

Evangelism Iii

by Dana Congdon

Dana Congdon emphasizes the importance of evangelism through personal engagement, prayer, and following up with attendees during a gospel meeting.

Duration: 1:04:46

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 10:1-5, Acts 2:47 - 3:10, Acts 4:4, Acts 14:27, Acts 16:6-10

Topics: "Evangelism"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares about a unique approach to a gospel meeting. Instead of the typical format, where the focus is on the front of the congregation, the speaker proposes a different approach. They suggest having 25 brethren stand up and be identified throughout the congregation, and then everyone is to gather around these brethren. These brethren will pose a question to each group, providing a wonderful opportunity for discussion and engagement. The sermon also references the events of the day of Pentecost, where the Holy Spirit came down and the disciples spoke in different languages, leading to a great stir and curiosity among the people. Peter then stood up and explained what was happening in a simple sermon.

Transcript

Well, when we put this in our heart that we want to reach out and share the light of Jesus Christ out into the world and bring people in, then the spiritual atmosphere gets charged with interferences and problems. I wonder if you've had any this week. All kinds of things.

I got home last Sunday and in 24 hours I lost both of my cars and had no car all week long. One lost its whole engine and is now getting a new one put in. The other one, I have a diesel and it had 10 gallons of water in the diesel tank and it shot the, whatever it is, it gets shot in those things.

The injector, yeah, somebody put in bad fuel. So, you know, things like that. So I walked around all week and fought off a cold this week.

How about you? You know. And I thought to myself yesterday as I was fighting off a cold and taking some vitamin C's and laying low, I said, you know, I wouldn't miss this weekend. I am thankful to be here and I'm very encouraged to hear of the prayer meeting Wednesday night, of the doors that our Lord Jesus has opened already and is opening.

The people that are anticipated on coming tomorrow and if they get here, you know, they will come through spiritual flack and it will be a spiritual victory just to see people here. Really. It's a wonderful opportunity.

Now I want to share with you one detail which wasn't clear last week just to help us all trust the Lord just a little bit more. Now in gospel meetings, you're used to, I suppose, you're used to having a gospel meeting basically have its focus down here in the front where somebody sings, somebody shares testimony, somebody preaches the gospel, somebody gives the invitation. Well, we are going to do most of that, but the invitation is the unique part of tomorrow's gospel meeting.

And here's what's going to happen. I just want to tell you all about it so you can pray tonight. After I share for a period of time the gospel, some simple message, I'm going to stop my message.

And at that point, there are going to be 25 brothers scattered throughout this congregation, basically one for this side here, front and back, and one for this group and so on and so forth. It's a great logistic problem, but we'll work it out. And at that point, these 25 brethren are going to stand up and be identified and everybody is to group around these brethren.

And here's what's going to happen. These brethren are going to pose the question to everybody in the group that I'm going to pose. I'll tell you what it is beforehand.

I'm talking tomorrow morning on the 23rd Psalm and the end of it where David said, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. I'm going to pose this question. Are you in the house of the Lord? Are you outside the house of the Lord? Or are you in the house of the Lord, but not at home with the Lord? Basically, I'm talking about salvation and lordship.

But I'm going to pose the question and leave it sufficiently ambiguous where it gives some people latitude, depending on where they're coming from, to express how they feel. And what's going to happen is this group is going to get around and Dan's going to pose the question and say, now, would anybody like to answer that question or perhaps raise a question? And I want a Christian to be the first to speak. I mean to be wonderful if somebody who's just a visitor is the first one to chime in, but most likely take one of the brothers or sisters.

And do you make your confession? You know, well, I believe by the grace of God I am in the house, but I'd like to be more at home. Could we pray about it? Or I wonder how I could be more at home. Let's just be honest and then pray for one another.

Well, eventually the heat's going to get on and some of the people in the group who are just there visiting are going to get their chance to say where they're coming from. Somebody might say straight out, I'm outside. Somebody might say, what does it mean to be in the house anyway? What's this guy talking about? And the whole group together gets an opportunity to pray silently inside and sometimes pray, you know, outwardly for the various people.

The brothers need to be bold enough to say, could we pray for you? Somebody says, well, I don't know if I believe in God. You say, good. Can we pray about that? And what we do in the small context is actually invite people to declare where they're at and pray for them.

Some people will get saved. Some people will come closer to the Lord. We don't know what's going to happen.

But this is going to be a little different than when we usually have a meeting and then one person draws a net and people come up to the front. You're going to be evangelizing right there in your little group. How does that make you feel? Isn't that great? Okay.

A couple other footnotes that I want to mention now. The person that you bring or have invited to the meeting, by God's grace, I hope you'll commit yourself as he enables you to follow up on that person. We have no follow-up system here in the house of God except your heart being faithful to find out where somebody's coming from.

Now, let's just say you're sitting over here and you brought a friend who absolutely mummifies during this little group. Doesn't say a thing. Sir, where are you at? Well, you don't pry somebody open.

You just go on to the next person. Does anybody else have something to say? But you, you see, you brought this guy right here. Now, after it's over, tomorrow, I mean on Monday or during lunch or sometime, you should really go to the person and say, where do you think you fit into that little thing? Or what did you think of the meeting? Or what do you think of the Lord Jesus? You see, you have this opportunity of following up the people that you've invited.

Now, please, brothers and sisters, do that. Otherwise, we have no system. You know, we have no cards.

You're not going to write down any names. But we need to have our hearts sensitized now because what's liable to happen here is the beginning of some people's conviction by the Holy Spirit which will lead them down the road at some point to the Lord. But you and I need to follow up.

I remember a meeting that I had back, oh, it was three years ago. It was actually, we had sort of a, you know, a Christmas party is what it amounted to. We had a turkey dinner at this little fellowship out on Long Island.

And these people brought all their non-Christian friends. I mean, there's non-Christians all over the place up there. They're just, you know, but they'd come for free turkey and some singing.

And we sang and we sang some Christmas carols. And we did a whole thing like that. And then I shared the gospel.

