

David Guzik Testimony

by David Guzik

God opens doors for us, but we need to perceive them and be willing to change our plans in order to take advantage of them.

Duration: 32:06

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 16:8

Topics: "Gods Provision", "Faith Guidance"

Description

This sermon from 1 Corinthians chapter 16 focuses on the concept of open doors in our lives, emphasizing the importance of recognizing, embracing, and walking through the opportunities God presents to us. The speaker shares personal experiences to illustrate how God's open doors can lead to unexpected blessings and challenges, urging listeners to trust in God's provision and guidance amidst adversaries.

Transcript

This will be a low-tech sermon. Open your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 16. Good morning, everybody.

It's sure great to see you all. It's wonderful to be here. My wife, Ingalo, who's sitting right up here, and I, we sure enjoy coming to our family here in Santa Barbara.

And we so value all the deep relationships. And thanks for the great missionary interest from this congregation. It's really wonderful.

You guys are making an impact all over the world. In places like Russia, places like London, it's just wonderful to see what the Lord is doing. This morning, I want to talk to you from 1 Corinthians chapter 16, verses 8 and 9. And the whole topic that I'm going to be talking about is the topic of these verses, which is about open doors.

But yet, I have to say, I come into this message feeling just a little bit self-conscious. Because it's just sort of my own manner of preaching that I very rarely talk about myself or illustrate messages from things in my own life. But this morning, I just feel compelled to do that more than I normally would.

Because I think that what God has done in our lives over the last four years is an illustration of the text that we have right in front of us. And so I'm going to be a little more free with that than I would normally be this morning. And so let's begin with prayer here.

1 Corinthians chapter 16, verses 8 and 9. Father, we pray that you would bless your word to us this morning. We thank you for your word. It's light unto us.

It's life unto us. And Lord, it's like grace raining down to us, as we sang earlier this morning. And we praise you for it.

So Father, come and speak to us this morning. I pray that you would challenge hearts, that you'd inspire hearts this morning. Do it all for Jesus's glory.

We pray it in his name, amen. 1 Corinthians chapter 16, verses 8 and 9. Paul writes, he says, but I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

Now, Paul wrote this to the Corinthian church, obviously. But he wrote it from the city of Ephesus. And at the time Paul wrote this, in the city of Ephesus, there was an amazing work of God going on in the city there.

Paul had founded the church in Ephesus, but he had also founded the church in Corinth. And he had gone from place to place in his missionary travels, keeping these warm connections with the congregations that he had spent so much time and effort and love investing into. And as he was in Ephesus writing this letter, it was a season of conspicuous fruit.

If you turn in your Bibles, don't turn there now. Maybe make it for a little bit of pleasant homework for yourself at another time. Acts chapter 18, excuse me, 19.

You're gonna see the tremendous work of God that was happening in the city of Ephesus. It was a real time of revival, a real time of advance for the kingdom of God. Now, that isn't a problem, is it? That's glorious.

But it was Ephesus. They said, Paul, why aren't you here with us in Corinth? You don't love us, Paul, do you? You love the Ephesians more than us. And they kept playing this guilt trip upon Paul.

They wanted him very badly to come back to Corinth, even if it was just for a visit. Therefore, at the end of this letter, 1 Corinthians, Paul is explaining to the Corinthians why he is staying in Ephesus for now, why he doesn't just run down to the travel agent and book the first ship passage to Corinth. He says, I'm gonna tell you why I'm staying in Ephesus.

It's because God has opened a great and effective door unto me. So I wanna talk to you about this idea of open doors. Well, first, look at it right there in the text, what Paul shares with us in verse nine.

He says, for a great and effective door has opened to me. The first thing I wanna call your attention to about this door is that it was open. Isn't that the first thing you notice about a door? Either it's open or it's closed.

What does a closed door say to you? It says, keep out, you're not welcome here. Don't bother coming in. An open door, it says, come right in.

The opportunity is open. Here it is, ready for you. The door is already open to you.

Paul looked at the ministry opportunities going on right there in Ephesus at that time. And he said, it is like an open door. But not only that, what else did he say about the door in verse nine? He said that it was a great door.

