

## Hidden Opportunities

While visiting Camp Nauvoo this past summer my grandchildren, Aidan and Chloe, were playing by the basketball court when Aidan happened to spy something glistening in the grass and went over to get a better look. As he looked in the grass, he saw something unique and beautiful. It was a geode.

Geodes are plentiful in the Nauvoo area. An interesting thing about geodes is that they have a rather dark, plain looking, drab exterior. It isn't until they are cracked open that their real beauty is exposed. If this one hadn't been broken and turned upside down, it would have looked like a dirty, ugly, plain rock. Can we draw any parallels to strangers and potential friends in our midst?

We may see someone at the store/restaurant, park, or sitting at a bus stop and not pay much attention. Honestly, when we see an average person, and unless they interrupt our goal, we don't give them much thought. We may make a simple gesture of friendship by saying hello, nodding, or smiling. But in reality, rarely do we examine the situation longer than for a fleeting moment. There are both goals and relationships that command our attention and, often, the goals of our personal lives remain higher and more important.

Zacchaeus was a short man who was not well liked by his community. He came out to see Jesus and the crowd pushed him away. When Jesus saw Zacchaeus up in the sycamore tree, because he was trying to get closer to Jesus as he passed, the scriptures tell us that Jesus stopped, looked directly up at him, called him by name and said, "Today, I must dine at your house." Christ took time from his busy schedule to address Zacchaeus, to make him feel valued, and interacted with him on a personal level and it changed Zacchaeus's life. It restored him back to wholeness. It brought salvation to his household as he righted some wrongs and became a new creature in Christ.

Those who want to be a disciple of Jesus might consider looking deeper at the people we meet and greet on the street. We may want to begin to look deeper, to see an opportunity, and try harder to connect with others. Yes, they may have deep scars or dark spots caused by experiences of life. They may have a dark, dull shell around them too, but when that shell begins to crack open we get a glimpse of the beauty within them as they begin to reflect the love of Jesus. We may be the only ones they ever meet who know the good news of the gospel and are willing to share it freely with them.

May we be a people whose eyes are always open for new opportunities. May we risk talking to and caring for a stranger. May we be the ones to introduce them to Jesus. Jesus alone has the power to turn people's lives around and grant them new life and then we get the privilege of seeing their inner beauty sparkle and shine. Amen!



Pat Reaves,  
Cedar Valley-Nauvoo Mission Center  
Invitation Support Minister

## Upcoming Mission Center Events

- Aug 18: Camp Nauvoo Budget Meeting @ 9:00 AM
- Aug 18: CVG Work Day & Operations Mtg @ 9:00 AM
- Sept 28: CVG Budget Meeting @ 10:00 AM
- Oct 20: CVG Work Day @ 9:00 AM
- Oct 27: Priesthood Gathering @ Cedar Rapids
- Oct 28: MC Fall Conference @ Cedar Rapids
- Nov 3: Camp Nauvoo Operations Mtg @ 9:00 AM
- Dec 1: Campground Board Meeting @ TBD