. The speed bump could be big or it could be small. But the wise thing to do is to attend to it. Pull off the road. See what's going on.

The problem is that many of us never pull off the road. We hit bump after bump and never stop. People will sometimes ask, "Why is it that God never speaks to me?" This might be why. Often it's not that God isn't speaking, it's that after a while, if you hit bump after bump after bump for years without stopping, you get used to it. It starts feeling normal. You grow numb to it.

Eventually you hit a bump (or brick wall!) that's too big to go over, we crash and are therefore forced to stop and attend it. God is that committed to us. He can't let us go but so long like that. Sometimes like the tribes of Israel being sent into Exile, we too realize that God will let us crash to fully get our attention, for our good and his glory.



So when you have a Kairos moment...

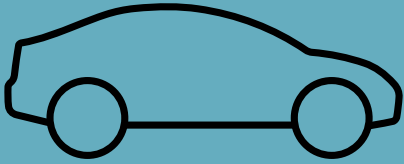
Stop. Pull over. Attend to it.

Step into the Kingdom unfolding before you in the present. Engage with what God is trying to do in you right now.

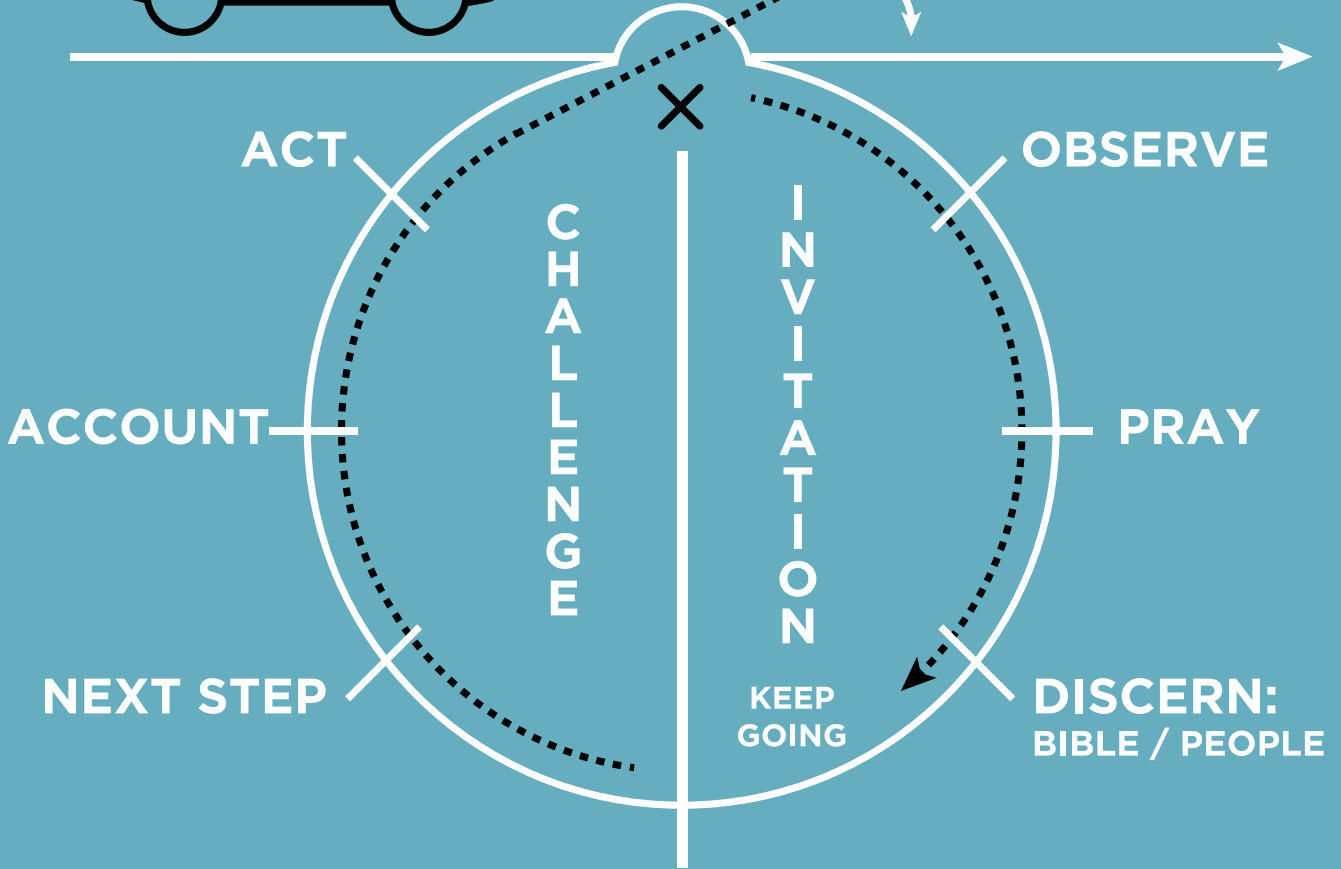
How do you do that? Engage with a very simple process.

