

Open Doors

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This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

There is so much we could say about the will of God. As a pastor, as I go on, I see more and more people living in ignorance, deception, and neglect. They live in these attitudes because of a misunderstanding they had about open doors.

Here is how it goes with some people. They want to go to another country, and they pray. Bang! A plane ticket becomes available, and immediately they think that they know God's will. I am very, very careful when I discuss issues regarding the will of God for a person. It is totally personal. I cannot interfere in the decisions of people.

Very often people will go to pastors and leaders and seek their counsel, concerning very serious matters—jobs and relocations and marital choices. All of these are major choices that people make every day, every month, every year. Really, the only thing a pastor can do is walk before God and let his life serve as an ex-

ample of a living sacrifice and living faith. He should be “stingy” with his opinions and not allow his personal preferences to become the guiding force in the lives of others.

From the example of the apostle Paul, we discover a great deal about operating in the will of God. One thing he prayed for constantly was that God would open doors for him.

We have a message. God has told us to go into all the world and preach the Gospel. There is no question concerning His will in this matter. He communicated this to the apostles, and that commission has been passed on to us. My prayer is that this booklet will lead many more of God’s people to pray for openings in the areas of evangelism and world missions. God desires to use us, and He has made ready certain fields. Still, the laborers are few and the harvest is very ripe. May God touch your heart with these words and lead you in His call for your life.

Chapter One

THE MYSTERY OF FOLLOWING CHRIST

“Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds” (Colossians 4:3).

Paul was seeking the will of God, but he wasn't asking about where he should go. At that point, Paul was going nowhere. He was in prison, and his prayer was that God would open doors for him to share the Gospel there in prison.

God answered his prayer and gave Paul an open door with Onesimus. His imprisonment also opened the way for him to preach to some of the member's of Caesar's household. That was a pretty good open door!

During his time in Roman custody, Paul also found doors open to preach to King Agrippa and to Felix, a Roman governor. Apparently these

exchanges grew very intense. During one such encounter, Felix was left trembling and said, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee" (Acts 24:25b).

Choosing the Right Door

Open doors draw us into a deeper intimacy with God. I remember years ago when I first began as a pastor. There were three doors open to me. One opportunity that presented itself was in Amsterdam, New York. A church there was planning to build a new sanctuary and offered to give me a big increase in pay, a new parsonage, and a car. The offer was very tempting. Just one thing was wrong: that door was not the one that God wanted me to walk through.

The door I walked through was to stay in Montsweag, a little town in Maine. In this place, there were about thirty people, a church room with a hole in the floor, and thirty dollars a week in compensation.

I didn't drive down to New York to check out the situation there. No, I stayed home and spent hours in fasting and prayer. What an answer came, and what a difference it has made in my life.

Consider again the words of Paul from 2

Corinthians:

“For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things.

“To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ;

“Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

“Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ’s gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord,

“I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia.

“Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.

“For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish:

“To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?

“For we are not as many, which corrupt the

word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:9-17).

Open doors are there: God puts them before us. And through prayer and fellowship with the Lord, He shows us the way we are to go. The great thing is that it is God who always causes us to triumph in these choices and encounters.

Chapter Two

GOD TOUCHES HEARTS

“And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles” (Acts 14:27).

Early in my ministry, I made a commitment to go door to door with the Gospel. It was Jesus’ way, it was the disciples’ way, and it was Paul’s way. In a little area of Maine, I just started walking and knocking. It was good exercise. For six months, I knocked on door after door, and nothing happened. Six months, I went alone. But then in the seventh month, seventeen people made professions during the first week. After that, for the next nine years in that area, people made professions to receive Christ every week.

Those first months were important. “But no one’s door was open,” you say. That’s not true. All of those doors were open to me. I had to

keep walking through them. Did I quit? No. I went out every morning and every evening. I believed that God would touch the hearts of those people. Right where I was, God was doing something. First, it was happening in me. Then, I saw God swing open the doors of so many hearts and lives.

The open door does not refer to witnessing for Christ. We have been commissioned to do that. He told us to go, and we answer that call wherever we are. I am to witness in my Jerusalem, my Judea, my Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the world. I do not have to ask God when or where I am supposed to do it. I do it right where I am. That's how it must go. The open door is what I ask for as I go.

The Power of Prayer

Intercession and obedience to the Great Commission are so important. My obedience—my opening the door of my heart to let His command come in, and then my going in response to that command—makes all the difference.

When we have contact with God, things happen. Perhaps you are a salesman and you need to make a few deals or you won't be meeting your obligations. Get in contact with God.

Go to Him. Let Him close the deals for you.

This is the same way that it works on the streets and at the doors in evangelism. Go to God and let Him open hearts for you. The trick isn't to move to a new place for new opportunities. Hearts are right where you are. There is no secret formula. Methods are not the issue. Prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit do the work for us. We are empty vessels, and our obedience is God's success.

Are the hearts of your loved ones closed to you? Pray and believe God that those hearts will swing open.

To the church at Philadelphia, the Lord spoke in Revelation 3:8, saying, "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." We have had a lot of people try to shut the doors of our church. We have people mock us and make trouble for us through slander and lies. But they could not touch God's ministry, so it still goes on.

