

# Open Doors Pt. 2

Pastor James Foley – Sunday, February 6, 2022

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## COMMUNION

Communion is the Christ-ordained means whereby His people are to remember His sacrifice until He Returns...

- 1) The Wafer Symbolizes the BODY of Christ** – Broken for Us
- 2) The Juice Symbolizes the BLOOD of Christ** – Shed for Us All

### **1 Corinthians 11:23–26 (NIV)**

23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” 25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” 26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

**KEY** – Children and workers are dismissed at this time...

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## INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining us today! Whether you are here in person or joining us via livestream, you are most welcome. Please have a Bible at the ready and be prepared to take notes as you desire. We have much to cover in a short space of time.

## SETTING THE STAGE

Last Sunday we discussed the concept of OPEN DOORS per a text from the Colossians 4. Open doors, herein, refers to God-given opportunities to spread the gospel of Christ and promote the kingdom of God in the earth. Let us revisit this timeless and timely passage from the apostle Paul to the ancient church at Colossae...

### **Colossians 4:2–4 (NIV, Emphasis Mine)**

2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. 3 And pray for us, too, that God may **open a door** for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. 4 Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.

**NOTE 1** – I feel this to be a particularly timely word for New Life, as I sense we are entering a season of open doors for ministry. Thus said, let us be a people who: a) PRAY for open doors of opportunity; b) rightly PERCEIVE open doors and His working in the moment; c) fearlessly PASS-THROUGH open doors (i.e., availing ourselves of God-moments in life and living); and d) PERFORM the work of Christ (e.g., proclamation of the gospel and/or serving others in love with our unique giftings).

**FYI** – As we do this, we will see the Lord work mightily both in and through us!

**NOTE 2** – However, we do not always excel in this area. We are often hindered in this four-fold work of PRAYING for open doors, PERCEIVING open doors, PASSING through open doors, and PERFORMING the work of Jesus Christ...

**Q. Why is this? What hinders us from this component of Christian ministry (i.e., individually and collectively)?**

**KEY** – Let us take some time to answer these questions with the time we have this morning...

LET US DELVE IN...

## SELF-ABSORPTION

Firstly, many are hindered by a spirit of self-absorption...

LET US BE HONEST...

**NOTE 1** – Quite often we are so caught up in daily living, we fail to take the proper time to pray as we ought. How many feel like you have arrived in the area of prayer? Moreover, when we do pray it is often for personal needs and circumstances v. open “doors for ministry” (cf. Col. 4:3). Of course, there is nothing wrong about praying for personal needs! However, our prayer lives often do not reach beyond ourselves, and we fail to consider the vital role we play in the broader work of Christ (i.e., the Great Commission).

**NOTE 2** – Moreover, we can all be oblivious at times, living life with tunnel-vision. We can be self-consumed to the point where we do not see the needs around us (i.e., open doors for ministry) and/or we cannot bring ourselves to expend the time and the effort if we do. So focused on our own priorities, schedules, and agendas, we can easily miss the God-moments we are afforded in the course of Christian living.

**NOTE 3** – A great many of us are familiar with the Parable of the Good Samaritan (cf. Luke 10:25–37). This story features an unlikely hero in the despised Samaritan—a Samaritan who takes the time to tend to the wounds and care for a man who fell prey to robbers and thieves. He is a character we are called to emulate in every way! However, the villains of the story are a priest and a levite who fail to render aid to this man in need. Of course, they are presented as a classic case of what NOT to do! And yet...

**NOTE 4** – How many of us function more like these figures v. the Samaritan (i.e., seeing an open door for ministry and simply moving along on our way)? Like the villains of the story, we may even offer legitimate reasons that justify our villainy! I can almost hear the thoughts of the levite and priest: “I cannot take the time to help this man, as I am already late for temple services” OR “I cannot help, for if he is dead, he will render me unclean and unfit for ceremonial duties” and beyond. Thus said...

**NOTE 5** – Contrast this with how Christ lived; He who continually offered Himself in a spirit of sac. selflessness...

### Matthew 9:35–38

35 Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

ULTIMATELY...