Now we can go into great depth about how this process plays out in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7 and in other places in the Gospels, but for our purposes here, we'll simplify it.

**KAIROS
MOMENT**



TRANSFORMATION



ACT

OBSERVE

CHALLENGE

INVITATION

ACCOUNT

PRAY

NEXT STEP

**KEEP
GOING**

**DISCERN:
BIBLE / PEOPLE**

OBSERVE

The first step of dealing with a Kairos moment, an INVITATION to live more fully in the Kingdom and to discern what God is saying, is to observe. 'What?' is the big question we're asking here.

What happened?

I was just going along and then BOOM! Something happened. Maybe you're feeling some strong emotions (joy, sadness, guilt, excitement, fear, etc), but that emotion was triggered by an event. It's not random. What triggered it? What happened? What was the event? It's important to understand what you experienced.

PRAY

In this particular part of the process, we want to reflect on what has happened and process this with the Lord in prayer. The question within ourselves that we seek an answer in prayer to is '**Why?**'

Why did this event grab my attention? Why are you asking me to stop here?

"There are thousands of moments on any given day. God, why this one? Why is this emotion coming out? Why am I responding this way?"

Sometimes 'Why?' can be one of the hardest questions and truly requires the Holy Spirit to reveal the contents of our hearts. As Hebrews says, "There is nothing hidden. Everything is laid bare before him to whom we must give account." But that's a good thing! The Holy Spirit is our comforter and guide. He will help us and show us the way. Scripture encourages us to take these burdens to the Lord in prayer. He does not fault us for asking questions, in fact He welcomes us as we approach in prayer.

DISCERN: BIBLE/PEOPLE

The next step of the process is a twofold process of seeking discernment, first in God's Word and secondly with others who we see actively following Jesus Christ.

This is a very important part in discerning what God might be saying because we have to acknowledge that we all have blind spots. For all the internal observations and reflections we make, there is always the chance for us to miss something. Scripture tells us that God's Word is useful for teaching, encouraging and correcting. The first place we should take our processing is to the Word of God. Does the Bible already speak clearly to the situation I am processing?

Secondly, I can seek discernment with people I respect who I see walking closely in step with Jesus. Sharing these moments with people we trust allows them the opportunity to speak what they see into our life with love.

Often times they might see something that we aren't seeing. They might offer a really encouraging insight or affirmation. Maybe we keep beating ourselves up and not living in the grace of the Gospel and they encourage us that we are already loved, accepted and forgiven. Perhaps they will see something and challenge us on it, truly wanting the Gospel to be worked out in our life.

The key is that we do this with people we trust; people we know love us and want God's best worked out in us. It is a miraculous thing to have people in our lives who love us this much and are willing to fight for us in this way, regardless of whether it is encouragement or challenge.

IT'S AN INVITATION

One of the most important things for us to understand in all of this is that any word that God is speaking to us is a word of invitation. Whether it's encouragement and affirmation, something that brings clarity...or God speaking words of challenge, rebuke or correction, it is all an invitation to draw closer. Every time the Lord speaks, he is speaking with the intention of drawing us closer to himself.

If we feel encouraged and bolstered by what He's said, we feel the embrace of the Father. If it's challenge and correction, we recognize that "it's the Lord's kindness that leads us to repentance." He's saying it to help us remove the sin that we will so often use as a barrier between us and him.

Every word is an **INVITATION** to **RELATIONSHIP** so that we might draw close to him.

LET'S PAUSE HERE

At this point in the process, we've had a Kairos moment. We've observed, reflected and discussed. In the midst of all of this we've been asking the Holy Spirit to engage the process. After we have done this, we want to start asking, "Ok God, what are you saying to me here?"

