

# How to have a great year!

## Lesson for Sunday, January 1, 2023

### INTRODUCTION:

- Begin with a brief discussion: What will you remember about 2022?
- Ask this follow-up: What kind of year are you expecting?
- While many of the events of the coming year are outside our control, there is much that we are responsible for and can influence. Primarily, will you walk with God in the coming year?
- Today, we will look at a passage of Scripture that outlines the practices that characterize the successful Christian life.
- Read as a class Colossians 4:2-5.

**BIBLE STUDY:** In this passage, Paul is beginning to wrap up his letter to the Christian church at Colossae. As he often does, he fires off a series of instructions that he wants to remember and apply.

1. Constantly practice prayer (vs. 2)
  - a. Paul begins with the word “continue” which means to be courageously persistent, or to hold fast and not let go.
  - b. He follows up with the “watch.” This has the idea of being vigilant. It means to stay awake while praying.
  - c. Paul has the idea of staying alert for specific needs about which to pray, rather than being vague or unfocused in our requests. This reminds us of Jesus’s teaching in Matthew 6 about praying “vain repetitions.”
  - d. Always remember the old adage, “little prayer-little power, great prayer-great power.”
    - i. James said we have not because we ask not (James 4:2).
    - ii. Paul wrote to pray without ceasing in 1 Thessalonians 5. Pray when you get up, in the car, when you walk across the parking lot.
    - iii. Prayer takes work, a behavior that God expects us to do for ourselves.
    - iv. Many Christians often practice “Why pray when you can worry”, when they should be practicing (Matt. 7:7) asking and seeking and knocking your way into peace through prayer (Phil. 4).
  - e. Do you want a good 2023? Practice prayer.
2. Constantly work on being thankful (vs. 2)
  - a. Paul is writing from prison and yet five times in this little letter he refers to thanks (1:12, 2:7, 3:15, 3:17, 4:2).
  - b. Over 130 times the Bible addresses this major subject of “thankfulness.”
  - c. Failure to genuinely be thankful (Rom 1:21) is the first sign of a cold or wicked heart.
  - d. Most of the world (& Christians) complain. But Paul writes in Philippians 2 that complaining is a sin. When we complain we are questioning the sovereignty of God in every situation.
  - e. Instead, Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 5:18 that we are to give thanks in all things. Note he does not say to give thanks for all things, but in all things.
  - f. More importantly, the verse in 1 Thessalonians says that a thankful spirit is the will of God for our lives.
  - g. Do you want a good 2023? Learn to practice thanksgiving in every area of life.
3. Constantly witness (vs. 3-4)
  - a. Amazingly, Paul did not ask them to pray that he be released from prison. Instead, he asks them to pray for boldness in his witnessing opportunities.
  - b. Paul is praying for “a door of utterance.” He wants the Lord to open a door of opportunity to speak to others about Christ.
  - c. Every situation (even prison) was an opportunity for Paul to share the Good News with others.

- d. Too often, we segregate witnessing to specific times of our week (at church or on visitation). The best opportunities to witness come in the daily activities of life.
  - e. The problem: We often are not looking for an open door of opportunity as was Paul.
  - f. Do you want a great 2023? Nothing will do more for your spiritual growth than becoming a faithful witness for Christ.
4. Constantly walk in wisdom (vs. 5)
    - a. What is wisdom? One simple definition: Wisdom is the willingness to adjust my life to God's expectations. After all, this is His world – and we're just living in it.
    - b. When we understand that God is the Creator of this world we can begin to live wisely – we live according to how He set it up.
    - c. The source of wisdom is God's Word (Psalm 19:7). We cannot walk in wisdom without spending time in our Bibles.
    - d. Do you have a plan for your time in God's Word in 2023? *You may want to share what your plan will be!*
    - e. If you want to experience a great 2023, you must walk in the wisdom of God's Word.
  5. Constantly redeem the time (vs. 5)
    - a. 573 times the Bible uses the word "time."
    - b. Hebrews 9:27 reminds us we will have a death day just like a birthday.
    - c. Every day you get 86,400 seconds, don't waste them.
    - d. "I've only got a minute, only sixty seconds in it, forced upon me, can't refuse it, didn't seek it, didn't choose it, but it's up to me to use it, I will suffer if I lose it, give account if I abuse it, just a tiny little minute, but eternity is in it."
    - e. In our current society, we waste a lot of time! This point is not to spend every minute doing something. There are times to relax and to rest.
    - f. But there is a very real danger that we waste a lot of time.
    - g. God has given us a limited amount of time. Make your time (or life) count.

#### APPLICATION:

- Divide the class into five groups and give them a few minutes to brainstorm one point of the lesson. Have the answer the question: What can I do to apply this point? Lead a discussion to develop some practical ideas to implement this Bible passage.
- NOTE: Give each member a card to write these five points down and hold on to in the coming weeks. We need to be reminded of these points daily.