



### **INTRODUCTION:**

- Are you ready for God's Word?
- We've looked at how a LIFE WORTH LIVING is a life that is lived with eternity in mind
- I have a little note in one of my Bibles that says... be eternally minded
- It's a great reminder
- We also said that a LIFE WORTH LIVING is a life that embraces all the seasons of life
- We've looked at how a LIFE WORTH LIVING is a life that embraces JOY and lives responsibly with the blessings God gives to us
- Last time we looked at a LIFE WORTH LIVING as a life that embraces WISDOM which we defined as living life from God's Perspective
- Today as we continue looking at LIFE WORTH LIVING, I want to look at OPPORTUNITY
- A LIFE WORTH LIVING is a LIFE that embraces OPPORTUNITY when it comes

### ***Andy Stanley in his book Visioneering said this...***

We don't need to pray for more Miracles, we just need to be more sensitive to the opportunities that God brings our way

- The problem isn't more or better opportunities
- The problem is sensitivity to the opportunities God is already bringing
- And learning to live in a constant state of readiness to respond
- So today I want to look at embracing the OPPORTUNITIES that God brings and how we can live ready to respond

### ***Solomon writes in Ecclesiastes 9:11***

Ecclesiastes 9:11 (NKJV)

<sup>11</sup> I returned and saw under the sun that— The race *is* not to the swift, Nor the battle to the strong, Nor bread to the wise, Nor riches to men of understanding, Nor favor to men of skill; But time and chance happen to them all.

### ***The first thing I want you to notice is... Solomon makes it clear that OPPORTUNITIES are present in every circumstance of life***

- He mentions five areas... The race, the battle, daily provision, riches and favor.
- Paul uses the metaphor of a race when describing our lives



- He also uses the metaphor of a spiritual battle
- Jesus used the metaphor of bread to refer to our daily provisions
- Solomon refers to riches and David spoke of the Lord's favor
- In all five areas... time and chance happen to them all

### ***What does Solomon mean?***

- When he speaks of time he speaks of the fact that every person has been given the same amount of time... 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- No one is given an unfair advantage in the area of time
- What you do with your time is 100% your choice
- When Solomon speaks of chance the word used means "to meet" and it carries with it the idea of physical contact
- It's like lightning that strikes its mark with sure aim
- So there are in every area of life - occurrences, events, opportunities that strike our lives with the sure aim of the hand of God... like lightning
- Opportunities sent by God and how we respond to those opportunities is up to us

True story... M&M's lost out to Reese's Pieces when Mars Candy didn't grasp why it should be featured in a new film... the film? E.T.

The iPod wasn't actually invented by Apple

It was invented by Tony Fadell, an engineer at Phillips Electronics

He pitched an idea to pair a music player that was tied to a streaming content delivery system to Phillips and a then media giant called Real Network

They passed... they couldn't see it, but Steve Jobs saw it and grabbed hold of it and the rest is history...

- There are opportunities being sent by God that strike our lives with precision accuracy and the question is are we ready to respond?
- Do we recognize the opportunities that God is sending our way or are we so caught up with the distractions of life that we miss those divinely orchestrated events that strike our lives from the hand of God?
- If you want to be successful, start looking for those divine appointments that God brings into your life
- Ask God to make you sensitive to the doors of effective service that He is opening all around you and be ready to walk through them



***The second thing I want you to notice is... being the most gifted, most skilled, the smartest, the wisest or the strongest doesn't guarantee success***

- Solomon says... the race doesn't go to the swift
- The battle doesn't go to the strong
- Provision isn't guaranteed to the wise
- Riches aren't guaranteed to the ones with the greatest know how
- Favor doesn't automatically follow the skilled
- But time and chance happen to them all

***Now this is a hard one for us to understand***

- We teach our kids work hard, study hard, go to school, get an education, learn a skill, become the best you... you can be and you will be successful
- The Bible teaches us the benefits of hard work
- But we can set our kids up for failure by not teaching them the greatest value of all... that God created us for a purpose and when we are faithfully living out God's purpose for our lives that's when we are most successful

1 Corinthians 1:26–31 (NKJV)

<sup>26</sup> For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*. <sup>27</sup> But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; <sup>28</sup> and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, <sup>29</sup> that no flesh should glory in His presence. <sup>30</sup> But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—<sup>31</sup> that, as it is written, "*He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.*"

***Now I want you to understand the words of Paul who is writing this***

- Paul was the rising star of his day
- Educated by Gamaliel, the rabbi of rabbis
- He was the promising new talent, passionate, intelligent, persuasive
- Until he went to Mars Hill where he was met with total defeat
- The craftsmanship of his message was exemplary
- His delivery was flawless... the only problem? No one responded



- No one was saved and Paul left Athens a failure and went to Corinth

### ***We read this about his arrival in Corinth***

1 Corinthians 2:1–3 (NKJV)

2 And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. <sup>2</sup> For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. <sup>3</sup> I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.

