

How to Seize Opportunities 1 Corinthians 16:5-12

Introduction:

1. Have you ever really needed something from the store (a missing ingredient, medicine, etc.), only to run up to the door and find it locked? A locked door means no opportunity.
2. But on the other hand, have you ever needed something, you knew you were running close to closing time, and when you get to the door, it opens. When that door opens, you are filled with joy. Why? Now you have **opportunity** to get what you need.
3. Many times Paul would use the word "door" as a figurative term for opportunity. Let's read verses 8-9. There was a great door of opportunity that Paul had while in Ephesus. As we read Acts 19, we understand how true this was.
 - Paul was there over two years, with many people getting saved, lives being radically changed, and the Word of God going through all of Asia. vs. 10, 18-20
4. We see this same "door of opportunity" in **Acts 14:27**, **2 Corinthians 2:12**, and **Colossians 4:3**.
5. The apostle Paul accomplished so much for the Lord during his time on earth. How did Paul go about seizing the opportunities that came his way?
6. This text will give us some valuable insight into Paul's thinking as he ministered for the Lord. How can we seize the open doors or opportunities that come in the Lord's work?

First, we must take the time to develop a strategic plan.

1. As we read verses 1-7, it is clear that Paul was not shooting from the hip. He had a plan and put it in writing for the Corinthians to read.
 - He had a strategic plan for the offering he was collecting for the poor saints at Jerusalem.
 - He had a plan for the correct and right way to get the offering to Jerusalem.
 - He had personal travel plans for the future.
2. What is it that you would like to accomplish in the Lord's work? Do you have a plan for how you are going to accomplish it? Until you have a plan and can write it down, you don't have a **goal**, you simply have a good **idea**. Good ideas seldom come to fruition without a plan.
 - **Illustration:** take a missions trip, become a teacher of God's Word, become a missionary, enter full-time Christian service, start a new ministry, increase my giving to God's work, etc.
3. There are two unbiblical extremes when it comes to the subject of planning. Both of these unscriptural ideas will kill planning and cause you to miss opportunities in God's work.
 - First extreme: "I'm just going to let the Spirit lead me." Some people never plan or give any forethought to things because they think it is somehow non-spiritual to do this. Remember - the Spirit can lead in your planning! Paul was a strategic planner.

- Second extreme: "I'm going to wait on God to show me His plan." This is the thought that there is this preordained plan that God has from the foundation of the world for the details of your life and you have to somehow find God's will. This entire text refutes this form of fatalism. vs. 4, 6, 12
4. The first extreme leads to impulse - spontaneous decisions that are not well thought out. The second extreme leads to inactivity because you are sitting around waiting on "signs from God" to show you what to do.
 5. With Paul we see a balance. Paul was a planner and didn't hesitate to make plans, but he also maintained flexibility realizing that circumstances can change our plans. In everything he was yielded to Christ knowing that the Lord could overrule his plans at any time. vs. 7

Second, we must recognize our adversaries.

1. In verse 9, Paul said that there was a great (big) and effectual (active, operative, powerful) door opened in Ephesus, but there were adversaries that wanted to see the door shut.
 - As we read Acts 19, we can read of the intense opposition that Paul encountered while in Ephesus. There were people that were filled with the spirit of Satan that wanted to shut down Paul's ministry.
2. Of course, Satan is our chief adversary (**Ephesians 6:11-12**). Satan loves to throw road-blocks in front of us so we don't seize the opportunities that are there.
 - Satan is not going to give us a free pass. He is our adversary.
3. Once you strategically lay out your plan, you need to realistically look at what your chief adversaries are that could keep you from accomplishing the plan.
4. Ask yourself, "What roadblocks could Satan use in hindering me from accomplishing this work for God?" Once you recognize your adversaries, you can intelligently pray and develop a plan of attack in how to overcome them.

Third, we must learn to work with and through our other co-laborers.

1. Timothy was Paul's son in the faith. Paul had sent Timothy on ahead. Notice what Paul says about Timothy in verse 10: *"...for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do."*
2. I love Paul's attitude. He didn't consider himself to be the only one - "I am the great Paul and I am the only one who can do this service for Christ." His attitude was just the opposite. He had no inflated opinion of himself.
3. Do you remember, many in Corinth had carnally chosen certain leaders as their favorites, and Apollos was one of those in the center of this controversy? Apollos was a great and powerful Bible teacher and the controversy was not of his making.
4. Yet there is not a jealous bone in Paul's body. He had encouraged Apollos to go back to Corinth and teach God's Word. vs. 12
5. What is the point? Paul didn't hesitate to work with and through other people when it came to accomplishing the work of the ministry. He didn't hesitate to ask other people for their help and assistance. He wasn't jealous of others and their contribution to God's work.
6. As you lay out your goals and plans in God's work, realize your adversaries, but then ask yourself, "Who can I enlist to help me accomplish these plans and goals?"

- If you desire to one day work with teens, I would be getting with Rob Hall. If I wanted to counsel, Kathy Shive would become my friend real quick. If I wanted to preach and teach God's Word, I would get in the BI class this semester and soak up everything I could, like a sponge.
7. The body of Christ is a body. A body has many parts, but they all work together to accomplish whatever the head desires to do.
 8. God didn't plan for you to go at it alone and be an island unto yourself. If Paul had not utilized other members of the body, he could have never accomplished all that he did.

In Conclusion:

1. The problem is not that there are not open doors of opportunity for us to serve the Lord. The open doors are there, but how do we seize those opportunities?
2. Devise a plan, recognize the adversaries that could keep you from accomplishing the plan, and enlist other believers to assist you.
3. Let's seize the open doors that God has given to each of us.