Now he doesn't mean it in the sense that it was finally made out of wonderful craftsmanship, that it had a beautiful paint job, that it had an ivory inlay. It wasn't, hey, great door. He means great in the sense of what? Big.

Not only was it an open door, but it was a big door. It was like the garage door going up on that big two car garage that you have. It was wide, it was big.

And that got Paul even more excited, right? Not only is the door open, but look how big it is. Look at all the stuff that could go on through that great, big, open door. A lot can happen with that.

But the third thing he says about it in this text is you saw it, right? It is an effective door. Now that's not normally the kind of thing you say about a door, is it? Look at that door. Boy, is it effective.

But Paul saw that it was an effective door. And I just thought about it. What is it that makes a door effective? Well, if you actually go through the door, then it's effective.

And Paul said, well, this is how it is with me. Okay, God, you open the door. I'm gonna go through it and be effective with it.

By the way, I think that for some of you, you're expecting God to pick you up and throw you through an open door. Like you don't have to walk through it. Okay, God, I see the open door in front of me.

And if it's your will, throw me through that open door. But listen, that's not commonly the way the Lord works, right? I say commonly because God is God. And if he wants to, I suppose he could pick you up by the scruff of your neck, so to speak, and throw you through an open door.

But that's not commonly the way he works. More normally, God will put the open door in front of us. He says, I want you to make that door effective.

And how do you make a door effective? You walk right through it. That's God's traditional sort of predictable pattern in dealing with this. And so this was very exciting to Paul.

He looked at the door and it was open. He looked at the door and it was big. He looked at the door and he said, this door can be effective.

I'm gonna walk right through to it. But then notice the other thing about this door in verse four, excuse me, in verse nine, where he says, for a great and effective door has opened to me. In other words, that's in the passive verb, isn't it? In other words, the door was open to Paul.

He didn't say, I saw a door and I kicked it open. He didn't say, I saw a door and I picked the lock to open it. He had to step through it, but he didn't have to kick it open.

Paul saw that God had opened up this door unto him and now it was his job to make the door effective by walking through the door that God had opened to him. Now, I believe that God wants to open doors in your life. I believe that God can open doors in your family, in your neighborhood, doors at your work, maybe even doors to the whole world where you will reach out and touch the world in a way that you had

not previously expected.

And I can say that God wants to do this in our life on any number of levels, because I know the way that the Lord has worked in my life and in the life of my family. You see, I was the senior pastor of a Calvary Chapel Church in Simi Valley for some 13 years. We'd started the church in 1990 and stayed there for 13 years and God was blessing the ministry.

We enjoyed what God was doing, we were very thankful for it, but then very unexpectedly, God opened a door for myself and my wife, Ingellil, and our three children to go to Germany and start a Bible college. And God opened a great and effective door with that Bible college. See, every semester we worked with 40 or 50 students plus interns and staff and it's an international Bible college, so we have students from many, many countries, but they're mostly Americans and Germans.

And it's a great atmosphere. It's a great atmosphere academically, it's a great atmosphere socially, but most of all, it's a great atmosphere spiritually. And I wish I had the time to tell you about all the students that we've sent out from our Bible college to do something wonderful in this world for Jesus Christ.

I wish I had the time to tell you about Paul from Berlin, or Alfredo from Peru, or Jason in Grundstadt, or Celso and Christoph and Joachim and Karen, who are all serving at the same church in Brazil, or Jess from Australia, or Ben from Canada, or Valerie and Emily who are in Russia, or Katie and Noah in France, or Patrick in Australia, or Jesse in Portugal. You see, all these different places the Lord is using these students that he's blessed us with, and we've been able to pour into, and send them back out to touch a needy world for Jesus Christ. Isn't that a thrilling opportunity? We feel like God has enabled us to just take a burning torch that has been given to us by others, and pass it on to these young people, and just to pour into them, and see them be used of the Lord all over the world.

But you know what I have to say, that as big, and as great, and as effective as that door has been, God opened the door even bigger for us in going to Europe, in an unexpected way. God opened the door to us to minister to the churches, and to the leaders, and to the pastors of Europe, and sometimes beyond. You see, a second part of our ministry over there is to work with pastors and congregations and leaders all over Europe.

