

Make the Most of Every Opportunity

Pastor Kerry S. Doyal

"Make the most of every opportunity" sounds like advice from a business consultant, a high-priced efficiency expert. Perhaps Anthony Robbins comes to mind or Zig Zigler or John Maxwell.

"Make the most of every opportunity" reminds me of that well-known Latin phrase "carpe diem", seize the day. It conjures up images of people who are "gusto-grabbing, be all that you can be" kind of people. Diligent, focused, goal setting, objective-driven eager beavers who strike while the iron is hot, as they make hay while the sun shines.

"Make the most of every opportunity" is a phrase laden with wisdom, worthy of contemplation. In and of itself it would not be a bad life motto or motivational plaque. Yet, when it is seen and set in its context, this God-given word of wisdom is particularly instructive for disciples of Jesus in how they relate to those who still need Him.

"Make the most of every opportunity" is from a letter the Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Colossae, a church he had not started, nor at that point even visited. As he asked for prayer for his own ministry of sharing Christ with others, he exhorted them to creatively capitalize on their interactions with unbelievers. They were to thoroughly and wisely "exploit" all their interactions with the unsaved to point them to Jesus.

An outreach mindset was to impact their walk and their talk - which was to be filled with grace.

Before we go any farther, carefully read this rich text a time or two:

Col. 4:2 "Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. 3 And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. 4 Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. 5 Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. 6 Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone." (NIV)

Some of those whom Paul had discipled during his two year ministry in Ephesus went out and proclaimed Christ and started churches in the surrounding area (see Acts 19). They took the message and passion of Paul - which was that of Jesus - and shared it with others (see Col. 1:27-29 & Matt. 28:16-20).

The church in Colossae was birthed by obedient believers who boldly, wisely and graciously made the most of gospel opportunities. Paul's plea in this passage is for this church to do as was done for them: with a wise walk, make the most of every opportunity as they sought to reach others for Jesus.

In a context dripping with prayer, Paul urges them to be wisely and winsomely engaged in the world so they may lead people to Jesus. Far from calling for a retreat from the world or accepting any recoiling from the world, they were to be strategic, sweet and sensible emissaries for Christ. Effectively, efficiently and with God-given wisdom reaching people for Christ.

They were to have "gospel eyes and hearts", seeing and seizing opportunities to share Jesus with outsiders - those still in the dominion of darkness, needing to be rescued as we were (Col. 1:12-14). Note carefully: "outsiders" does not mean "us versus them", but "us and them" - God's people by His grace and those who still need Him.

How wise is your walk towards those who do not know Jesus? More often it seems we either walk wide away from those of the world - fearful of contamination, or we walk wild and foolishly, ruining God-given chances to show and share Jesus.

Do you cut off chances to witness due to a lack of graciousness - guilty of crass, crude and condemning speech? Or does your kind demeanor itself create opportunities for telling the good news? Are you prayerfully watching for openings to steer conversations to Jesus, even creatively making openings?

Where has God strategically placed you as one of His lights? Are you up on a stand or under a basket (see Matt. 5:13-16)? Does foolish living obscure the light, dimming it, shading and tinting it (see Phil. 2:14-16; 1 Pet. 2:11-12)? What openings for the gospel - generational, ethnic, seasonal, cultural, geographical or economic - do you need eyes to see and then heart to enter into? Which needs is God calling you to meet?

How much does Matthews' description of Jesus sound like you? "But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. 37 Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. 38" Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." (Mt. 9:36-38 -NKJV.)

Jesus saw their deep needs and hurts. He was seized by their hopelessness. He solicited His disciples to pray that God would send out desperately needed harvesters.

Will you be an answer to their prayers? Let's strive to be wise and winsome world-walkers reaching out at home, work, school, the neighborhood, civic clubs, restaurants, teams, leagues. where ever and every where God has us!

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