

Opportunity Knocks

2024 Year Kickoff – The Year of Opportunity

January 6-7, 2024

Galatians 6:10

Introduction

- **A New Era for Bridgeway** – the **aircraft carrier model** (Eric & John). The **prophetic prayer** of being in the water. The **gift** by Banning Leibscher.
 - *“When you mentioned that someone had given you a word that your ship was in the water, my heart was stirred. I believe it was the world of the Lord for you and your church right now. The season you have been in is over, and it’s time to sail! I felt I was to send you this gift as a prophetic statement. What God has been doing is equipping you for war. He has not built a sailboat but a warship. But it not just a warship but a hospital ship sent to rescue and heal thousands. The ship in the picture is the SS HOPE, originally a US navy hospital ship. It was donated to Project Hope in 1958 and served as [the first peacetime] civilian floating hospital ship with 150 nurses and 100 doctors who taught and helped around the world. It was retired in 1974...My friend, I can’t wait to see all God does. I’m cheering you on, praying for you, and believing that the days ahead for your church are going to be beyond anything you can think or imagine. This last season has simply been the Lord building a ship that is about to impact thousands upon thousands, and that ship is officially in the water!. In your corner, Banning.”*
 - **Past the Past and Onto the Future** - We are past the big adjustments, we are past the pandemic, we are in the water and on our way. You get to be a part of that.
- **God is always communicating with us and working around us.** **The question is whether or not we are tracking on it.**
- **Making the most of our lives**
 - Ga 6:7b–10 – *“...whatever one sows, that will he also reap. ⁸For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. ⁹And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. ¹⁰So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”*
 - **An Opportunity to Change the World** - We have things to do in this life, important things. God has honored us with the invitation and opportunity to be a part of His plans to change the world.

- **How God uses opportunity** – The Bible records God’s design of opportunities for His people in many ways. Due to His creativity many times those opportunities come in ways we would never expect nor recognize if it happened.¹
 - **Famous Biblical Stories of OPPORTUNITY**
 - God told **Noah** to build a boat when it hadn’t rained before. Noah took the assignment.
 - God asked **Abraham** to sacrifice his son – Abraham didn’t hold back – blessing.
 - **Joseph** made the most of every opportunity even when it showed up in prison and slavery.
 - **Moses** lost focus and missed out on entering the Promised Land.
 - **Gideon** became a famous warrior through a supernatural angelic visitation and following the worst battle plans of all time (even the Jericho walkers were shocked at the awkwardness).
 - **Both Saul and David** had an opportunity to be God’s man on the throne. One succeeded, one failed.
 - The nation of Israel saw a **giant**, David saw a **blasphemer** who needed to be silenced.
 - One time **Peter** blew an opportunity to stand up for Jesus (denying Him) and other times he didn’t.
 - **The list goes on and on.** It’s impossible to track on all the opportunities in Scripture.
 - **The most famous and blatant opportunity-capture story was that of Esther** – **PARAPHRASE** the story.
 - **A stunning young lady (2:7)** – her beauty created an opportunity. Not all good nor all bad. But God was going to use it.
 - **No parents around (2:7)** – we don’t know how her parents died but she was an orphan and adopted by her older cousin, Mordecai who worked for the Babylonian king.
 - **An open Queen spot** – the king and queen had a fight, and she was out. That left a vacancy, an opportunity for someone else to fill it.
 - **A dysfunctional beauty pageant** – the advisors and king decide that to fill the spot they are going to have a beauty pageant and take advantage of a young lady. It could be an opportunity for a poor

¹ Persecution is an opportunity to ‘bear witness’ – Luke 21:12-15
 God creates opportunities to defeat the enemy (Samson v. Philistines) – Judges 14:4

family to be wealthy, or it could be an opportunity for trauma. Esther's cousin and adopted dad signs her up.

- **A dysfunctional process navigated with grace** – Esther approached the situation with grace and with humility. She acted that way with Mordecai (her dad – 2:20) and with the guy in charge of the pageant process (Hegai). She didn't cop an attitude, she rolled with what was in front of her (2:15).
- **Failed Assassination** - Mordecai happened to hear about an assassination plot toward the king and busts the bad guys. (2:19-23). Mordecai could have stayed out of it. He didn't.
- **A bad guy (Haman) launches a plan of Jewish genocide** – The right hand of the king seeks to destroy all of the Jews, but Mordecai convinces Esther to intervene. She's terrified but decides to take the opportunity and stand for what's right.
 - **Mordecai said**, *“Do not think to yourself that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. ¹⁴ For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”* (Es 4:13–14)
- **The most interesting fact about the Book of Esther** – there are so many more COINCIDENCES in the story. It's full of them. We only hit some highlights. BUT, there is one more, perhaps the most fascinating fact about this book...**it doesn't mention God's name ONCE**, yet His fingerprints are all over every page of it. If you look through a secular lens you see coincidence and serendipity. If you look through a spiritual lens you see a dramatic rescue from a Personal God.