It's important to note that we're not really looking for what we're going to do about it yet. We're looking very specifically at what God is saying. It will often times be very simple and to the point. And really, we're trying to hone in on that kind of word from God. So be careful not to confuse what God is saying with the plan.

Obviously, God can say anything! But for the sake of being practical, here are some examples of what you might sense God is saying to you:

- I'm proud of you.
- You're worth more than how much money you bring in.
- Why are you looking for satisfaction there?
- You don't need to worry.
- I'm more than enough for you.
- You don't have to earn my love.
- It's because you're scared of what people think of you.

- My grace is sufficient for you.
- I care more about your kids more than you do.
- Haven't I always provided for you?

Again. These are just a few examples of the many, many things God can say to us about what's happening in our life. The reason we are drilling down to something simple and not immediately jumping to what we'll do next is because of the massive importance of hearing what it is that God is saying...and using that as the foundation for doing something.

We've referenced this verse already, but let's revisit it:

"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." Romans 10:17

Faith comes from hearing the word of Christ to you! The words of Christ to us arranges our inner world, allowing more of us to live in his Kingdom which is available to us in this moment, and then we step out through the power of the Holy Spirit and do something in complete assurance and faith.

TWO WORDS OF CAUTION

First, when we think we have discerned what God is saying to us, we always want to test it against the phrasebook of Heaven: The Bible. In his wisdom and sovereignty, God has chosen to give us his Word that is wholly authentic and fully trustworthy. Any time we think God has said something to us, our first response is to test it against the Word of God, using it like we would a plumb line.

For instance, someone might say, "Hey, I think God is saying he really wants me to be happy and is releasing me from my marriage. So we're going to get a divorce." Well, the Bible has a few things to say about that and so we test what we're sensing against his Word! In this case, it would certainly serve as a very helpful corrective.

Second, we want to hold what God is saying to us with loose hands. What we mean by that is that we are finite creatures who are fully capable of misunderstanding what God is saying. Now because we have the Holy Spirit, the Bible and other disciples of Jesus speaking into this process, we can be confident of what God is saying. But we also want to have the humility to say we could be wrong! Biblical humility is "knowing who we are in relation to God." But even in this, God's grace is abundant.

So practically speaking, we might want to use phrases like:

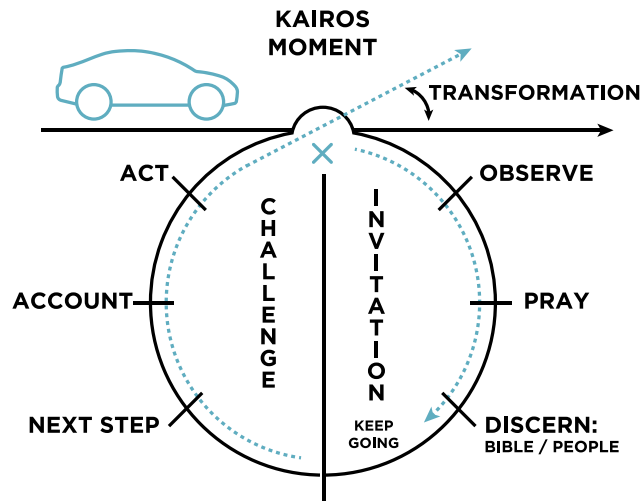
- I sensed God could be saying...
- I think God might be saying...
- I could be wrong, but...

NEXT STEP

The first half of this process is the **INVITATION** to draw closer to God. The second half is the **CHALLENGE** to respond in loving obedience. It's a challenge because we are often tempted to hit the eject button before we go further in the process, but we have to keep going!

Remember, both the Wise man and the Foolish man heard something from God. They both did! The only difference was that the Wise man did something with it. So like the Wise man of the Old Testament, the disciple of Jesus doesn't just hear God, but does something with it.

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?



If we're going to do something based on what God has said, to step more fully into the Kingdom, we're going to need a plan, or a **NEXT STEP**. We'll want to know exactly what we're going to do so that we'll know whether or not we did it.

