

An Open Door

We've Got Mail – Part 6

[Slide 1] You may or may not have had the unique experience of working in an office. While in college and seminary, I worked as a pool construction worker, which means my office was a big hole in the ground. I prefer an office.

Much is communicated through a door, especially if you work in a cubicle office. Having a door is actually a status symbol.

Much is communicated through the positioning of a door. A wide open door is a free pass. A closed door usually means there is a meeting going on and you're not invited to it. (As if...I am a little bit in line with what George Will said about football combining the two worse elements of society, violence and meetings.) A door that is technically open but mostly closed says, "This better be good."

[Slide 2] Doors send messages. Jesus communicated through one when He compared Himself to one. He also promised the church at Philadelphia an **open door** of opportunity to preach the **open door** of salvation through the **open door** of His church. [Slide 3]

The Open Door is...

Opportunity ...*an open door*... v.8 [Slide 4]

I love the image of an open door. It reminds us about opportunity and about those God-moments, those leadership moments that each of us have.

Only God creates opportunity, just like only God creates a wave (Isaiah 51:15) We can learn to watch for them and we can learn to ride them. But we can't create them. Only God can.

Candidates for opportunity are those with...

1. Limited Strength *limited strength* v.8 [Slide 5]
2. Unlimited Obedience *kept my word* v.8 [Slide 6]
3. Limitless Commitment *have not denied my name* v.8 [Slide 7]

The Gospel ...*an open door in heaven*... Rev. 4:1 [Slide 8]

The gospel is about access. It tells us that there is access to God through Jesus Christ. It is Christ's gospel and He is the Way to salvation. He is the only way.

We have to be okay with that kind of exclusivity. I don't need ten ways to lose weight, as the ads say, I just need one way that works.

1. Our part ...*you have kept My command*...v.10 [Slide 9]
2. God's part ...*I will also keep you*... v.10

There is a lot of discussion about "parts" when it comes to salvation. Some say it is all God's part. I'm not interested in arguing about it as long as we're clear that we must play our part.

A Christ-like Church [Slide 10]

...I will make them come and bow down at your feet...v.9

Many churches bill themselves as “open doors” but is that really the case. I had a boss once who said, “My door is always open.” After the sixth trip to hear his AA tell me, “He’s not in right now,” I decided that maybe he wasn’t as accessible as I originally thought.

I can promise this; the person who visits this church will not give us six opportunities. We get one. That’s it.

We have to embody the message of salvation. We must walk uprightly according to the truth of the gospel.

Those who seize the opportunity in this life to bear His name will bear it forever. [Slide 11]

...I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name. v.12

This new Jerusalem has gates, access points for entry. In other doors, there’s a door. God is always about a door because it allows people to come in. What’s our role? Sam Shoemaker says it pretty well: [Slide 12]

*I stand by the door.
I neither go too far in, nor stay too far out,
The door is the most important door in the world-
It is the door through which people walk when they find God.
There's no use my going way inside, and staying there,
When so many are still outside and they, as much as I,
Crave to know where the door is.
And all that so many ever find
Is only the wall where a door ought to be.
They creep along the wall like blind people,
With outstretched, groping hands.
Feeling for a door, knowing there must be a door,
Yet they never find it ...
So I stand by the door.
The most tremendous thing in the world
Is for people to find that door--the door to God.
The most important thing any person can do
Is to take hold of one of those blind, groping hands,
And put it on the latch--the latch that only clicks
And opens to the person's own touch.
People die outside that door, as starving beggars die
On cold nights in cruel cities in the dead of winter—
Die for want of what is within their grasp.
They live, on the other side of it--live because they have not found it.
Nothing else matters compared to helping them find it,
And open it, and walk in, and find Him ...
So I stand by the door.*

Go in, great saints, go all the way in--

*Go way down into the cavernous cellars,
And way up into the spacious attics--
It is a vast roomy house, this house where God is.
Go into the deepest of hidden casements,
Of withdrawal, of silence, of sainthood.
Some must inhabit those inner rooms.
And know the depths and heights of God,
And call outside to the rest of us how wonderful it is.
Sometimes I take a deeper look in,
Sometimes venture in a little farther;
But my place seems closer to the opening ...
So I stand by the door.*

*There is another reason why I stand there.
Some people get part way in and become afraid
Lest God and the zeal of His house devour them
For God is so very great, and asks all of us.
And these people feel a cosmic claustrophobia,
And want to get out. "Let me out!" they cry,
And the people way inside only terrify, them more.
Somebody must be by the door to tell them that they are spoiled
For the old life, they have seen too much:
Once taste God, and nothing but God will do any more.
Somebody must be watching for the frightened
Who seek to sneak out just where they came in,
To tell them how much better it is inside.
The people too far in do not see how near these are
To leaving--preoccupied with the wonder of it all.
Somebody must watch for those who have entered the door,
But would like to run away. So for them, too,
I stand by the door.*

*I admire the people who go way in.
But I wish they would not forget how it was
Before they got in. Then they would be able to help
The people who have not, yet even found the door,
Or the people who want to run away again from God,
You can go in too deeply, and stay in too long,
And forget the people outside the door.
As for me, I shall take my old accustomed place,
Near enough to God to hear Him, and know He is there,
But not so far from people as not to hear them,
And remember they are there, too.
Where? Outside the door--
Thousands of them, millions of them.
But--more important for me--
One of them, two of them, ten of them,*

*Whose hands I am intended to put on the latch.
So I shall stand by the door and wait
For those who seek it.
"I had rather be a door-keeper ..."
So I stand by the door.*

[Slide 13]