We gave an invitation. I think maybe one person accepted the Lord, a teenager. But that was the beginning of a snowball that eventually resulted in over 50 baptisms in that little group.

Because the brothers and sisters followed up with those people. As a matter of fact, one of the sisters and brothers started a Bible study in their home for a bunch of 12 or 14 of those people who came and heard and wondered what was going on. And that started a snowball going out in Mattatuck on Long Island.

It's just amazing what can happen. But if we just say, whew, I'm sure glad Sunday's over now. Now we just let everybody drift.

Now we've missed it, you see. I just hope you'll be very aware of the people that you've brought. And if they feel very uncomfortable, help them.

Help them. You know, it may come while they're in the group here and there's going to be a lot of noise here tomorrow. You might even need to sort of talk to your friend just right there in the meeting.

You just feel the freedom. Now we're not going to pressure anybody. Listen, I don't believe in a gospel where they have to accept it tomorrow morning or it's too late.

I believe what we need to do is share the gospel and for some people it may just start to penetrate. So let's let people express where they're coming from. You know, and just pray for people and be kind to people and be confessional ourselves as Christians.

You know, if we all say, ah, praise God, I was delivered from hell and I live at home with Jesus and everybody who's good should do the same thing. Anybody who's struggling immediately has a tough time with that kind of a statement. Now I know all of you are almost perfect and ready to be raptured, but you don't have to tell that to everybody.

You know, I think sometimes it's better just to be a human being and just thank God that you do believe you're in the house of God. And maybe you want to explain just a second why. Now we don't want the Christians to hog up those times, you know, but there needs to be input.

And you Christians be sensitive. If the whole thing is dying right there and the brother is sweating like crazy, help him out. Maybe you need to say, I believe we better pray for Rob.

Rob says, yeah, I think I'm getting kicked out of the house. You know, whatever. Just be sensitive and pray.

Well, you see, we have a tremendous logistics problem here tomorrow morning, which the Lord's going to have to help us get through. We're going to have those small little groups for about a half an hour and you're going to get a chance to see God moving in some people's lives. To me, the most wonderful thing is when somebody sees somebody coming to the Lord, just right there in front of your eyes, and you see conviction or you see harvesting, done by the Holy Spirit in a real way and in a sensitive way.

It's just a marvelous experience. It's wonderful. I remember back a few weeks ago, somebody came to my house who, because I am a minister, you know, quote, wanted me to marry him.

I don't know where they got my name. Actually, I do know that the woman who is in the process of getting married, she's a sister in the Lord who goes somewhere and she's seen me somewhere. Anyway, so they came to find out if I'd marry them.

Well, I sat there and talked to them for about two hours and watched this man come under conviction and watched him start to cry and watched Jesus just soundly save him right there on the porch while we were talking about getting married. You know, it's just wonderful to see that happen right in front of your eyes. You just see the power of the unseen God turning somebody's life around.

Well, so here we are. We're going to give it our best shot tomorrow and we believe the Lord's going to be present with us. And I'd like to just share a few things tonight regarding the Lord's presence with us.

If you'd turn to John chapter 10, I'd like to start off with a thought that actually I mentioned briefly last week. I'd like to take it up a little more fully. I'll begin reading in verse 1. John 10, verse 1. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he's a thief and a robber.

But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he puts forth all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice.

And the stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him because they do not know the voice of strangers. This figure of speech, Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which he had been saying to them. So Jesus said to them again, Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep, and all who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them.

I am the door. If anyone enters through me, he shall be saved and shall go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.

I came that they might have life and have it abundantly. Well, here's a wonderful picture of Jesus as the door, as the door of the sheep and as the door. Now, of course, I'm sure since Lance has been here, you have heard this explanation of what it means to be the door of the sheep.

If you go over to Israel and you travel around out in the country there and you see different shepherds grazing with the flocks and everything, and then you see the little sheepfolds where they take them at night, you're amazed by these little sheepfolds that are built up by stones about maybe three feet high, all the way around on four sides, but there's an opening about this big for the sheep to come through. And there is no door. There's no wooden door.

There's no iron gate. There's nothing. When the sheep come in, the shepherd sits down in the door.

He is the door of the sheep. Nobody comes in unless they go through the shepherd. He is the ultimate door.

No safer door than having Jesus sitting in the doorway. The thief just can't come in that way. And Jesus is using this illustration to show that he is the door to salvation for people who come in, for people who come out and find pasture.

Jesus is the door. And as I mentioned last week, it means that Jesus is the way to salvation, but it also means something very practically for us now on the inside. It means that Jesus, practically speaking, is the way that salvation opens up for somebody.

He's not only the way, but he is the actual mechanics. He is not only the way, but he is the means. Now, I'd like to explain what I mean by that, because when you look at the book of Acts, you see Jesus as the door.

This is my simple way of entitling the book of Acts. Now, you know, you've heard the debate over whether the book of Acts is the Acts of the Apostles or the Acts of the Holy Spirit or the Acts of Jesus Christ. Well, Luke says at the beginning of the book that he's continuing on with the story that Jesus began to do and teach.

It's obviously the Acts of Jesus through the Holy Spirit and through the Apostles. But if you look at the book of Acts in a very simple way, we see that Jesus opens the door in this place and in that place for people to be saved, to come to himself. It's amazing that he not only is the gospel, but he is the gopeller behind the scenes who opens the door.

Now, I'd just like for us to take a quick survey through the whole book of Acts just so you can see what I'm saying. Okay, here we go. Let's go to Acts chapter 2. And you're aware, of course, of what happened on the day of Pentecost.

The Holy Spirit came down and there was a mighty wind and tongues of fire came down on these disciples. They began to speak languages of the visitors who were visiting for the feast of Pentecost. And such a stir and such a noise came about that people rushed to this particular meeting place where the disciples were banded together to find out what was going on.

And as they came together, Peter stood up with the other apostles and what he basically did was explain what was going on. His sermon was actually rather simple. He said, you know what's happening right here? We're not drunk, but the promise from the book of Joel that in the last days the Spirit would be poured out, you're seeing it right in front of your eyes.

