Guidelines for the Duration of a Kairos Talk

Within Kairos there are 11 talks. A better way to say this is that there are 11 speakers who each deliver a portion of the message that we are giving to the participants on the Kairos weekend. These talks are defined as part of the Kairos method. The first talk begins a journey for each participant on the weekend. The last talk launches the participants into their 4th day journey. Each talk is another step on the journey. Each talk builds upon the previous talks and each talk lays the foundation for the upcoming talks.

The content of each talk is well defined by the Kairos ministry and must never be deviated from. This is part of our obedience to the ministry in which we all participate.

Kairos River Banks is the way in which we describe where we must comply exactly with the Kairos Method and where we have flexibility to make choices. The Kairos River Banks helps us to understand that there are limits to what is called Kairos inside and the remain within those limits. In some places within the Kairos Ministry, the river is wide and offers a large amount of flexibility and in other places it is very narrow. There are some places where the river is so narrow that there is only one choice available. This is another way of saying we have to follow Kairos established procedures.

Each Kairos talk has an allotted time budget (the amount allowed to deliver the talk). There are several reasons for this time allotment:

- The entire Kairos weekend is a short course in Christianity. The weekend has much material to cover with the participants and a very fixed amount of time in which to cover it. We need to ensure that all of the material is covered and so we must stay on schedule to do it.

- The average attention span of an adult is 20 minutes (note that this is the time allotted to a talk). Each speaker must ensure that the 20 minutes of their talk includes all material that they want the participants to remember. As an experiment, the next time you attend a talk look around after 25 minutes and see how many people are doing other things, such as doodling, looking at laptops, reading papers, or dozing. This happens during talks during the weekend.

Talks that go over the time limit cause several issues:

- The participants lose energy and focus. The Kairos method uses the breaks, periods of discussion, poster creation time, songs, and prayer time to maximize the energy and focus of the participants. When talks run over (especially when talk run over by a lot), that energy must be regenerated. An analogy to what you are doing is running hard for a few minutes, taking a break, then running hard again.

- We fall behind schedule and risk having to omit some content from the weekend. Slack is built into the schedule to handle emergencies that very well may occur. Emergencies have occurred on previous weekends:
  - A dense fog covered the camp, and created a security concern within the camp so all inmates were confined to their dorms until the fog lifted.
  - Incorrect count. The correctional officers have regularly scheduled counts of the inmates. If the total count within the camp is not correct, all activities within the camp (including the Kairos weekend) stop until the count is correct.

These emergencies (or unplanned delays) are not predictable and may never occur. If they do occur, we need to have the available flexibility in the schedule to react to them. It is the responsibility of the observing leader to manage the schedule to deal with these unplanned delays. If we have used all of our slack time, because talks have run over, we are not able to react to any unplanned delays.

- Each activity during the weekend is equally important to the overall success of the weekend: Talks, meditations, discussion time, poster time, break time, chapel time, music time, and meal time. We do not want to sacrifice one over the other.

As you prepare and practice your talk follow these guidelines:

- Your talk is a performance of sorts. It is a performance that is in service to Jesus, his Holy Spirit, the Kairos community and the participants on the weekend. The purpose of your talk is to get the message across to the participants so that they will know who Jesus is.

- Your words, your posters, and your body language are the tools we use to convey our message (the objective of your talk) to the participants.
• On average, people speak at a speed of 100 words per minute. So, if you are allowed to speak for 20 minutes, your talk should be no longer than 2,000 words.

• A rule of thumb is that each chart or poster that you use in your talk takes 5 minutes of discussion time within your talk. It follows that a 20 minute talk that has more than 4 charts may very well exceed the 20 minutes allocated for a talk.

• If the talk is written, it takes about 5 minutes for a talk to read one page of single lined 12 font type. Four pages will take 20 minutes. The same talk double lined will of course be 8 pages but still take 20 minutes.

• It will take longer than the practice time for the speaker to give the talk, therefore if the talk review takes 20 minutes, some topics should be summarized to eliminate time.

• The areas that speakers most often get in trouble are:
  
  o Personal witness. The personal witness is to support the points of the talk. Personal witness shows your vulnerability but more importantly how God supported you at a difficult point in your life that is related to the objective of the talk. God supports us in all aspects of our lives. Focus on the ones that support the objective of your talk only. Use break time and meal time for other personal witness.

  o Working from an outline with inadequate preparation. Practice your talk frequently before the Kairos weekend. If you want to use an outline when you give your talk, that is fine. Just remember to have practiced your talk sufficiently that you will remain within the allotted time when you are speaking from your outline.

  o Not having your charts and posters for review and practice. During your review and when you practice your talk, use your charts and posters. The mechanics of using the posters during your talk (changing the poster, referring to the poster, etc.) take time. Practicing with the posters allows you to gauge how long these mechanics take.

  o Asking participants to read the poster and waiting while they do so. Your participants will read the posters as you give your talk. The poster is part of the message and reinforces your words. You do not need to wait for the participants to read your poster.

  o Letting the posters “take over” your talk. Do not have so many posters or so much information on a poster that the posters become the center of your talk.

  o The main enemy of a presenter is tension, which ruins the voice, posture, and spontaneity. The voice becomes higher as the throat tenses. Shoulders tighten up and limits flexibility while the legs start to shake and causes unsteadiness. The presentation becomes "canned" as you lock in on your notes and start to read directly from them. First, do not fight nerves, welcome them! Then you can get on with the presentation instead of focusing in on being nervous. When we are nervous, adrenaline starts to kick in. When you feel tension or anxiety, remember that everyone gets them, but the Holy Spirit is with you and supports you. Let the speaker’s cross remind you that the Holy Spirit is working through you to convey the message of agape love to the participants.