**FYI** – We live in a self-consumed generation. I read the following words of the apostle Paul and cannot help but see our own generation (2 Tim. 3:1–5a, Emphasis Mine): “But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. 2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, 4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power.

**Q. Don't believe me?**

**A.** Listen to the lyrics of a chart-topping song (i.e., Obsessed Chorus)...

"You say you're obsessed with me  
 So I took a second and I said me too  
 I'm obsessed with me as much as you  
 Say you'd die for me I'd die for me too  
 And if I lost you - I'd still have me - I can't lose"

**KEY** – The only way we are going to participate in the four-fold work of PRAYING for open doors, PERCEIVING open doors, passing through open doors, and performing the work of Christ in the moment is to move beyond a spirit of self-absorption, that we might take hold of something far greater and more enduring.

## **SELF-DETERMINATION**

Secondly, we are hindered by a spirit of self-determination (i.e., a brief point comparatively)...

**NOTE 1** – Rather than seek the open doors of the Lord, we focus on our own agendas and what doors we want to see opened. The emphasis is on what we can make happen v. watching for what God is doing in the moment. How often do we rely upon our own power, capacity, perspective, and sense of wisdom in the outworking of our Christian ministries?

**NOTE 2** – We pray for our will to be done. We select who we will reach out to. We practice in our minds what we want to say. We determine what must take place and in what order to achieve certain ends. I think of a friend in Bible school who was prophetically told that his future wife would be someone he personally led to the Lord. So, in our infinite wisdom, we told him to witness to only "hot" girls. This is self-determination v. looking to the Lord for divine appointments!

**NOTE 3** – Similarly, I recall my first Easter as a believer. I was about twenty-years old, and I wanted to make Easter an opportunity to promote Christ, which is a noble goal. However, I did not take the time to pray for God to open doors, etc. Rather, I took it upon myself to hatch a plan! I was going to make everyone watch *Jesus of Nazareth*, believing that if people gathered around the TV to watch, an altar call would soon occur. Want to know what happened? Nothing! No one watched!

**KEY 1** – Let us be more like Christ who continually looked to the Father and for His open doors...

**John 5:19b**

19 . . . "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does."

**NOTE 4** – Keep the following principle in mind if you are given to a spirit of self-determination...

John 15:5 (Emphasis Mine)

5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

**KEY 2** – Those who would be used of God must look beyond their capacities and wisdom to those of the Lord.

## SELF-DISQUALIFICATION

Thirdly, we are hindered by a spirit of self-disqualification...

**NOTE 1** – I believe that many believers live with a “ministry” of self-disqualification. Such convince themselves that God could never use someone like them, emphasizing what they cannot do v. what God can do in and through them. They are always a knee-jerk “NO” when called upon by the Lord or His emissaries, sadly missing-out on many God-moments in ministry.

**NOTE 2** – As counterintuitive as it might sound, this is simply a manifestation of pride. Why? Because the focus is still squarely on “self” and not upon the Lord. Remember, humility is not thinking less of yourself—it is thinking of yourself less! Such fail to realize that God has purposed to use the lowly and the weak for His glory! Consider the following Pauline passage...

### 1 Corinthians 1:26–29

26 Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28 God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, 29 so that no one may boast before him.

### Q. Don't feel like you are up for the task of serving God in the moment?

A. PERFECT! You are exactly the kind of person the Lord wants to utilize mightily!

ILL – March of the Unqualified...

“Think God can't use you? Think he only uses perfectly qualified people? Take a closer look. Moses was not a great speaker. Jonah ran from God. Jacob was a liar. Noah got drunk. Rahab was a prostitute. David had an affair. Jeremiah was depressed, a lot. Solomon was rich in wisdom but poor in lifestyle. John the Baptist was just plain poor. Timothy was too young. Abraham was too old. Lazarus was dead. Sarah was barren. Naomi was a widow. Gideon and Thomas both doubted; so did Sarah. Peter lacked self-control. James and John were self-righteous. Paul had a short fuse. Well, so did Peter and Moses. Actually, lots of people did. God's army isn't perfect. It never has been. It's the march of the unqualified, so get in line.”

