

## **New Opportunity**

David Flatt

**Opportunity:** “a set of circumstances that make it possible to do something.”

Why does opportunity have to pass us by before we recognize it? I’m not sure exactly why this happens, but it does. Once opportunity passes us by, it’s too late to seize it. There are reasons we let opportunities slip through our fingers. Some are not looking for opportunities to share Christ. Some think someone else will seize the opportunity. Some are self-absorbed and inconsiderate. Others think they are incapable of making wise use of opportunities.

God provides us with opportunities to influence others with the Gospel. Jesus once assured the apostles that a great harvest for God was ready. Workers were needed to bring in the harvest (Matt. 9:37-38). We are God’s workers. We must diligently work while there is time (John 4:35).

Recognizing opportunity demands a certain perspective of the world. Paul told the Ephesians, “...Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:14-16).

As Christians, we must always be looking for opportunities to share Jesus with other people. The apostle Paul asked the church at Colossae to pray for God to open doors of opportunity in his work: “At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison—that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak” (Col. 4:3-4).

Opportunity is a general concept; yet, it is presented in specific forms. For example, someone grieving gives us the opportunity to comfort. Someone straying from the Lord gives us an opportunity seek restoration. Someone speaking against God gives us the opportunity to defend the faith. Someone lost gives us the opportunity to lead to Christ. In this article, we want to refocus on a specific opportunity that is currently being presented to us.

### **The Pandemic & Opportunity**

The pandemic has had a major impact on faith. There is a certain demographic of people that have stopped attending church services. This problem has been widespread among all churches. Some people have been away due to health concerns. This is not the demographic we are considering. The ones we are especially concerned about are those whose faith has been harmed by the pandemic.

For some, the pandemic was the final push to stop worshipping. Their attendance was infrequent pre-pandemic. The pandemic gave them cover to quietly disappear. Others stopped attending with the intention of returning when they felt safe. Then, plans changed, new habits formed, and they did not return.

The percentage of people who quit attending church services during the pandemic is our opportunity. Think of someone who you have not seen at worship in a long time. Is there some way

that you could reach out to them and invite them to return to worship? Perhaps they feel awkward returning after a prolonged absence. Let them know that they are welcomed. If you were away for a time, but returned, relate to them about the value of worshipping with the church. Assure them of their need to worship with the church. Let them know they have been missed. Express understanding, concern, and love to them.

Additionally, are there people you know who attended a church other than Fry Road but stopped during the pandemic? This could be an opportunity to invite them to worship with you. They could learn the truth.

The pandemic has been hard on everyone. There is a tremendous amount of negativity in the world. People are frustrated and discouraged. Only those who are sustained by hope will see the opportunity that is before us.

### **The More Excellent Approach**

As is characteristic of opportunity, we must seize the moment. Opportunity is worthless if it is not taken. This moment of opportunity is critical. We are at the close of 2021. This is the time of year when people reflect on their life and make plans for their future. For some, spiritual needs may be weighing heavily on their hearts. You could be the difference in someone's life.

A word of caution is in order. Different situations call for different approaches. Jude wrote, "But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh" (Jude 1:20-23). We must pray that God grants us the wisdom to recognize the best approach for every situation.

Seizing the opportunities of the pandemic requires gentleness and skill. Approaching people with self-righteous condescension will only cause harm. The cross of Jesus must influence how we seek to persuade hearts and minds. The cross of Jesus draws people by communicating self-giving love. Self-giving love truly is the more excellent approach for everything in life. May love guide us in the opportunities before us.

*Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude;*

*It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;*

*It does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.*

*Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

**1 Corinthians 14:4-7**