Now, most of them are connected with Calvary Chapel, but not all of them by any means, and it's been a great pleasure for us to develop friends and to make connections beyond the Calvary Chapel movement over there. But when we look, when we look back at the door he's opened for us in the last four years, it's pretty staggering. You know, apart from the ministry at the Bible College that Inge Will and I have done, apart from the classes that we've taught, and the discipleship that we've done, and the school that we've organized, and all the things that we've overseen, beyond all that, God's given us this ministry outside the church.

And I was sitting down the other day and just going through my old calendars and sort of adding it up, and I was sort of astounded to see that in the last four years, we've spoken or ministered more than 350 times at churches, or conferences, or special events in the last four years. And we've done this in like 20 different nations. Of course, in the United States and in Germany, but also in Australia, and Austria, and Canada, and Croatia, and Denmark, and Switzerland, and Sweden, and Slovakia, and Spain, and South Africa, and on and on.

And we've done it at more than 50 different churches, and at more than 50 different conferences in the last four years. I mean, that's an unexpected blessing. But I gotta say, the third area was even more unexpected.

Again, a great and effective door. In some ways, I think the greatest and most effective door that God has opened to us in ministry has been on the internet. This is a ministry that God gave us in an unexpected way about 10 years ago, through a very interesting, unexpected term of circumstances, I found out that what I prepare for myself in verse-by-verse teaching through books of the Bible, I found out that that could be helpful for other people as well.

And so I take what I prepare for myself, I sort of polish it up a little bit, and refine it just a bit, and mostly, I put it out on the internet. I also occasionally publish it in books, but the books are just a small part of what I do. 99% or more of people who use the materials that I have, they use it for free on the internet.

I found out something about a business plan, that it's hard to sell what you give away for free. But you know what? We're so happy to be able to give it away for free, because just in the last few months, we've got some statistics back from the websites that we have and the websites that use our materials, and I gotta say, I was staggered by it. I was staggered to find out that on the three different main websites where my stuff is published on the internet, the Bible commentary, and this is Bible commentary.

It's not like a joke page or a humor page. Bible commentary, we're finding out that we're getting more than 300,000 hits a month. That well more than four million uses.

People are clicking on Bible commentary and using it every year, and the amazing thing about that is that it's reaching and helping and preparing a lot of pastors and teachers and home group leaders and Sunday school teachers who are passing that on to other people as well. Do you see what I mean about a great and effective door? No, we didn't have all that planned out to begin with, but God said, look, here's a door, step through it, and maybe you don't even see how great and effective it is until you do step through it. You see, that's what God wants to do.

A door that you thought may not have been very big turns out to be bigger than you thought. You know, I remember when I was a kid in Ventura at my parents' house, I was a teenager at the time, of course, we moved to Ventura when I was a teenager, and I would lock myself out of the house very often being a teenager and very forgetful. Sometimes I'm still forgetful, but anyway, at those days, I could always find a way to get back into the house because the house had doggie doors on it.

And I could go in through the outside door that would go into the garage, and I could reach my arm through the doggie door, and just wrenching it through as much as I could, I could reach the handle to the door and unlock it and open up the bigger door. You see what I'm talking about? A little door, a door that seems very small, can turn into a bigger door, and all of a sudden, you have a great and effective door that perhaps you never expected. Listen, that's about the door in verses eight and nine, but what I want you to see, especially in verse nine, is what Paul did about the door.

You might take a look at it and say, okay, well, here's a great and effective door, what do I do about it? Well, look at the text again here, verses eight and nine, where Paul says, "Alterian Ephesus, until Pentecost, "for a great and effective door has opened to me, "and there are many adversaries." The first thing Paul did was he regarded that open door as being to him. Did you notice what he said in verse nine? A great and effective door has opened to somebody, and I hope God shows who it is. No, he didn't say

that.

I hope God has opened the door to somebody, but no, no, no, no, no. A great and effective door has been opened to me. Paul could have said, man, that's a great and effective open door, I wonder who it's for, but Paul knew that if he could perceive the door, it was probably for him.