Lesson

- **Why we want to walk into God's opportunities** – there are a million reasons why we want to grow in tracking on God's opportunities and walking into them more consistently, but I just want to highlight 3 to get us started for the year:
 1. **Honor to His Name** – how much of our life makes God smile? How much does our loving Father have to tolerate in us and work around versus smoothly flow through?
 2. **Greater Purpose and Meaning in Life** – Inside we all crave to be a part of something that matters. We want our lives to have meaning. There is no

greater meaning or purpose than partnering with the eternally valuable works of God.

3. **A Deeper Relationship with God** – living disconnected from God is a lonely existence. When people fail us God does not. When others leave us, He does not. The more we can personally develop that depth of connection with our Lord, the brighter our life becomes.
 - **So, how do we do this?** – how do we hear God? How do we track on His movements? How do we notice His windows and doors of opportunity that He opens for us? How do we say yes, when they come? That's what this year is about. So, let's dive into the heart of it right now...
 - **There are two key components to living a life that sees and responds to God's opportunities:** 1.) it **BEGINS** with a perspective shift; 2.) it **ACTIVATES** through intentional choices.
- **A.) Walking into God's Opportunities BEGINS with PERSPECTIVE SHIFT** – Although the Bible tells us that God is speaking through the world around us and even within nature that He has created, most of us are not trained to pay attention to it. Many of us believe that God is largely silent, yet to those attentive they see and hear Him everywhere. The difference tends to be perspective. It's all about what we are looking for and what we are expecting. There are 3 core perspective shifts that will help us see the movement and hear the voice of our God.
 - **The Right Worldview - Why are we here?** What's the purpose of our existence? The Bible indicates that there are 2 primary reasons for our creation. 1.) Relationship with Him; 2.) to bring glory to His name. Both of those demand that we can track on and interact with Him in real time.
 - **Relationship demands** – human beings develop relationships **through communication and shared experiences**. That is true of people to people and also with God. So, any of our lives that seem devoid of interaction with God leaves our spiritual lives feeling very distant. Yet **the more we can EXPERIENCE Him, the more it feels personal and we begin to bond**.
 - **Glory activity demands** – what do we have that we can bring to the table that is fit for a King who has everything? **Obedience and worship**, that's about it. We can offer our hearts, our lives and our praise. Outside of that He, He already has everything we could possibly come up with. Therefore **it's incumbent upon us to hear Him and respond to Him**. This

means that tracking on the activity of God is paramount to a thriving Christian life.

- **The Right Heart** – Communicating to a distracted or resistant person is ineffective. They CAN hear, but they WILL not hear. Part of living the Christian life that God designed for us is remaining continually open to God's transformative activity in our lives. It's about **availability and expectation**. Expectation that God is moving around us.
 - **Humility and Attentiveness** – WHEN God calls and moves around us, and He does so continually, **the condition of our heart will determine whether we will notice and respond**.
 - **Attentiveness is the concept of being alert**. It's about looking for the Lord to move. It's about tracking the Holy Spirit's activity. It's about **seeing through the normal** into the supernatural.
 - **Humility is the concept of seeing that it's all about God and not about us**. It is the perspective of the waiting servant. It's a heart that has a **YES, SIR, prepared** in advance.
- **The Right Mindset** – This is about having a maturing and growth mindset, both to allow God to personally change us and also to utilize us at will.
 - **Personal Growth** – If we don't believe that growth and transformation are possible, we will be unlikely to take advantage of opportunities in front of us. When God opens up a new class to learn more about prayer, but we think that prayer classes are only for the spiritually gifted in prayer, we are going to pass on the opportunity.
 - **Growth in Responsiveness** – All of us are continually battling flesh vs. spirit. We are always going to WANT to be selfish and make decisions that best suit us, however, the more we realize that the most fulfilling aspects of life are doing what God wants us to do, we begin to lean toward following the Spirit. So often, we sense or hear God's whisper, but we don't want to do it. That has to change.
- **3 Books we are going to cover this year to help shift our Perspective.** These books will align our worldview with one that is a biblically-based. They will also develop a right heart in us and they will alter our mindset.
 1. **Ezekiel – "Impossible Hope" 7-part series** - making the invisible, visible. God pulls back the curtain and lets Ezekiel (and us) in on the greatest secret...there's another reality that is even more real than our own and far more influential (the supernatural). In a mind-bending way, God

shifts Ezekiel's perspective to see that there is so much more going on than he assumed. We are a part of it. That begins next week. Don't miss it.