When God closes doors, no one can open them. The Lord has made it possible for us to have thriving ministries in Maine, Massachusetts, and now Maryland. He opened doors and then He closed them. We moved forward in obedience to the will of God and we have seen the

fruit of His work in us.

Chapter Three

ADVERSITIES AND ADVERSARIES

“For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries” (1 Corinthians 16:9).

“Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth” (Psalm 46:10).

At every open door that I have seen, there have been adversaries. This verse has been true at every place that I have gone to. Open doors are given as a test of my faith.

Open doors are given to us so that we can learn to hear the still, small voice of God. Open doors address my faith, not my needs. This is not about walking by sight. This is about letting God teach us how to pray and show us how to walk on.

For sure, there will be challenges at every door that is before you. We don't walk through

the door that leads to comfort and convenience.

“This door takes me to more money, so that is the way I am going,” you might think. Or, “This way is the way my best friend wants me to go, so this is the way I am going.”

Those are adversaries to your call. Stand still and listen to God. Let Him direct your path. The Spirit will speak expressly. Your heart will hear.

Walk with the Wise

“He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed” (Proverbs 13:20).

“And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who was in Egypt, whither he fled from the presence of Solomon the king, heard it, that Jeroboam returned out of Egypt.

“And they sent and called him. So Jeroboam and all Israel came and spake to Rehoboam, saying,

“Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore ease thou somewhat the grievous servitude of thy father, and his heavy yoke that he put upon us, and we will serve thee.

“And he said unto them, Come again unto me after three days. And the people departed.

“And king Rehoboam took counsel with the

old men that had stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, saying, What counsel give ye me to return answer to this people?

“And they spake unto him, saying, If thou be kind to this people, and please them, and speak good words to them, they will be thy servants for ever.

“But he forsook the counsel which the old men gave him, and took counsel with the young men that were brought up with him, that stood before him.

“And he said unto them, What advice give ye that we may return answer to this people, which have spoken to me, saying, Ease somewhat the yoke that thy father did put upon us?

“And the young men that were brought up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou answer the people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it somewhat lighter for us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little finger shall be thicker than my father’s loins.

“For whereas my father put a heavy yoke upon you, I will put more to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

“So Jeroboam and all the people came to Re-

hoboam on the third day, as the king bade, saying, Come again to me on the third day.

“And the king answered them roughly; and king Rehoboam forsook the counsel of the old men,

“And answered them after the advice of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add thereto: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions” (2 Chronicles 10:2-14).

The Body of Christ offers us a great deal, including wise people who can give godly counsel. I can remember when I was considering all of those options in my early ministry. I went to an older, experienced man of God and asked for some advice. Now, he did not tell me what to do. Yet, I talked and he listened and then I listened. Mostly, we prayed together, and God led me in the way that I was to go.

We see in 2 Chronicles, Rehoboam sought some advice. He turned first to the men of experience—a wise move that brought wise advice. Then, he went to his buddies, the guys he grew up with. He asked them, but their advice was based on their selfish advantage. Secret adversaries were awaiting this young king. Sadly, he swallowed their analysis and it cost him part of

his kingdom. Rebellion came and God took ten tribes from Rehoboam's rule. Israel was split into two kingdoms, as it remains to this day.

Listen, if I become lost in the forest and I meet a couple of old hunters, I am going ask them how to get out of the woods. That's humility and it's just plain smart—that is, if I want to get out the woods alive.

Young preachers and young believers need help, and there are grizzled veterans who can help them. These are men who have been places, built churches, weathered storms, and stood for God through thick and thin. These men know the power of prayer, they know the Book, they know how to go to God, and they walk in faith. Use these men. Their wisdom is invaluable. It's priceless. They know how doors swing open and how decisions for God must be made.

Always Open

The door to the throne of God is always open. It is His will that we pray without ceasing. It is His will that we seek the lost and go soul-winning. Plan to go, and do it on purpose.

Any Christian who studies and prays will witness for Jesus Christ. He will do it in grace with love for His Savior. God's provision for our

lives is so amazing. If you are in a difficult marriage, let God lead you. Pray and love and serve, and let Him make a way. There is a door of hope, not necessarily an escape hatch. Swallow up the pride and don't play games with the truth. The door to the Father, the entry into His presence, is there. Go to Him. Live for Him. Stand in Him.

God picks up the weary. He strengthens and quickens them. He teaches His people how to walk in knowledge and in power.

CONCLUSION

“Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind” (Luke 14:21).

We have grace, love, and the glorious Gospel. What else do we need? Let's go. God wants His house to be full. Our church doors are open and our community's doors are open. We knock and knock, and we let God deal with the results. We pray and go, pray and go, pray and go. It is His work, His purpose, His power. Something is happening. We may not see it on the surface, but a work of the Holy Spirit is going on. It is going deep and people will respond.

Some are so faithful to see the open doors at their places of employment. These people work hard and work honestly. They give forty hours for forty hours' pay. This is a precious thing. We keep on loving and we keep on being available.