And this means that the Messiah has been glorified and gone up to heaven and that's why you see the Spirit being poured out. And the people were absolutely pricked in their hearts as Peter shared with them how they, in fact, had been culpable in putting Jesus to death. But now He's been raised again and this is proof of it.

And the people said, well, what shall we do? And He said, repent and be baptized, and 3,000 were saved that day. Now, when I say Jesus is the door, what I'm trying to say is this. How could the disciples ever have gotten started? What would your strategy have been? If you felt, the Lord told us now to tarry in Jerusalem until you receive the power of the Holy Spirit and then to be a witness in Jerusalem.

Now, how should we do it? Peter, you got any ideas? I don't know. James, how about you? John, you got any ideas? How should we do this? Should we go out two by twos like we did in the past? They said, I think we better wait for the Lord to take the initiative. And suddenly it was the day of Pentecost and we might say, and it's an understatement, the Lord took the initiative.

I mean, a rushing mighty wind. Suddenly they're speaking the languages of the Parthians and the Medes and the visitors. I mean, it's an amazing miracle.

And in the context of that miracle, Peter didn't really preach perhaps the greatest sermon of all time. All he really did was explain what was going on and 3,000 people were saved. Now, do you see that the perspective of it, I don't want to say this with disrespect, but it almost downplays the apostles.

It was like this. An act of God took place on that day of Pentecost and then the disciples just came along and explained what happened. And 3,000 people got saved.

Now, that's an amazing thing to think about. But let's jump over to chapter 3. And that's the story where Peter and John are walking to the temple one day and they see a lame man sitting there. Now, they'd seen that lame man sitting there every day.

You know, that man had been there for years. Everybody knew this guy had been there for years. And Peter and John had been walking to the temple every day to pray, every day they were there in Jerusalem.

But on this particular day, they're walking there and they see this man begging for alms and they turn away and it's just a clue hits them. I like this word, clue. I guess you noticed.

And something hits them and says, wait a minute. This isn't a mistake, this man being here. And they turn to him as if in the providential divine moment.

And they said, silver and gold we have none, but in the name of Jesus stand up and walk. That man stood up and walked and it says in Acts chapter 4 that now 5,000 men had been saved. In other words, let's just put it this way.

In the economy of effort of the working of Jesus, He opened up the door further in Jerusalem and at least 2,000 more people were saved as a result of a miracle. You understand, when that man got up leaping and walking, everybody rushed around and said, what's this miracle? What are these miracle men like Peter? And Peter says, hey, what are you getting excited about me for? There's nothing I'm doing. It's this Jesus that you crucified.

You didn't know any better, but now He's raised up. And what you see about this man sitting here whole, it's because Jesus is raised up and He's sitting at the right hand of God. And God knows you made this mistake in the past, but now it's time to repent.

And now the church goes from 3,000 believers to 5,000 men and who knows how many women. Now, that's not to say that's the only thing that was happening in Jerusalem. Every day they were sharing the gospel from house to house and all the things that were going on.

But God did a divine act and the disciples explained what was happening. In other words, let me put it another way. Jesus opened the door through an event.

An event that caught the eye of the people of Jerusalem who knew that man who'd been there for years. It was an event planned by God. And all we have to do is be obedient to doing those events planned by God.

And it's amazing the economy of how God opens up a whole door when such a thing happens. Now, if you look in Acts chapter 6, I mean, it just goes on and on, but if you look in Acts chapter 6 at verse 8, you find these men who've been chosen to help serve the tables and it has this to say, And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people. And some of the men in the synagogues began to argue with him.

And verse 10, And yet they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the spirit with which he was speaking. Now, Stephen was this Hellenistic Jew who was soundly believing in the Messiah and what he was doing was this. Because he was preaching the gospel and there were such signs and wonders, people were stuck.

And when argumentation came up, he spoke with such wisdom that they couldn't out-argue him. It was an act of God. And what actually happened is through Stephen, God began to begin the very beginning stages of prying the Gentiles about this matter of the gospel.

When we go on and look in chapter 8, we see the same thing basically happens with Philip. What happens to Philip? Because of the persecution, Philip goes to the city of Samaria. And he goes there because of the persecution.

But as he goes to the city of Samaria, he begins to preach the gospel. And notice what it says. It says in verse 6, And the multitudes with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip because the

singing in the choir was so beautiful, because the tent was so luscious.

Now, now, what was it? Philip was preaching the gospel and the Lord was coming right behind him with signs and wonders being performed. And in the case of many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out of them, shouting with a loud voice. And many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed.

And there was much rejoicing in the city. Now listen, anybody here who preaches the gospel and there are such kind of miracles and signs following, people will listen to it. The door opened up to the city of Samaria because Philip was willing to come and preach the gospel and then the Holy Spirit came behind him with signs and wonders.

Does it say anywhere that Philip was a miracle worker? No, it only calls him an evangelist. But Jesus came to Samaria with Philip and Philip preached the gospel and Jesus came behind and opened the door to the whole city. The whole city was aware of this gospel of Jesus.

The Lord opened the door. Philip wouldn't take any credit for it. He was sent out into the desert.

Next thing he knew. Let's look in Acts chapter 9. Again, of course, this is miracle after miracle and move of God after move of God. We look in verse 32 and we see Peter.

Now it came about that as Peter was traveling through all those parts, he came also to the saints who lived at Lydda. Now Peter was visiting the saints at Lydda. This was his purpose, encouraging the saints and talking about Jesus.

There he found a certain man named Aeneas who had been bedridden eight years for he was paralyzed. Peter said to him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed.

And immediately he arose and all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him and they turned to the Lord. All in two towns turned to the Lord. One miracle.

Now Peter was just at the right place at the right time. Was Peter looking for miracles? Was Peter shuffling around saying, let's see, who's somebody who's paralyzed? No, no, he was just going to serve the Lord. But he was there at the right moment.

There was something about Aeneas being there that Peter realized that God wanted to do something about. And he touched Aeneas' life and this miracle, just two whole towns turned to the Lord. And the story continues down in verse 36 because he goes to Joppa because this girl Thibitha dies.

