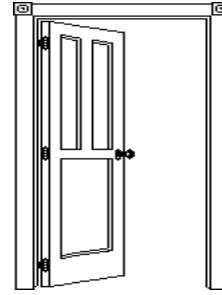


# Watch For Open Doors And Closed Doors



God often gives us direction through closed or open doors, so keep your spiritual eyes open for them. Often they are not apparent to the natural eye.



a. **Open doors.** God will open doors for your work—I Cor. 16:9. “...I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.”

1) Are you aware of how God is opening doors for you for effective ministry in the kingdom? No person should ever boast at the way doors open for them. The Creator of the universe just happens to be leaning on that door.

We are so smug. To take the credit for the ministry we have been involved in is as silly as the person applauding themselves every time a door automatically opens when they leave a supermarket.

2) Is there a caution to be observed with open doors? Yes! Need and opportunity are not necessarily God’s will. We may see more than one need and we may have many opportunities to choose from. The opportunities may be a sidetrack to God’s will for you. Most of us can do many things, but not all we can do is God’s will for us.

3) What determines if an open door is God’s will?

- ➡ a) Prayers—Mark 1:35.
- ➡ b) Priorities—Mark 1:36-39; II Cor. 2:12-13; 6:14-7:1
- ➡ c) Scripture—Matt. 4:8-10; II Tim. 3:14-17.

- 4) Does this mean then that there will be no opposition or suffering if we are in the center of God's will?
- a) It's almost a guarantee that anything that is God's will will be opposed overtly or covertly—I Cor 16:9b.
  - b) If we do everything right and with the right spirit, we may still suffer for doing good—I Peter 3:13-17.
  - c) It isn't strange to suffer when you are doing God's will—I Peter 4:12-18.
  - d) Don't stop doing what is right even when you suffer—I Peter 4:19. "So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good."

**b. Closed doors.**



- 1) A closed door is often an indication that God has something else in mind for you to do—Acts 16:6-7. "Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to." Who closed the door?



Paul must have had the sorest nose in town, because the Lord would indicate His will to him by closing a door in his face as he was walking through it. On the other hand:

- 2) A door can be closed by Satan, too—I Thess. 2:17-19.
- a) What do you do when Satan locks the door?
  - b) When you have walked through the seven tests and you are convinced God wants you to do something, what do you do when the doors are still not open?



## Four Possibilities For Closed Doors

- i) **Substitution/partnership.** You may have to send or enable someone else to go in your place (I Thess. 3:1-3)—someone to check out the situation for you, or be your partner in enabling the will of God to be done. It may be that you have the right plan, but you are the wrong person. It may be you are the right person, but God wants you to team up with someone to accomplish the task. See what was accomplished by this substitution in I Thessalonians. Paul was encouraged and able to encourage as well—I Thess. 3:2-9.

\*Are you in a ministry team so that God's work is not totally dependent on you?

\*Are you able to pass the ball to another team member in the open field just as you are about to be tackled? That's good offense in football and makes great sense in ministry, too.



- ii) **Creative alternatives.** Paul gets locked up in prison, so he goes to his flock through creative means--I Thessalonians.

\*Principle: Be creative in doing God's will. If one idea doesn't work and you are convinced by means of the seven tests you should do it, then look for another way to do the same thing.

\*Paul's Example:

- 1) He sent letters, i.e., prison letters like Philippians.
- 2) He shared Christ with the guards he was chained to— Phil. 1:12-13.

\*Our closed doors:

- 1) *Mothers with small children:* minister to your children in your confinement; write notes of encouragement to other mothers with small children and share what you're learning; invite an older woman with grown children over to your house just to talk about raising children; as you are rocking your children, pray for their future, i.e., mates, children, vocation.

2) *Job that is not going anywhere*: listen to Christian music, teaching, or Scripture tapes to and from work, or even at work if it won't interfere or lessen your effectiveness; minister to your co-workers; carry on a running dialogue with the Lord; stop and take a five minute Scripture break; share your concerns in a small group and ask for prayer; go through the entirety of this teaching on God's will slowly and prayerfully.

iii) **Prayer**. You will always need to pray that the door will open for you, or that by His Spirit, God will do the work that needs to be done even if you aren't there—I Thess. 3:11-13; Col. 4:2-4; Phil. 1:7-11.

\*Catch the spirit of Paul's prayers in the above passages. He is praying for the Lord to clear the way, and he is praying specifically for the things that he would have supplied if he'd been able to go.

\*Prayer goes through closed doors more effectively, efficiently, and economically than most of the things we can do by our presence.

The final thing we might do if the doors are closed is to:

**WAIT**

iv) **Wait/suffer**. A closed door can have the sign "wait" on it.

\*There may be other things that must transpire, or other people who need to be obedient before God opens the door—II Cor. 1:23-2:4,12-13; 7:5-7; Phil. 1:8,12-19,29-30.

\*God may be preparing you for the tasks ahead by the process you're going through—Rom. 5:3.

\*Sometimes Satan wins the battle, but even then God will turn it for our ultimate good—I Peter 3:8-22; 4:12-19. It may be God's will that you suffer. It may be that others will persecute you when you are doing what is right.

**Conclusion:** Closed doors are often God's way of refining us and preparing us for the door He will eventually open. Thus it may be that God's will is focused more on how we respond to the door than in our walking through it. If we run from the "trial of waiting," we may miss God's will that is to be accomplished at the doorpost. This is illustrated in a book entitled: Talking About God is Dangerous: The Diary of a Russian Dissident, by Tatiana Goricheva (Cross-road, reviewed by Brian F.O'Connell in Christianity Today, February 19, 1988, p. 34).

**A. Open Doors.** In the book, the author describes how God opened the door for her to know Him. She was 26 and had been raised as an atheist in Russia. She had become an outstanding philosophy student, the pride of a Marxist society. But she was still dissatisfied.

"I was on a journey from nowhere to nowhere: I had no roots and would go into a meaningless future."

After never saying a prayer in her entire life, she ran across the Lord's Prayer in a yoga book and began to say it as a mantra (God opened a door).

"I said it about six times, and then I suddenly turned inside out. I understood--not with my ridiculous understanding, but with my whole being--that he exists. He, the living, personal God, who loves me and all creatures, who has created the world, who became a human being out of love, the crucified and risen God."

**B. The Closed Doors.** Tatiana goes on to describe the Soviet Christian community that is growing, not despite persecution, but often because of it. She implies that closed doors of opportunity are not always bad, but are often the best thing for us. She writes:

"It's a pity that the West does not understand the value of suffering, its power to renew and purge. The experience of the persecuted Russian Church says to us quite clearly that suffering for God does not take us away from him, but on the contrary brings us nearer to him."

It is due to the stringent restriction and persecution, she continues, that the church in the Soviet Union "is attracting the best people in Russia."

**C. The Door Dilemma.** God is ready to show us His will, but because we don't always hear His voice, He will use the circumstances of our life to direct us and stop us. Next time a door of opportunity opens or closes in front of you, ask God, "is that you? What do you want me to do or learn"?