

YOU ARE COMPLETE in HIM. COLOSSIANS 2:10, NCV

A new creation focus through Colossians ...

Making the Most of the Opportunity

Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost. That, of course, must be the mission of the church, and therefore the mission of every member of the church. One of the challenges is helping the brethren see that this too is their mission. When people first become Christians, they generally are focused on themselves; they want relief from a guilty conscience and forgiveness of sins. But as God continues their education or discipleship, His goal is to move them from that focus on themselves to a strong focus on others who are outside of Christ. To do that, God has to implant

His love and care for the lost in their breasts. He has to give them the confidence and assurance that they are capable of carrying out His mission. He has to provide them with the courage necessary to face the obstacles and persecution often connected with seeking and saving the lost. He has to help them develop the commitment necessary for the patience needed in working with the lost and helping them understand their desperate condition. And God has to have the teaching in place that helps the saint develop the deep conviction of the truthfulness of God's claims as revealed in the written word of God. As these qualities increasingly develop within the disciple of Christ, he becomes a more effective "fisher of men."

- ▼ **Wisdom toward outsiders** — Most of the effective work in seeking and saving the lost is going to develop from the individual or private conversations that spring up as Christians intermingle with those who are lost or of the world. Hence comes the imperative exordium from the apostle Paul, "Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity" (Colossians 4:5). Those who are serious anglers spend a lot of time figuring out how best to be successful in their fishing. The money spent on the appropriate fly rods, the lures, the "flies" themselves, is astounding. How much more, then, should saints of God be diligent in their preparation in "fishing for men"! If the disciple of Christ is not mentally, spiritually, and emotionally prepared, he will miss many of the opportunities to set up Bible studies. The opportunity will be there, but he won't see it because he is really not looking for it. Therefore Christ wants His followers to be geared up and ready to "redeem the time," to make the most of that opportunity.

- ▼ **Intelligent speech** — Since most of the opportunities develop out of personal or private conversations, the Father wants His children to engage in intelligent but purpose-driven communication. The prefacing words are "conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders." These are followed by, "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person" (Colossians 4:6). Gracious speech is forgiving, but it is also "giving." It always is teaching or motivating, with discernment expressing concern for the individual on the other end of the conversation. But that speech is also "seasoned with salt"; that is, there are always "trolling hooks" being pulled through the waters of the conversation to see if there is an opening for directing the conversation toward setting up a Bible study or moving things forward spiritually.

All these things fit the category of what might be called "skills." Basically, in the use of any skill, the more a person practices his skill the better he becomes. So it is with conversation; it is a skill. Hence, the more the saint practices his technique in getting the Bible study, the more effective he will become in so doing. This cumulative improvement in the skill set is even called in our vernacular "know how." God wants each of His messengers to get enough of that "know how" so that they can respond properly "to each person." So ... let's get out there and "make the most of the opportunity!" — for the glory of God, the salvation of the lost, and the expansion of Jesus' kingdom!!

JAY WILSON

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