- Paul realized that his skill, his speed, his strength, his wisdom and understanding wasn't enough
- His success wasn't based on his talent or his training, it was the work of God in His life

### ***And so he made a decision***

1 Corinthians 2:4–5 (NKJV)

<sup>4</sup> And my speech and my preaching *were* not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, <sup>5</sup> that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

### ***Paul understood, if anything good happens, it's because God's in it so he who glories, let him glory in the Lord***

- So I'm going to be led by the Spirit
- I'm going to allow the Spirit to work powerfully in my business
- I'm going to allow the Spirit to work powerfully in my home, my marriage
- I'm not going to rest on my skill, my talent, my abilities...
- I'm going to be faithful to say yes to the doors that are opening and allow God to be God in my life
- So what are the roadblocks in our life that keep us from seeing the Opportunities that God is bringing into our lives?

### ***One is our own strength, wisdom and understanding***

- Peter when he was praying saw a vision of a sheet coming down from heaven in Acts 10
- There were all kinds of four-footed animals, wild beasts, creeping things and birds of the air... all forbidden by the Jews to eat
- A voice from heaven says... Rise, Peter; kill and eat
- Peter says... no way Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean



- This happens 3 times and God tells Peter... What God has cleansed you must not call common
- Peter was a devout Jew, he was strong in his faith, he knew the law
- So he was only responding out of what he knew
- But God was confronting his understanding of the law with a higher law... the law of love
- Sometimes our strengths, our wisdom, our knowledge can make us insensitive to the opportunities God brings into our lives... like Peter

***Listen to what a few of the experts said about the opportunities of their day***

- Western Union said... This telephone has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication. The device is inherently of no value to us.
- The famous British scientist Lord Kelvin said... Radio has no future. Heavier than air flying machines are impossible
- Business Week in 1968 published.... With over 50 foreign cars already on sale here, the Japanese auto industry isn't likely to carve out a big slice of the U.S. Market
- The inventor of the adhesive for 3M Post-it notes said... If I had thought about it, I wouldn't have done the experiment. The literature was full of examples that said you can't do this.
- My favorite... It will be years, not in my time, before a woman will become Prime Minister... spoken by Margaret Thatcher
- How often does our strengths, our understanding, our wisdom gets in the way of seeing what God wants to do
- That's why Solomon says those things don't guarantee success
- Rather Solomon says... lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths (Proverbs 3:5)
- Don't let what you know or what you see keep you from what God has for you

***The Second is unbelief***

- Unbelief keeps us from taking advantage of the opportunities that God brings into our lives
- I think of the parable of the talents
- The owner gives 5 talents to one, 2 to another and 1 to a third
- You know the story, the ones with 5 and 2 talents invested their talents and doubled their investments



- The one with the 1 talent buried it in the ground and we read

Matthew 25:24–28 (NKJV)

<sup>24</sup> “Then he who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. <sup>25</sup> And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, *there* you have *what is yours*.’

<sup>26</sup> “But his lord answered and said to him, ‘You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. <sup>27</sup> So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. <sup>28</sup> So take the talent from him, and give *it* to him who has ten talents.’

- What’s interesting about the servant with the 1 talent is his view of his boss
- He did not believe that his boss was a good man
- He believed his boss was a hard man and because of that he hid what he was entrusted with
- How many of you hide what God has entrusted to you simply because you believe God to be a hard man
- He’s going to make you do something you don’t want to do
- Go somewhere you don’t want to go
- So you just say NO to everything that way God can’t take what little I have... it’s really a matter of unbelief
- I don’t believe that God really knows what’s best for me or has my best interest in mind and so I’m not even open to whatever opportunities He brings into my life
- I don’t want my life interrupted... I like it the way it is... Stop pressuring me... I’m barely hanging on, how can I do more?
- But what you don’t realize is saying NO to the opportunities God brings into your life is really hurting you because your missing out on the blessings, the joy, the abundant life, the freedom God wants to give you
- Better to simply surrender your life to Jesus and say YES LORD
- God gives Time and Chance to us all... are you ready when it comes?