And to make a long story short, he goes to this girl and prays and she's raised up from the dead. And it says in verse 42, it became known all over Joppa and many believed in the Lord. Now Joppa was a big city.

Now Lydda was just a little town. Joppa was a big city. And many heard this throughout the city of Joppa and turned to the Lord.

The Lord opened the door in Joppa. I mean, who would get the credit for that? Did Peter have a strategy? Say, I'm going to Joppa. All he did was, I'm willing to be faithful and go wherever God tells me.

The saints come to Peter and say, Peter, Peter, come quick. There's this girl. She's dying.

And he just goes in obedience. And God says, I'm going to open the door. The story just continues if we go to chapter 11.

You know the story of Peter and his vision and his going to the house of Cornelius. And you know, whenever the saints don't know quite what to do, well, I mean, Peter didn't know quite what to do about preaching to the Gentiles. I mean, what do you do? Give an invitation to them? Ask the Gentiles to be saved? Peter wasn't clear at all about what to do about it.

He just went in obedience. And as he was preaching the gospel, God said, well, I don't know if Peter's going to give an invitation, so I better take the initiative. And boom, down came the Holy Spirit and those folks were soundly saved right there on the spot.

And it was evident to all that were there and so they baptized these Gentiles. There was a door opening to the Gentiles. Right there.

And who opened the door? It was Jesus. He poured down the Spirit sovereignly in that situation. God took the initiative and Peter was there preaching the gospel when it happened.

When we turn and see the rest of the book of Acts and we primarily deal with the mission journeys of Paul, we see that when Paul was called to go, he took Barnabas and they went off. And they started going around and the first place they went was to Cyprus. This is in chapter 13.

Now, how is God going to open the door in Cyprus? Have you ever looked at the book of Acts this way? How is God going to open the door in Cyprus? Well, let's see. Well, they began to proclaim the gospel in the synagogues and the people were listening to them and things were happening, but there was a certain magician in verse 6 named Bar-Jesus. And this magician tried to prevent Paul and Barnabas from preaching the gospel.

And when they prevented him and carried on long enough, Paul, verse 9, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked at that man and said, You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked? And now behold the hand of the Lord upon you and you will be blind. And verse 12 says, Then the pro-council believed when he saw what had happened, being amazed at the teaching of the Lord. And the door opened.

I mean, when the pro-council believes, the door opens for the gospel. And Paul, you know after this miracle, people started listening. God just opened up the door.

It's an amazing story. Or if you just look in chapter 14, verse 3, you see in verse 1 that they come to Iconium and they begin to preach the gospel. And here it says something interesting, Therefore they spent a long time there speaking boldly with reliance upon the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting that signs and wonders be done by their hand.

So they preached the gospel and then signs and wonders came behind them to confirm that these things were true. And so in Iconium they stayed there quite a while preaching the gospel. If you look in chapter 16, you find how God opened the door up.

Over in Macedonia and over in Europe. How did that happen? Well, basically Paul went to preach the gospel and he tried to go south and the spirit prevented him and he tried to go north and the spirit prevented him. We don't know what that means exactly.

If circumstantially his chariot broke down or he took the mumps or what it was. But he was prevented. Couldn't go this way, couldn't go that way.

I'm not sure it was just all spiritual witness. You know what I'm saying? I'm not sure Paul just stood there and said, I don't feel good about that. He probably tried.

Circumstances made him begin to wonder and he stopped. Then they tried to go this way and circumstances again. So a little bit befuddled and confused he goes to the coast.

He gets the Macedonian vision of a man who says, come and help us. He goes over there and how is Jesus going to open the door in Philippi? Do you know how he did it? Well, just so happened in verse 14 that they went down to the river on the Sabbath day and just so happened they met this woman named Lydia who listened and turned to the Lord and her household with her. And the door opened up in Philippi.

Then what happened after that was interesting. A girl with a demon started chasing Paul around yelling things all the time. And Paul evidently put up with it for a little while but after a period of time he just was so distressed about it that he commanded this evil spirit to go out of her and the spirit did go out of her.

And then he got put in jail for causing this girl to lose her job. And that's how the door opened in Philippi because then an earthquake came and then the Philippian jailer got saved. Isn't it wonderful how God opens the door? But you see, Jesus is the door.

Jesus is the door to Philippi and his way to open the door there was through Lydia and through the Philippian jailer and probably their relatives and the people they knew and that's how the church began. Isn't that some magic? It happens through people. Communicating with people.

The right people at the right time. Going down to the side of the river at the right time and meeting the right people is not something that happens by accident as we're aware when we see this whole thing in its context. Or if you go to chapter 19, you see how God opened the door in an amazing way in Ephesus.

There were a few believers there in Ephesus and Paul came and God began to do mighty wonders and miracles and Paul began to preach the gospel and many believers were saved and people who had magic books burned them. It was a real revival time. God opened the door in Ephesus.

Or in Acts chapter 28, God opens the door in Rome. There's Paul in jail and he's freely and unhindered preaching the gospel in Rome. I mean, God used jail to open the way for Paul in Rome.

Now brothers and sisters, I just want us to see a couple of things. I mean, I am not saying that what we need is to emphasize miracles. What I am saying is this.

I believe when I say Jesus is the door, what that means to me is this. There is a specific door that he opens in an area. It's specific.

It's unique. It's his timing and it's his opening and when he opens it, no man can shut it. And we need to be aware of these doors.

Did you notice in each one of these places if we take Ephesus or Philippi or Iconium or Derby or wherever you want to take these places, each door was unique. There's no real pattern. Paul's pattern was he went to the synagogue and began to preach.

But God opened a different door in different places. And it's amazing when you see a company of God's people, how God opens a door. Let me tell you what I mean by door.

Sometimes a door is a college and two people on the college campus know the Lord and they start to get together with a few other people and next thing you know a door opens to this particular assembly and 30 people come from one college because somebody was there at the door. And boom! And these people come in and for six months or a year 30 young people from well, you've got all kinds of colleges around here. There's the University of Richmond or the medical college or whatever.