You know, sometimes I think that our problem is not that God fails to open doors for us. I think our problem is in perceiving the open doors that he has in our life, right? Sometimes I think we pray, God, open up doors, open up doors for me, and God says, what do you mean open up doors? I put them all around you. But sometimes we just need to back off on the busyness, to put away the distractions, and just really seek the Lord so that he'll show us the open doors that he has for us.

I think that's a great prayer for us to pray. Lord, help us to see your open doors and to receive them as being to me. Now, I want you to notice, first, Paul saw that the open doors were to him, and that was big, but there's another aspect to it as well.

Notice, he made his plans according to the open door. Did you notice that? He said, right there in verse eight, I will tarry in Ephesus because of Pentecost. In other words, Paul had planned to go to Corinth earlier, but he said, no, no, I'm gonna change those plans, and I'm gonna stay in Ephesus longer than I had intended to because a door had opened to me.

And listen, I really believe that, that when God shows us a great and effective open door, that he may want us to change our plans because of it. And maybe the thing that keeps us from perceiving that open door is an unwillingness in our heart to change our plans because of it. You want God to open up a door in your life, a great and effective open door, but if the attitude is, well, Lord, I'll only walk through it if it fits into my prearranged schedule.

And I think maybe you only see those little doggy door doors opening because God says, listen, you gotta be willing to change some plans, maybe change a direction, maybe change something for the future, but God says, you have to be willing to change plans if I open up a door. And by the way, this was a sacrifice for Paul as well, wasn't it? Because Paul said, I will tear in myself, change my plans. I'm willing to make the Corinthians angry with me so that I can take advantage of this open door.

That was a sacrifice for Paul to not visit the Corinthians as soon as he wanted to, but he was willing to make that sacrifice because he knew that a great and effective door had been opened to him. So, so far, two points to our text. First of all, about the door, we saw that it was an open door, that it was a big door, that it was an effective door.

Secondly, we saw what Paul did about the door. He saw that it was to him. We saw that Paul was willing to sacrifice and change his plans for the sake of this door.

But then there's a third point, and I bet you've seen it already. It's in verse nine, right? The part I haven't talked about yet, right? The part about the adversaries. Do you see that in verse nine? For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

Man, I wish I could say that you open up that door, and there it is, and you walk through it, and it's like walking down the yellow brick road. It's just flowers and trees, and oh, isn't it wonderful? You're skipping gaily through a meadow or something like that. It doesn't work like that.

God puts an open door in front of you, and it might be a great door, it might be an effective door, but there are still going to be adversaries that you have to deal with going through that door. And I have to say, this has been the testimony of our own ministry over there in Germany. We felt the many adversaries in our own work.

And as I think back on it now, I was just thinking about this this week. As I think back on it now, those adversaries that we would face were almost prophetically announced to us the day we told our kids that we had finally decided to go to Germany. Now, listen, we didn't just spring it on our children all at once.

We had taken them there to Germany to visit the place we were gonna minister. We'd asked them to be praying about it. We told them to seek the Lord.

We said, we wanna know your thoughts. We wanna know your opinions. And you know what? In that time that we told them to seek the Lord about it and that we would wanna hear what they said, we talked to them about it, they were all like, hey, mom and dad, whatever you guys think is best, it's cool with us.

That sounds great. But when we sat them down on that day to tell them that we had finally decided that this is what the Lord wants us to do, woo, you can imagine what that was like. There we go, we had our three children, Aunt Sophie, who was almost 17, Nathan, who was 15, and Jonathan, who was 12.

We sat them down in the living room and we said, listen, God has confirmed it. We're going to Germany. And I would say that the response of each one of our three children, it almost prophetically revealed to us what the difficulties would be that we would face.

First, our daughter, Aunt Sophie, she was 17 and her response was, well, we can't do this. We're going to be leaving behind what we have here. I don't want to miss my senior year at high school.

You know, that was an adversary for us. Not my daughter, of course, but the adversary was the challenge of leaving behind what you have. Listen, that wasn't easy for us.