### Q. Does this mean it is permissible to adopt such lifestyles?

A. Of course not! It does mean that God can use anyone—even us...

FYI – The people who frighten me as a leader are those who deem themselves competent! Glory in weakness...

### 2 Corinthians 12:7b–10

7 . . . in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9 But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

**KEY** – Those who would be used of God must repent of their self-disqualification and glory in the power of God.

## SELF-SILENCING

Lastly, we are hindered by the practice of self-silencing...

**NOTE 1** – That is, many may see open doors of opportunity but remain silent due to fear. Fear is a paralytic that stalls any forward movement, suppressing any effort to serve the Lord or represent Him in kind. Fear cannot long coexist in the same space as faith, as one must inevitably triumph over the other.

**NOTE 2** – Perhaps the Bible calls us to “fear not” so often because we are so prone to fear (i.e., it is our default condition as fleshly human beings). Who finds it easier to worry and traffic in anxiety v. believe and persevere in a spirit of faith? Be wary of fear, as it may in fact be Satan’s most deadly weapon.

### **Q. What specific fears hinder us from passing through open doors?**

**A1.** Fear of saying the wrong thing. Many remain silent when an opportunity to present Christ arises because they are afraid of saying something “wrong.” I would argue that imperfectly stating the gospel is better than staying perfectly silent! Should we study the Word and consider how we can answer the queries of non-believers? Of course...

#### **1 Peter 3:15–16a**

15 But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 16 keeping a clear conscience . . .

**NOTE 3** – At the same time, there is a place for faith in the moment. Consider the following promise of Christ...

#### **Luke 12:11–12**

11 “When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, 12 for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.”

**ILL** – The word of God to me prior to VBS (i.e., in the midst of panic): “I have given you things to say—say them.”

**A2.** Fear of persecution. Many close their mouths and stay silent due to a fear of being outcast, shunned and opposed for the message of Christ. Let’s be honest, we want people to like us. What if our sharing the gospel turns people off and/or turns them against us?

**NOTE 4** – We are going to have to deal with the following realities...

#### **John 15:18–20**

18 “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. 19 If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. 20 Remember what I told you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.

#### **2 Timothy 3:12**

12 In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted . . .

**Matthew 5:10–12**

10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

**Luke 12:4–9**

4 “I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. 5 But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after your body has been killed, has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him. 6 Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. 7 Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

8 “I tell you, whoever publicly acknowledges me before others, the Son of Man will also acknowledge before the angels of God. 9 But whoever disowns me before others will be disowned before the angels of God.

**KEY** – Those who would be used of God must be willing to suffer opposition, adversity and even death for Christ.

**SUMMATIONS**

**NOTE 1** – Let us be a people who...

- 1) Pray for Open Doors
- 2) Rightly Perceive Open Doors
- 3) Fearlessly Pass-Through Open Doors
- 4) Effectively Perform the Work(s) of Christ
- 5) ...Witnessing Divine Result Accordingly

**NOTE 2** – To achieve these ends, let us repent of our...

- 1) Self-Absorption
- 2) Self-Determination
- 3) Self-Disqualification
- 4) and Self-Silencing

## CONCLUSION

**NOTE 1** – Those who wish to give online may do so at [www.NewLifeBarre.org](http://www.NewLifeBarre.org). Those who wish to give in person can utilize the offering boxes located throughout the church facility. Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting this local work of Christ.

**NOTE 2** – Ministry schedule...

**Prayer** – Sunday at 8:45am

**Sunday School** – Sunday at 9:15am

**CYC** – Tuesday from 3–4pm and 4–5pm

**Weekly Study** – Thursday at 6:30–7:30pm

**Women's Ministry** – 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday at 6:30pm

**Men's Breakfast** – 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday at 9am

**Potluck** – TODAY After this Service