They suddenly come in. And then God closes the door. And then in the Shirley Wood neighborhood suddenly she meets somebody who meets somebody to have a Bible study and something happens.

And next thing you know that neighborhood's hot. Really. People are excited, talking about the Lord, coming to the Lord, coming to the meetings.

And then six months later it sort of ends. And then there's a bunch of young people who hang out down somewhere down here by a 7-Eleven somewhere. They're always hanging out there and nothing's ever happened.

And then somebody, some young person who got some kind of gift goes down there and starts talking to them. One by one they start being saved and they start coming to the meetings. Sometimes it's a family.

Sometimes you'll see a fellowship and one family gets saved and this family has influence over other families. Next thing you know they're bringing in neighbors and they've got like a network of six or eight families. And they're all entangled in this one family.

And when this one family gets saved by the Lord's providence, six other families come in and get saved. And I'm telling you, this whole thing is worked out by Jesus. And what we do is we need to be faithful and witness in many different ways.

But God has doors that He opens. Sometimes it's not doors we like. Not the doors we would choose.

Sometimes somebody opens up their house and next thing you know there's so many people hanging out in their house that they're hanging by the rafters. And it's just a door. It's a sovereign act of God.

But you see, we kind of always notice that two years after it happened. Now you guys could probably tell me what the doors were two years ago here in Richmond. The question is where is God going to open the door now? If we find those things and we go and pray and help people and even go pick them up over there at the University of Richmond if it's now a time of harvest over there and there's a cluster of 40 people or 20 people or 10 that the Lord wants to save right there, then we should go over there and pray about the situation and especially help the doorknobs.

Now I want to talk about doorknobs. Because those are the people that the Lord uses to open the door. Now you notice the Lord could have had some people saved in Philippi without Paul ever going there.

I mean, God can do things sovereignly. But He chooses to use, I'm just going to say doorknobs. People willing to be turned.

People who are just willing to be there at the right time when God's opening the door. And oh, what a wonderful thing. And of course, you know what's really wonderful? You have doorknobs right here.

Now there are doorknobs in your fellowship. There are certain people with a gift. I can almost spot them when I go someplace.

There's a young girl in the assembly that I go to and she's just kind of a young Christian. She's an absolute doorknob. She brings in people off the street.

She brings in friends. You know, I mean, the whole rest of the group don't bring as many people as that one person. She's a door.

Or I'll say a doorknob. She's willing to be turned. She has a network of people that she knows and cultivates and she's willing to bring them.

And she has a way with people that they come. It's amazing. And you know, you have an assembly here and these are people that actually are, if you want to use it non-technically, certainly the evangelists here in the assembly.

They're the door openers. The Andrews. You know, of course, Andrew is an apostle.

His sort of unique niche was he was always bringing people to Jesus. Who would Andrew bring first? His brother. Then who would Andrew bring? The kid with the loaves and the fish.

Then who would Andrew bring? The Gentiles in John chapter 12. Call them to Jesus. Andrew was always introducing people to Jesus.

You know, you don't hear that Andrew was a great apostle who saved a lot of people. But Andrew was always somebody bringing people to Jesus. So, if you want to call them Andrews or doorknobs or whatever, these people are vital in the assembly.

And they're in the assembly. Now, these doorknobs, I just want to put in a bit for them. They should be encouraged.

They should be encouraged. And not discouraged all the time. You know, now a doorknob tends to have, sometimes a doorknob needs a little bit of patience.

Because a doorknob is always thinking outwardly. Now, not everybody is a doorknob. You know, thank God, there are shepherds in the body of Christ.

There are people who are concerned for teaching and things that need to be done within the body itself. Doorknobs are part of the whole overall function, but they're not to be the main function. But doorknobs are always looking out.

Wondering why everybody else is looking in. Well, doorknobs, I want to now make a statement. Of course, everybody's looking at everybody else as to who the doorknobs are here.

But I want to make a statement to doorknobs nonetheless. The long range outreach here in the Richmond Assembly is in large part dependent upon you doorknobs being faithful. To keep stirring up the saints.

To keep encouraging them to reach out. And for you to keep being a doorknob. Encouraging people to come.

Now, not everybody is gifted in the work of evangelism. And not everybody's really even to be, everybody's to be concerned about it. But not everybody has that particular calling.

But you doorknobs, who sense that outward desire and burden, you need to be faithful. You know, in Ephesians 4, where it says that evangelists are given along with apostles, prophets, teachers, and pastors. It says that they're given for the edification of the body of Christ.

One of the practical applications of that is this. An evangelist is given to the church. Why is he given to the church? Not just so he can reach out to people who are lost and bring them in.

An evangelist is given to the church. And how does the Lord use an evangelist in the church? By keeping them properly stirred up about this whole matter of reaching out. Now, I'm not saying they need to always blow their horn and always say, oh, we haven't done the gospel in three weeks.

We've been unfaithful. But they need to always be there praying and personally being responsible and encouraging the other saints to be faithful in this whole matter of outreach. Now, I'm going to ask you a question.

Are you a doorknob? Now, I'll tell you a couple of things about yourself. Now, some folks are obviously doorknobs. They're extroverted.

They're open. They know a lot of people. They have a sort of influence like that and they're sort of, you might say, naturally doorknobs in a way.

There's other folks who think they're quiet and shy and oh, I could never be that way. But actually, you are. A few characteristics of a doorknob.

First of all, they have a giving spirit. A giving spirit. You know that famous passage in Luke 16 that a lot of people don't know what it means and I'm not sure I do either.

But in Luke 16, in verse 9, Jesus says, And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when it fails, they may receive you into eternal dwellings. How do you make friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness? Well, we all know that whatever we have could be consumed in a moment. All of our material things may go anyway.

But we all live in this world where we make money and all this. I think the Lord's just saying you need to take what you've got as an opportunity to reach out. To use what you have for the Lord's sake.