We're going after something practical. Next steps like "I'm going to love people more" aren't terribly helpful because it's really hard to know whether we've done what we've set out to do. Rather, the more specific we can get the better. Your sense of how 'big' your Kairos moment was will often help you shape your next step. For instance:

- **Small speed bump:** What's my practical plan for the next 24 hours?
- **Medium speed bump:** What's my practical plan for the next two weeks?
- **Big speed bump:** What's my practical plan for the next three months?
- **Mountain of a speed bump:** What's my practical plan for the next year?

Here's a practical example. Let's say you're realizing how much your identity is tied up in your job or in what people think of you or in how good of a mom or dad you are. It could be anything. But it's about identity. And you sensed that God was saying, "You're my child! I've saved you! You're mine. You can't earn my love, and my love and grace is all you need."

Well, we certainly want that to become a reality in your life. That's a real INVITATION into the Kingdom and for the realities of the Gospel to be more present in your life. "Come closer!", Jesus is saying. Let's say at this point in time, this was a medium-sized speed bump, so we're looking for a 2-3 week plan. Because we know that Romans 8 is the classic chapter on identity in the Bible, the plan is for you to read Romans 8 once a day, write down one thing that stood out to you, and to ask God to show you one simple way for you to live into that this day. That's the NEXT STEP.

Here's another practical example. You had a Kairos moment and sensed that God was saying, "You never really share the Gospel with anyone. You need to represent me and proclaim the good news." Great. Let's say it was a big speed bump and so your plan for the next three months is that you are going to constantly pray that God will prepare someone to hear the Gospel and once a week, you will share your Grace Story with someone who doesn't know or trust Jesus yet.

In this way, we are responding to what God is saying with a tailored spiritual discipline to our life and circumstance. It's not legalism. It's responding from our relationship with God who already approves of us.

It's so very important to understand what's happening here. Because God has justified us when we became Christians and we are now reconciled to him, his Spirit is now at work in our life. As Paul says, "the same Spirit that raised Christ Jesus from the dead is now alive in you." That Spirit is at work in your life, and whether you sense it or see it or see it all the time, he is slowly conforming you to the image of Christ. What you are doing is consciously looking for where he is already at work and then joining him in that work. It's absolutely amazing! We are careful to stay away from checklists and legalism for the sake of 'being good.' Rather, we are seeking to respond to what God is doing in us, drawing close to him through his invitation, and responding to his challenge to represent him.

We are not doing good works trying to prove who we are, but simply living into who we already are.

ACCOUNT

The role of other Christians in our life doesn't end with discussing what God could be saying and having them to speak into our plans. We also want them to hold us accountable to following through on those plans. ACCOUNT.

Often times we wrongly think that accountability is about people being 'spiritual police.' Nothing could be further from the truth. In reality, it's about allowing people to be 'spiritual partners.' We want people to ask us, "OK. This was your plan and it was based on what you sensed the Lord was saying to you. Did you do what you said you were going to do?" This isn't people lording the law over us, but people acting in love.

This shapes us to be people of Christ-like character and integrity.

We have put ACCOUNT before ACT because even as we want people to shape the NEXT STEPS we are putting together, we are much more likely to follow through when we ask people to hold us accountable (account) before we act, and then they follow up with us.

ACT

Last, but certainly not least, we must ACT. We don't act and follow through because we are trying to earn God's love or approval. We act because we are living into the identity that God has given us as his son or daughter and this is how we can respond in loving obedience.

We actually do what we said we were going to do.

