

DON'T MANAGE TIME—DEFEAT IT!

With Elaine Follis

A Podcast Transcript

The fall term is pretty much underway now. Think you could use a little more time to get things done? You probably have more than enough in the way of school assignments—reading, tests, the research papers. Maybe you face other demands as well, if you play a sport, take music lessons, have a job. And of course you want to leave time for friends, too—and for yourself, just to “chill” for an hour or two.

There are times when actually *doing* all of that looks impossible. Panic arrives, usually about the same time as the first round of exams—I still remember the feeling from my freshman year in college. So, what to do? Suffer? Endure? Just hope for the best? Or *triumph*? Christian Science shows that, yes, triumph is a real possibility. I've spent most of my life in school, one way or another—I was a professor after I was a student--so take it from me: I know!

“Time management” is a phrase you've probably heard a lot. Parents, guidance counselors, college admissions officers, are really big on it. Some schools have special workshops to teach students how to manage their time more effectively. But that's easier said than done, as you may already realize. And procrastination, the student's favorite method of dealing with “systems overload,” just makes a bad matter worse. So, is discipline and deprivation the answer? They might be, if the basic problem were time, as appears to be the case. But time's not the real issue: bottom line, the lie of limitation, of life, substance, and intelligence in matter, is the culprit. Time is part of the material scene, and matter is never, ever “enough.”

Christian Science lifts us above that material sense of being frustrated and limited. It teaches that we are spiritual ideas, the expressions of infinite Mind, God. No hint of limitation there! Mary Baker Eddy discovered Christian Science, and wrote *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, the textbook of Christian Science. Here's how she defines time: “Mortal measurements; limits, in which are summed up all human acts, thoughts, beliefs, opinions, knowledge; matter; error” (595:17-19). Would you *really* want more of these? Do they sound like something to manage—or something to *overcome*?

It's interesting: the Greek New Testament has two different words for time. One is *chronos*, as in chronology; it's the “tick, tick, tick,” time is passing, kind. The other is *kairos*, and it means “right time; occasion; opportunity.” The Bible uses it in the expression *fullness of time*—and how appropriate that is! . In biblical idiom, the expression relates to the coming of the Christ, the light of the world, at exactly the right moment. And, because God governs our lives, we are always at that point of *kairos*—opportunity and Christly light—an occasion both rich and full of blessing. That's true for everyone, not just a fortunate few. And so, also, there's no such thing as a *lost* opportunity; the *kairos* is where we live forever, no matter what.

The coming of the Christ has a lot to do with the promise of the *kairos*. Christ, as understood in Christian Science, is indeed the light of the world. It is the awareness of God's presence, and of our inseparability from Him, that shows everything in its true light, as God created it, sees it, and maintains it. Jesus of Nazareth, in his ministry, expressed the Christ fully and in a way that made it visible to everyone. We, as his disciples, have the opportunity to follow his example and walk in the same holy light.

The fullness of *kairos* is wonderfully reassuring. But it's not a license for mindlessly jamming our days with all sorts of events and commitments. Being spread too thin is a phenomenon that's not limited to students; it plagues people in all walks of life. So it's important to get a handle on it. The "you can have it all" slogan may be popular, but it's not such a great idea if, in the final analysis, "having it all" includes a block of ice in the pit of your stomach (that's how stress feels to me) and winding up enjoying nothing! If you feel pushed, rather than improved, by some of your activities, take a moment to consider: perhaps some of them can shift to the back burner, or even disappear altogether.

How are you to decide about that? Ask God! All too often, we consult Him only when we're already in over our heads. Why not seek His guidance before jumping in the deep end in the first place? His guidance is ours for the asking. The life of Christ Jesus is a great example. He was never limited by time or place—on several occasions, we read in the gospels that he was "immediately" at his destination. And he achieved an unparalleled record of healing and redemption in the space of just three years! He gave us this exhortation: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt 6:33). I love the idea that we have the kingdom—it's a "given," it is part of our inheritance as God's children. Everything else has its proper place, but it is an addition to the "bottom line" of who we already are.

Mary Baker Eddy led a disciplined, orderly life, as the reminiscences of those who worked in her household indicate. (These reminiscences are available for anyone to read in The Mary Baker Eddy Library, by the way! The Library has a collection of her letters, journals, scrapbooks, and other objects. Check out our website, or visit us sometime if you are in Boston.) She had many duties to attend to, such as writing, editing, teaching, carrying on correspondence, receiving members of the press. One time, when adding to the already heavy responsibilities of a secretary, she advised him to carve out time each morning to pray for himself. He had been wondering how he could possibly carry out his new duties; but he obeyed her instructions, and found he was able to complete every single task. Mrs. Eddy herself spent hours in prayer. She also had favorite pastimes. She loved to sit in the swing on her back porch at Pleasant View, and just about every day she took a carriage ride around town in the afternoon. She said, in fact, those were when she did some of her best praying! Time—whether hours of the day passing, or years passing—posed no limits for Mary Baker Eddy. Age had no hold on her; she established the Christian Science Monitor, an international newspaper, when in her eighties. And she knew how to regard every moment, and every activity, as prayer: praying without ceasing.

I had many occasions to gain dominion over the sense of *chronos* and realize the presence of *kairos* during my academic career. One time, I had accepted an invitation to present a paper at a professional conference. Normally, I needed months to write and document such a project, and had planned to use the summer months to do so. But I became ill, and needed to spend every moment in prayer. A few weeks before the conference, I was feeling much better, but I had no paper—and I was in an absolute panic! About that same time, I was scheduled to attend the meeting of a Christian Science students association. (That's a day dedicated to deep thought and discussion on Christian Science practice.) In this case, it involved travel and a lot of study. I was tempted not to go, but I caught myself: if I ever needed God's help, I needed it right then and there! I determined to attend the meeting, put down every bit of anxiety for the day, and just drink in the message that had been prepared. The following Monday, after I had returned to work, the thought came very clearly: sit down and write--do it now. I wrote non-stop for about four hours. And finished the paper—wow. I was able to document it and prepare it for presentation in just a couple of days. Here is the very best part: when I gave it, not only was it very well received; several colleagues came up to me afterwards to say the paper contained an idea that shed light on research they were doing, and moved their work ahead. I was so grateful! That experience stands out to me, both as an example of defeating *chronos* and as an example of how claiming *kairos*, opportunity, benefited me and others as well.

So now, *you* give it a try. Know that *kairos* is your birthright as God's idea, and overcome the claims and limits *chronos*-based thinking would make upon your life. Don't seek to manage time; defeat it. It has no place in God's kingdom or in your eternal, infinite life. To paraphrase Mary Baker Eddy: you lean upon the sustaining infinite. Today is big with blessings (**S&H** vii:1-2)!