To reach out to people who don't know the Lord through all the gifts that you have. If you and I started giving now, we'd spend the rest of our lives, I don't believe we could out-give what the Lord would pour into us. But Christians have a way, a funny way of becoming so stingy with their hearts.

Stingy with what they have. You know, we build walls instead of giving away. I'll tell you who a door is, a doorknob.

It's somebody who's always giving tapes to people. Somebody giving books to somebody. Somebody opens their home all the time, has people in.

Some women say, oh, my house is nothing, I can't have anybody over. And another woman with a house just as little or just as tiny or overstuffed with children or whatever says, let's have somebody over. It's that

kind of generous spirit, I believe the Lord really honors in this matter of being a doorknob.

People who are generous. Generous with your car. Picking people up, taking them places.

It's a giving spirit. The Lord Jesus, I suppose, had the greatest giving spirit of anybody. He had so little, I mean materially.

He's always giving. Always giving. A doorknob is somebody who's marked by that kind of a giving nature.

Come on, you and I have really been blessed. When are we going to give it away? I've stung my neighbors. They don't know quite how to handle guys like myself.

We went around Christmas caroling at Christmas time. Actually, this was last year. I was gone this year at Christmas.

And last year we went around, right around Christmas time and I got some of the saints from the fellowship over. And we all carried candles around and we sang Old Little Town of Bethlehem and stuff like that. Went from door to door and I gave every one of my neighbors the book.

They were so stunned. Somebody gave them... We didn't invite them to church. We just said have a blessed Christmas and Jesus loves you.

And here, would you please take this? There's a woman on my block across the street from me and her husband died just a few months ago. I saw her the other day. She says, you know, I've read that book every day since you gave it to me.

You know, I mean, they just can't get over it. I mean, why would this guy give us a book? Nobody gives us a book. Somebody gives us a book and says, would you like to subscribe to something? You know, we moved into that neighborhood and the year before we moved in in November.

And you know what we did? We had an open house to welcome ourselves to the neighborhood. Never been inside our house. They were curious.

And they hadn't met half of the neighbors. They were curious. And they sat around and talked to us.

You know, I know all my neighbors. Nobody else does. The people on either side of me, this house and this house right here, they hadn't talked to each other in six years.

They met at my house. They had a great conversation. You know, and the people just couldn't get over it.

They sent us thank you notes. I mean, they were bringing us bottles of booze as presents. They don't know what to do with you.

You know, if you just be giving like that. I mean, so what did we lose by that? Nothing, but we gained a lot. And we gained great opportunities just to be giving like that.

I admit it, I'm a doorknob. And I just love to have opportunities like that to share with people. Well, okay, a giving spirit.

Another thing is, and I don't mean this in a wrong way, but a doorknob has an opportunistic spirit. It's the opportunistic spirit like in Colossians chapter 4. Here in Colossians chapter 4, it says this, verse 5,

Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned as it were with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person.

Make the most of the opportunity. Here we have opportunities all the time bumping into people here and there at work, at home, in our neighborhood. Do we take the opportunity? Brothers and sisters, I'm not talking, when I'm talking about outreach, I'm not talking so much about going out and knocking on doors cold.

I'm talking about starting out with the opportunities we have and take advantage of them. It's incredible what happens when we take advantage of them. I remember one time I was with a witnessing team and we went to Nottingham, England.

My wife and I stayed in the home of just a wonderful Christian couple in the city of Nottingham. They had such a burden for their neighborhood. They always prayed for their neighbors, but they just didn't know quite how to make contact.

So, we got there, my wife and I. And of course, when you're dumb, you can just suggest anything. And I said, look, why don't we have a tea party to invite all the neighbors in? A tea party? Well, I don't know. When could we possibly do that? I mean, we've never done that before.

I said, well, let's have it Saturday morning. Aren't a lot of people off? Well, I guess we could. But nobody will come.

We don't know the neighbors. So, I said, well, listen, I'll tell you what. Have them over for tea on Saturday morning and tell them that you've got an American couple that is staying with you and you'd like them to meet a bunch of English people.

And that was the basis of it. And, you know, Americans are a very curious sort of animal. And so, they went around to the neighbors on about Thursday and told them about this tea on Saturday morning.

Come on over. Meet the Americans. Well, I'll tell you, this couple was so nervous.

I mean, they ate their fingernails away. They knew nobody was going to come, sure enough. Ten o'clock in the morning, nobody was there.

Ten-fifteen, the first neighbor came in. Then the next neighbor came in. And the next neighbor.

We sat around. My wife and I, we sang Amazing Grace. We explained why we were there.

We told them we were Christians. And people said, oh, I've never heard that before. And then the couple chimed in and started telling that they were Christians too.

And we left that place. And the next-door neighbor of this couple, shortly after we left, the wife became very sick, was in the hospital. This young couple kept the kids of the family while the wife was in the hospital.

You know, both the husband and wife got sick. But you know, they just were afraid that we'll be rejected and all this. So what? Give it a try.

And they found that there was quite an open and willing response. If you take advantage of opportunities. Now listen, people who are in hospitals, I'm not talking about taking advantage of them.

I'm just talking about going to them and sharing the love of Jesus with people. It's incredible what happens. I was told by a woman who was a Christian that her husband, who was a policeman, was in the hospital and he had some kind of blood pressure problem and didn't know what it was.

I just went in there and visited the guy. And I said, I just want you to know Jesus loves you and I want to pray for him. He couldn't even talk.

He was in an oxygen tank. I prayed for that guy. He got saved right there.

Came out of the hospital two weeks later and got baptized and joined the fellowship. It was just a wonderful opportunity. I'm so glad I went.

There was another woman who had been a Christian two weeks and she came down with a back problem and ended up in the hospital. And as it happened, it was Easter Sunday morning and so we had shared communion in the fellowship and I remember that she was in the hospital and she was a new Christian. I said, listen, let's a couple of us, two or three of us, go up to the hospital and just give her the Lord's Supper together and pray with her.

We went up to the hospital. We had the Lord's Supper with us. We prayed for her while she experienced the healing in her back.