2. **The Gospel of Mark – “The Greatest Opportunity” 34-part series** - the majority of the year is going to be spent learning what it looks like to follow Jesus every day. No one created and took advantage of divine opportunities like Jesus Christ. We will learn how to see the world through His lens and how to make the most of opportunities that the Holy Spirit presents us.
 3. **Jonah – “Consumed” 3-part series** – studying what it looks like when God puts a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity in front of His people, and they are too distracted and resistant to bother.
- **B.) Walking into God's Opportunities ACTIVATES with INTENTIONAL CHOICES** - How do we begin to live lives that take advantage of the opportunities that God provides? There are people who live on purpose and people who live on accident. There are people who live intentionally and people who live in reaction. What type of person will you be in 2024?
 - **Personal Transformation** – We must be INTENTIONAL in our own transformation in 2024. There's a significant difference between those who accidentally go through life and hope that God is doing work in them, and those who intentionally partner with what He wants to do within them.
 - **My Wheel of Transformation** – One concept that God revealed to me a long time ago and I've operated off of it most of my life, I call my wheel of transformation. Picture a wheel that has a bunch of different slices of pie/portions. Think, “Wheel of Fortune game wheel”. On each portion there is a different element of the Christian life: prayer, spiritual disciplines, supernatural ministry, bible study, patience, love, evangelism, etc. I picture that God wants to develop me holistically but I can only focus on one or two at a time. Once I develop that area significantly, I click the wheel to the right and it's a whole new category that I have to start growing in anew. That allows my discipleship process to be both perpetual/continual, AND it keeps me humble since I'm always starting at the bottom of any given category, and I never feel like I have “arrived.”
 - **How to build each portion** – each time a new portion is revealed in my life to work on, I have to look around and see what opportunities are in

front of me to develop that specific aspect of my Christian life. When I wanted to grow in my Church leadership I stepped into the doctoral program. When I wanted to grow in my understanding of the supernatural I read books and attended conferences. When I wanted to learn about silence and solitude as a discipline, I went to a Catholic retreat center. When I wanted to learn about evangelism, I went out on the street and partnered with those who knew more. So much of my maturity today had to do with a piece-by-piece development program along the way.

- **Existing opportunities at Bridgeway** – Everyone at Bridgeway has this OPPORTUNITY right in front of them. Use the **discipleship systems that we have in place**.
 1. **Classes-** These are **short-term learning environments** where you get trained in a **specific practice or subject**.
 2. **Workshops-** These are **weekend events that address big topics**. In 2024, we are planning workshops about mental health, parenting, and church hurt.
 3. **Personal time with the Lord-** We grow in our connection with the Lord by **spending time with him**.
 4. **Community Groups and Start-** Community Groups at Bridgeway are a place to **make friends and make a difference with Jesus at the center**. The best way to connect with a Community Group is to **join START**, a nine-week on-campus discipleship experience that will help you deepen your faith and connect with others who want to start a group.
 5. **Events-** We will have numerous events throughout the year that are designed to help you **connect with others while having fun and growing spiritually**.
 6. **Serving-** There are always **plenty of volunteer opportunities** at Bridgeway, and serving is one of the best ways to meet people and grow spiritually.
- www.bridgeway.church/opportunity- On this page, we'll provide resources for general spiritual growth and for going deeper with the topics we're covering in weekend services.

Conclusion

- **This is our chance to GROW.** This is our chance to start becoming what God designed us to be.

- **Look for Opportunities to engage with the Lord and see things afresh.** This is not the year to sit back and observe, or to simply do things that way they have always been done. This is a year of learning, of eye-opening, of new experiences, anticipation, expectation, divine appointments, and miracles.
- **Who's Your 1 Person?** – we have an assignment this year, each one of us. All of us need to bring at least 1 person to church that has never come before and who needs Jesus. This means that we are going to start praying for an open door now, to invite them, and then we are going to look for opportunities over the next few months. It's not about forcing anyone but joining the Holy Spirit as HE opens their hearts to the possibility.
- **Let's pray about our person right now as well as eyes to see opportunities.**