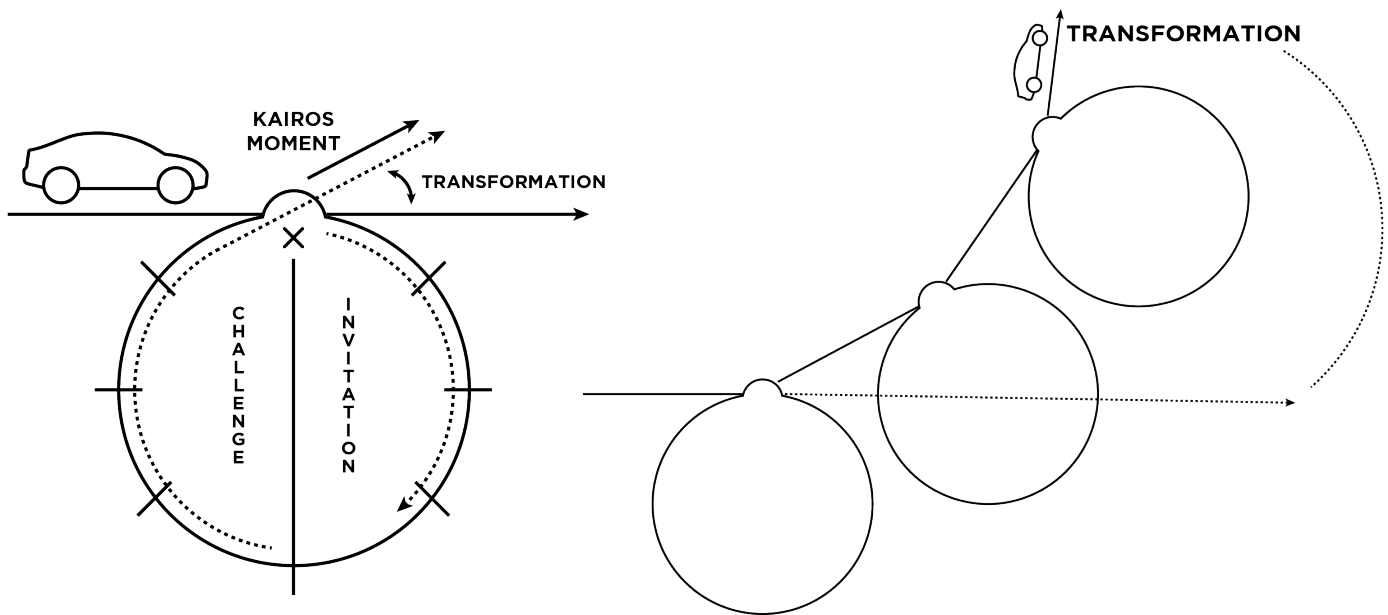
HOW TRANSFORMATION HAPPENS

What is God saying to you? What are you going to do about it? These truly are the foundational questions of the Christian life. But what happens when we live this out?

Let's go back to the car analogy.

You've hit a speed bump, but you've pulled alongside the road and attended to what God was saying to you and acted on it. You've engaged the process.

But now, even if it's by a .0001 degree of difference, you are headed in a slightly different direction. You were headed one way, but because you've heard from God and responded, the trajectory is somewhere else.



You can see the gap between where you were going and where you're headed now. That gap is called transformation. That is God working in you for his purposes and his glory.

The Gospel working out in your life is not complex, but easy to do. No. It's simple, but hard to do. That's why we need the Holy Spirit.

So over the long haul, if you constantly attend to what God is saying to you, what you find is that the Holy Spirit is creating a groove of grace in your life where he is carving out a path of radical transformation. One Kairos leads to another which leads to another which leads to another. He knows how to disciple us and knows exactly what he's doing. That's the freedom in allowing him to do his work and simply joining him in that process.

He is **INVITING** you into a closer **RELATIONSHIP** with him, and **CHALLENGING** you to **REPRESENT** him well in his world. This is you engaging with the process of discipleship.

EXAMPLES

Here are a few examples of Jesus using this process with his disciples.

The Epileptic (Matthew 17:14–21; Mark 9:14–29)

- The epileptic seizure (kairos)
- Unbelieving and perverse generation! (observe and reflect)
- Lord, why couldn't we drive it out? (discuss)
- This kind can only come out by prayer (plan) Mustard seed principle (account/act)

Forgiving Wrongs (Matthew 18:15–20; Matthew 18:21–35)

- A wrong is done, a resentment remembered (kairos)
- If your brother sins, go to him (observe and reflect)
- Lord, how many times? (discuss)
- Therefore, forgive your brother from the heart (plan, account, act)

A Mother's Request for Status (Matthew 20:20–28)

- Coming to Jesus with request (kairos)
- When other disciples hear this they are indignant (observe and reflect)
- Jesus calls them together for teaching and discussion (discuss)
- Not so with you! (plan)
- Whoever wants to be first must be a slave to all (account and act)

The Rich Young Man (Matthew 19:16–29)

- Conversation (kairos)
- When the disciples hear, they are astonished (observe and reflect)
- Who can be saved? (reflect)
- We left everything; what will there be for us? (discuss)
- If you leave houses, family, fields (plan, account, act)