Her husband got saved. Hospitals are such an opportunity. But if people don't take that opportunity, then when somebody is in the hospital, you say, oh gee, that's too bad.

When somebody moves into your neighborhood, what an opportunity to go, welcome! Tell them where you're from. Tell them where you fellowship. Where are you at? Talk to them about it.

You know, when people move in. When there's a death experience in somebody's family. Just to go, I mean, have you ever seen somebody do a double take when they realize you're sincere? And you say, hey, where were you last weekend? They say, oh, my father died.

I had to go into the city. And you say, I'm really sorry to hear that. How's your mom doing? He's sort of, well, she's doing okay, a little depressed.

Say, what's your mother's name I'd like to pray for? They just do a double take. They can't believe somebody cares. But taking opportunities like that, why do we flub it up all the time? Why are we so busy and into ourselves? We never see these things right in front of us.

I'm not talking about working something up. I'm just talking about being there. At moments like this in people's lives, it's sometimes that door and that moment.

And we need to be sensitive to it. And so, well, there's so much to say about that. And everybody has so many opportunities.

But you need to be aware of it. There's an opportunity coming up in a couple of weeks, the Super Bowl. Now, listen, I'm concerned about men.

Because women catch hold of this thing and they go and reach out to the people that they know. But how about men? How many doorknobs do you know who are men? There's a lot of sisters praying for people, talking to people, inviting people. You know, they're more likely to do it.

How about men? Well, I'm totally serious about this. I think that some men ought to get together with a couple of their buddies from work and have a Super Bowl party. Go over to your house and have some kind of light snacks there and watch the Super Bowl together and talk about the Lord a little bit during halftime.

I absolutely do. And I believe men would just eat that up when you do it and you're real. Gospel opportunities of outreach for men include things like getting together and having some sports or breakfast together with men.

Just men. There's all kinds of opportunities like that. We're just so chicken.

I bet you if you had, of course, now I share my bias, but I bet if you had a golf day. I love golf. If you had a golf day and the men went and you invited a friend of yours, even if you don't play golf, it makes no difference.

Everybody who says they play golf, they don't play well anyway. Except for Owen and a couple of others. Anyway, you bring a friend of yours, you share an outing of golf together and then afterwards you have a meal together and you share the gospel with them, I'm telling you there will be some men who are really impressed.

I mean, impressed with the Lord in your life just by you being natural. But how often do we get opportunities like that? Now, I just dropped the truth. Here is the truth.

If we don't plan to take hold of opportunities like that, they slip by and we just don't get around to it. You cannot just always be haphazardly sort of winging it. How are we going to continue to reach out beyond the meeting tomorrow morning? Well, I'll just make a few suggestions.

Your area groups are probably the best ways of reaching out. And I don't know how often do you have meetings in the area? Once a week or once every two weeks? How often is it? Every two weeks. So let's say if you gave maybe every fifth meeting.

Now, that's every two months or more. If you gave every fifth meeting to reaching out in your particular local area and had a gospel meeting. And by that, I just mean an informal meeting.

You have a meal, invite friends over, have a light evening, have some people talk about the Lord. Let people see what Christian fellowship is. It's a tremendous way of outreach.

But now, if you don't plan that, I know that all the area groups have all kinds of things going on. But if you don't plan for outreach, it doesn't happen. If you don't plan for outreach here, corporately, on a larger basis, it also won't happen.

You know, it just doesn't happen. Some people have to have the vision and the foresight and say, I believe Jesus is the door and if we'll be faithful, He'll open the door. Well, I'm talking to doorknobs and I'm talking to you as a corporate assembly and I believe that God is certainly wanting to reach out to people.

And if you'll be faithful, He'll show you some doors, some specific doors to go through. If you'll be faithful and go through those doors, then the Lord will lead you through and you will lead some people to the Lord and then the Lord will close the doors because there will be a time of consolidation where these people have to be developed and disciplined and helped. You know, the Lord just doesn't always keep the door swung wide open.

There are seasons of in-gathering and then consolidation. If we could just faithfully do that and let the Lord add daily to the church such as is being saved. Not to make it a big thing, a big exhausting continual crusade going on.

You know, bring an organ in here and pump it up loud every week. But just to follow the season. To sense where the Lord's at and to do it faithfully.

You know, you will have more people coming to the Lord than you can handle. Now, I believe that much of the church lays latent. Dormant.

But as soon as people start coming to the Lord, there are gifts in the body of Christ that suddenly wake up. There's all kinds of discipling gifts. Brothers and sisters, it's a costly thing discipling something, isn't it? They tell you all the problems they have, all the self-centeredness they go through.

They spend a lot of time on the phone and you pray with them and you talk with them and you share a Scripture with them and you try to deal with the particular sins that they're having a problem with. Are you willing to pay the cost? I wonder if the Lord sometimes doesn't really say, listen, I can bring people in and they can come to the Lord just in a moment. But where is an incubator where I can grow up in people? Now, there's a certain, brothers and sisters, there's a certain shift in priorities that has to happen in our lives if this is going to happen.

We don't neglect the other things. Our emphasis upon the family, our emphasis upon prayer, our emphasis upon the corporate life and upon teaching and understanding what God's doing today. These things are not de-emphasized, but certainly the Lord isn't all inward.

And we need to have some shift of priorities in our life that comes down to something practical like this. Are you willing to A, as I said last week, be open? Just really be open and say, now Lord, is there an opportunity today? I want to be open to it. That's the most important thing you can do.

And B, are you willing to consider taking some little section out of your life and letting that be for other people? You know what I'm saying? You come home from the job and you're so tired. By the time you eat dinner and do the dishes and everything, it's now 8 o'clock at night or whatever, well, let's just sit down and watch television. There's no meeting tonight.

Can we take one little section of our week out? Maybe one little section every two weeks and let that be for somebody else, somebody outside the church. You know, most of us, here again, if we don't plan to do that, it'll be a great intention that will never happen. And I bet you some of you don't know your neighbors and you've lived in your neighborhood for years.