We love California. We love our family. We love our friends here.

But I can say that God made it good for us. And that was an adversary that we had to face. But God made it good for us and we just praise his name for that.

But then a second adversary, it was again, it was almost prophetically revealed by our son, Nathan. You should see what Nathan said. His reaction was this.

He goes, no, I don't think we're going. It can't happen. You don't have enough money.

That's what he said. I didn't know that my 15 year old son had become a financial genius. I don't know exactly why he said that.

But again, almost prophetically, he put his finger on a challenge and on a potential adversary for our work there because we were leaving a normally paid position with the church and launching out as a missionary on support in a place that can be pretty expensive to live. Listen, let me tell you, if you want to know how expensive it can be to live in Germany, I was so happy to come to California and pay about half what I'm paying for gas in Germany. Ouch.

By the way, Jasmine was up here and Jasmine's going to London. If you want to bless Jasmine, if you want to pray for her and support her, you should pray for her to be provided for financially and you should contribute to her ministry because London is scary expensive to live in. And right now the exchange rate for both the pound and the Euro, it's just from Satan.

That's all you can say. So you need to be supporting Jasmine, lift her up in prayer and be generous to her in every way that you can. But listen, for us going out to Germany, that was a real challenge that we had to face.

But listen, with churches behind us, like your blessed church here and with individuals who support us either month to month or on occasional gift, listen, God has met our needs every month and he sustains us month by month and God's faithfulness has been revealed. But then there was a third challenge, an adversary sort of prophetically revealed and it was by our son, Jonathan. Again, he was 12 at the time.

And when we told him, look, we're going son, he sort of buried his face in a pillow and he began to tear up. And he said, well, Jonathan, what's wrong? And he said, I don't know it. We're like, you don't know it? What don't you know? I mean, he said, I don't know German.

I don't know how I'm gonna get along there. And that was the third challenge we had to face. You know, it's not just leaving one place, is it? It's going to a brand new place with a different culture, with a different way of doing things, with a different mentality, with a different language.

And I'll tell you, that was a real adjustment for us. We had to get used to life in a different culture and it hasn't always been easy. You have to drive a different way, shop a different way, go to the bank a different way, and especially you have to talk a different way.

And God has blessed us along these lines. And if there's anything you want to pray for us, pray that my wife and I can get even better at the German language. We're sort of fluidly conversationally, I'd say fluid, not fluent, because sometimes it sounds like Tarzan and Jane speaking out there.

But listen, we make our way around with that, oh, but I just long for the day when I mastered the language enough so I can speak in German the way that I'm speaking to you right now. And so you can pray for us in that regard. But listen, God has been faithful to us in meeting the challenge of that adversary.

But listen, you get the point I'm trying to make, is that you should recognize that there will be adversaries. As a matter of fact, notice what Paul said there in verse nine. He said, an effective door has been opened to me and there are many adversaries.

So I don't want you to be blind to that fact. But listen, sometimes Christians get the entirely wrong attitude about that. They say, listen, every time I get serious about walking with God, every time I get serious about the open door that God has put in front of me, I get attacked.

You say, well, what do you do after that? Well, I give up and then the attack goes away. No, that's not the right attitude. Listen, if you'll persist, if you'll abide in the Lord, if you'll take his strength, he will give you the ability and the empowering and the spiritual defense to overcome those adversaries and you don't need to back down one bit.

See, this is Paul's great attitude in this passage. He knows that there are adversaries. Matter of fact, he knows that there are many adversaries, but he did not focus upon them because he knew God wanted to

do something great.

He went right on ministering and that's what we should do. We should trust God's strength and his protection and we should go for it. Last year, in the year 2006, I was invited to go to Vienna, Austria and preach at the Calvary Chapel there one Sunday and it worked out on my schedule and there was a former student from the Bible College there in the area that we were gonna visit, so I was excited to go.

I took my son Jonathan with me, a couple of kids from the Bible College and we got in my VW Golf and we drove the seven or eight hours or whatever it is to drive from where we live to Vienna, Austria and it was a great time. The day we got there, we went walking around the city because it was the first time I had ever been there and it was just wonderful to see. Boy, Vienna, one of the great cities of Europe and it was beautiful, but when we were downtown, we noticed something, we heard it first and then we went on a different street and we saw it.

It was a procession coming towards us. When I say procession, I don't mean a parade, I mean a march, a demonstration, a protest coming down the street and it didn't take us long to figure out what the protest was all about. From the flags, from the banners, from the signs, from the faces, this was a pro-Palestinian, pro-Islam, pro-Arabic, anti-Israel, anti-American protest march down the streets of Vienna promoting the Palestine Liberation Organization, the PLO and there they were coming down the street right where we were.

Now something inside of me said, you gotta do something, but what was I gonna do? What, would I stand in front of the procession and say, I command you in the name of George Bush and the United States of America to stop? What, would I rebuke them in the name of Uncle Sam? What was I gonna do? What was I gonna do? Well, listen, I knew right away that that was the wrong thing to do because listen, I'll tell you, I love America and being in Europe for the last four years has made me appreciate America all the more. But I'll tell you something, I did not go to Europe to preach America. I went to Europe to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, to advance his kingdom.

And so as I was standing there on the streets of Vienna wondering what I was gonna do, I knew I had to do something, but I didn't know what to do and then it just came to me. So I stood on the sidewalk and I tried my very best to speak in a way that was loud but not screaming, a way that projected myself but wasn't angry. I tried to put a smile on my face, tried to have sort of a bright countenance and I stood on the sidewalk and I just started saying over and over again, I started saying, Jesus Christ is the savior of the world.

I figured, listen, I'm gonna get beat up. For something that I'll make a stand for. And I'd make a stand for saying, I'd make a stand for saying, Jesus Christ is the savior of the world.

And listen, I knew that this was the message that they needed to hear. And as much as I thought that they were wrong politically and culturally and especially spiritually, they needed Jesus to save them. And I hope that God would do something with that simple proclamation of the truth over and over again, loud and clear and in love.

Well, I didn't get beat up. People would come up to me and they would start trying to discuss things with me. They start trying to talk about Islam and you know what I would say to them? I just kept repeating with a smile on my face, Jesus Christ is the savior of the world.

Well, what about this? What about that? Jesus Christ is the savior of the world. You should have seen the looks on the face of the people in that demonstration. They didn't know what to do with me but the strangest looks were on the faces of the Europeans.

The Europeans who were in the midst of the march, they looked at me and they gave me this little strange smile that said, oh, you're really in trouble now, mister. But nothing happened. Matter of fact, it was so great that as the procession passes by, we ran ahead of it and at two other places along the route, we did it all over again.

Now listen, when you start going through God's open doors in your life, you'll face some maybe crazy situations, maybe unexpected situations, maybe some impressive adversaries but again, we notice the focus in Paul's text. The door was greater than the adversaries. That's the testimony of my life, of my wife and I and our ministry over there in Europe and I know that God wants to do something similar in your life.

So shouldn't we pray about that together? Now right now, I'm gonna pray and as I pray, the prayer team is gonna come up to the front here and what that means is that's your signal for you to come up front for prayer because I'm bold enough to believe that the Holy Spirit has spoken to some hearts this morning. I'm bold enough to believe that the spirit of God is here and that he's ministering to people and he's given you the idea that you need to respond. Well, this is how you respond.

You come up and you seal God's word and God's work to your life right now by coming up and praying with one of these wonderful willing hearts that comes up here for prayer. So let's pray together right now, shall we? Father in heaven, we thank you for the open doors that you give us in our life, in our ministry and I pray now that you would speak, Lord, to this congregation, that you would speak to them about the individual open doors, the great and effective ones that you wanna open in their life. I pray, God, that they would not be intimidated by the potential adversaries, but Lord, rather that you would pour out your spirit upon them and that, Lord, you would stir them to do great things for your kingdom.

Lord, I just thank you for your goodness to us and I know that you wanna pour out your goodness upon this congregation. Do it now for Jesus' sake. ■ All who are thirsty ■ ■ And all who are weary ■ ■ Come to the fountain ■

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