And if you just every two weeks would invite somebody over just for dessert on one evening you'd begin to find all kinds of people who the Lord is working upon. See, it's a matter of willingness and it's a matter of changing our intentions into some sort of simple plan of action. Now, you know, if you plan this every two weeks, it'll never work.

It doesn't work that simply. You're going to have to battle and you'll be tired and then the kids are going to get sick and all of these kind of things only because it's such a worthwhile venture. But if you'll just simply reach out as I said last week, let's just say the Lord led you to somebody maybe already and tomorrow morning you're bringing them to the meeting.

But let's just say the Lord led you to somebody in 1986 here in January and you loved them and you prayed with them and you talked to them and you had patience with them and you helped them understand the Gospel for the whole year of 1986 and let's say next December that person comes to the Lord. There would be 100 people saved if everybody just had been working with one person. Now it doesn't happen like that.

I'm not suggesting we set up a mechanical system each one win one. This is not a strategy. Because what will actually happen is somebody here who's a door is going to bring a dozen people to the Lord in the next year if they're willing.

And somebody else will be willing and even praying Lord give me an opportunity and it seems like God will not give them an opportunity because He has other priorities in their lives. God knows what He's doing. But if there were... What's the truth? If there were 30 people added to the church by means of salvation in the coming year, that's about all you could handle and really bring them up and help them to grow in the Lord.

It's such a dynamite here. And Jesus is a door. I think what He needs is a couple of people to start being willing to knock on the door.

Say, Jesus, we believe You're the door and we haven't the foggiest idea where the open patch is out here. We don't know if it's the west end or the south side or the college campus or where it is, but we're going to start knocking. And you know what happens? One of those areas opens up.

An area of the city opens up. Or you guys are right here and Ashland opens up. It's amazing how it'll happen.

It'll happen for a certain period of time and Ashland will open up and suddenly, you know, maybe a boy's been having a meeting up there for three years and it's been he and his wife. And I mean, nothing's ever going to happen, whatever. And then, suddenly, boom! Something opens up.

And 10, 12, 14, 16 people come to the Lord. It just happens like that. And for a period of six months.

And then, it opens up over on this side of town. The Lord keeps us alert. It doesn't just get an old system.

You know, we don't just develop the old system. Oh yeah, the Lord's always opened down at the James River. Let's just go down there and witness.

He changes. The places change because there's people there that the Lord wants to win here and there and everywhere to keep us all sensitive. Now, you own the ghost of that kind of exciting thing.

Now listen, if God opened the door in Philippi and God opened the door in Ephesus and God opened the door in Joppa and God opened the door in Lystra, how's God going to open the door here? And when He opens the door that no man can shut, hold on to your seat belts because people start coming to the Lord and then the Lord says, now, you remember how much you wanted to see people saved? Now, how much

do you want to see the made disciples? There'll be some people here tomorrow. You'll be surprised. They'll come to the Lord and you didn't think they were ready.

And then it's up to us to help them grow, to teach them the ABCs, to introduce them to the labor and watch them wash their hands in the Word and enter into the holy place. I think there's no greater environment than the sincerity of the saints here for somebody to grow. First, they have to get in.

And I hope you're as concerned with that as I am. I'm just so grateful that there's already energy of the Holy Spirit just anticipating what's going to happen tomorrow. I think you'll see that it's just the simplicity of the truth of Christ and I've purposely made it this simple meeting simple just because I want everybody to be aware of the fact that it isn't when there's some great preacher who preaches that something happens or when somebody draws a net in some special way or they play a certain song or we continue it for such a period of time.

Just the simplicity of the truth of Christ is what's going to impact people tomorrow. I'm just looking forward to being here. I hope you are too.

Lord Jesus, you're the door. And when you moved in the book of Acts, how could the apostles take credit? Sometimes they didn't even know what to do and their spirits just had to take total initiative. Lord, maybe we're in that kind of position.

We would ask that your spirit would be poured out upon us tomorrow as our brother and sister share testimony as a song is sung as the gospel is simply stated and as the groups spin around to talk. We need the outpoured Holy Spirit evidencing the simple words that are spoken. Opening the hearts of people who are ready to receive.

Lord, we expect to see some harvest tomorrow. But we also expect to see some people initially impacted. Brought under some initial conviction.

Brought to see that this matter is real. Oh, we just thank you for an opportunity to share the gospel. We pray that perhaps tomorrow will be an opening of doors.

That there will be some family who will get saved here tomorrow and there will be a network that will open the way to other families and other people that they know or other people in their community or perhaps other workers where they work. So many possibilities. And only your omniscience can we depend upon.

But we just want to be faithful to you to present the gospel and then ask, Lord, as you did in the past, so you can do it today. Come along with the reality of your life confirming the words that are spoken. We don't want to get into the position where we are trying to out-argue with somebody.

We just want to share the truth that is so authentic because Jesus is behind it giving his authentic stamp to people to simply either accept or reject that which they know is real. We thank you for the people who have prayed and prepared and who have awaited for this meeting tomorrow morning. We pray that you'll give us order.

We pray that you'll give us power. We pray that you'll open us up with faith. Even if somebody is sitting there with a specific need that you give somebody in the midst of the prayer a word of wisdom to speak to the situation or a prayer of faith to speak to a need.

Lord, help us be alive to you as you walk among us and do your amazing work. We just thank you that you're a door and when you decide to open, oh Lord, we just stand in amazement at the things that you can do. Lord, I pray that you would raise up in this assembly some faithful doorknobs people who can open the way people who can bring in people and people who feel that this is a ministry that they should take seriously.

Help them, Lord, and encourage them. Help us to get out from under the bushel and to realize that when it comes to the message of the Gospel we don't have to be afraid of the enemy. He fears us.

We just thank you for your great power of the Gospel. We say along with Paul, I'm not ashamed of the Gospel. It's the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes.

And we believe that when the Gospel goes forth, it'll have that same power. We pray with anticipation and we pray with thanksgiving. Oh great door, we thank you we can come and knock upon the door tonight and know that you're the shepherd who'll open the way tomorrow.

Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus.

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