**The Christian's Witness**

**l. Open Doors**

*2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. 3 And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. 4 Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should 5 Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. 6 Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt. so that you may know how to answer everyone (Colossians 4:2-6).*

**Introduction**

• As we continue adapting the Billy Graham training material into sermon format, we get to their second topic: the Christian's witness.

• We start with a series of important questions:

• Do you have faith in the power and sovereignty of God?

• Do you believe that God can use you in spite of your own weakness and inadequacy?

• Do you believe that the Holy Spirit will guide you, make you courageous, help you in your work, and also work effectively in the lives of those to whom you will speak?

• Do you believe that "the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double—edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow;

it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart " (Hebrews 4: 12)?

• Do you believe that the Gospel of Christ is the "power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" (Romans 1 :16)?

• Did you answer "yes" to the above questions?

If so, then you have to believe that witnessing for Jesus Christ is something you can do.

Remember, "the battle is not yours, but Godi (2 Chronicles 20:15)

• We tend to focus on deficiencies in our ABILITY.

God, however, is concerned with Our AVAILABILITY.

**1. We are All WITNESSES**

• For many believers, sharing the Good News Of Jesus Christ can be a rather intimidating experience. According to studies, only I percent of believers Claim to have the gift of evangelism. Where does that leave the 99 percent who do not have the gift?

• Some think that because they don't have the gift, they are relieved of the responsibility of sharing Christ with Others.

• But having the gift of evangelism means having a special ability in proclaiming the Gospel. We all have the responsibility. Again, it's about availability. Every believer's mission in life should include actively sharing Christ with those people God places in his or her life.

• Consider Paul, who was part of the I Yo. His priority was to share the Gospel with everyone he could. He asked others to pray that he would have opportunities to do so:

*And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message (v. 3).*

• But look how he continues a few verses later, addressing ordinary believers like us:

*Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone (vs. 5-6).*

• Opportunity for what? The next phrases point us to conversation that is gracious, seasoned with salt (truth, love, Jesus), and that answers people's questions and objections, presumably, regarding the Christian faith.

• So even if it's true that none of us here are evangelists, God will give us opportunities … which we must not neglect… to share our faith with unbelievers. And not just with our lives (though certainly with them), but also with our conversation.

• Since, then, we are all witnesses, let's dig into this idea of open doors to which Paul was referring… because it gives us some practical direction.

**2. OPEN DOORS**

• Doors, of course, are how we pass through walls, so to speak into or out of a closed room or a locked house.

• The imagery is helpful whether you think of an unbeliever in a room of unbelief, or of a believer in a room of hesitation and fear with regards to speaking up about Jesus.

• From one perspective, the open door is needed to get into the unbeliever's hardened heart, from the Other it is needed to get the believer out of whatever is holding back their witness.

Here, then, are three open door ideas:

**PRAY for Open Doors to Share the Message of Christ**

• "Lord, open a door."

Pray for a natural opportunity to bring up your relationship with Jesus.

Often that will be something going on in your life, their life, or the world.

• "Lord, open their heart."

Ask God to get a lost person ready to hear what He's getting you ready to share.

• "Lord. open my mouth."

Trust God to give you the courage, the words, and the approach.

If you consistently pray these three open door prayers concerning someone close to you, God will answer it!

**LISTEN to People: Open Doors often come through Needs and Questions**

• People often do not see their need for Christ.

They don 't understand that He is the answer to the emptiness they feel.

They think their real need is something they can identify, such as:

A. Broken and disappointing RELATIONSHIPS;

B. GUILT over the wrong things they've done;

C. LONELINESS;

D. STRESS;

E. Life without MEANING;

F. Intellectual QUESTIONS about the nature of reality;

G. Inability to Overcome the DARKNESS within;

H. PAIN of the present or the past.

• We know that a relationship with Jesus is the answer to the deepest needs that people have. *Our greatest need is to find forgiveness by receiving' Christ as Lord and Savior, but many today don know they need Christ or forgiveness of sin.*

• They think their need may be to restore a troubled marriage, to get rid of loneliness, or to find meaning in life. These needs are **symptoms** of a greater problem — a missing relationship with God.

• There needs to be a linking from the need the person is feeling because of sin, to the real problem, and then to the solution found only in a relationship with Jesus Christ.

• We begin with the symptom they can see and feel (loneliness; guilt; disappointing relationships) then move to the disease they can't see (sin) and finally to the cure Jesus brought through the Cross.

• By careful listening as a friend, we discern their needs. Knowing the difference Jesus makes, we can witness to the ultimate solution to our broken relationship with God.

• Is this manipulative? Are we taking advantage of people going through tough times? No, it's reality.

• If you're hiking and all of a sudden you have a sharp pain in your foot, that pain is telling that something is wrong be it a thorn or sprain which needs to be investigated and dealt with.

• The pains, questions and concerns of life are like that too… they require diagnosis. And, we believe, they ultimately point people to God — the goal of life.

**BRING JESUS through the open Door**

• God created us to have a relationship with Him. When Adam and Eve decided to disobey God and run their own lives, sin came into the world. Now each person is born without the relationship God made us to have with Him.

• Because of this missing relationship with God, we experience all sorts of symptoms in our life. These symptoms are a constant reminder that something—actually Someone— is missing.

• Augustine said: *"You have made us for yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you. "*

• Often, it is precisely this restlessness that is the open door for the Good News. When, by God's grace, we have discerned matters correctly, we have an opportunity to bring Jesus into the situation. The Open door is for Him.

• We need to point from the Symptom, whatever it is, to the deeper problem, and then to the solution — a relationship with Jesus though His death on the cross.

**Conclusion**

• When we carry on we'll look at some practical applications.

• For this week, think about Augustine's claim, and consider the ways in which Jesus has brought rest to your restless heart.

• Ponder too the still restless hearts of your unsaved friends and families, and their need for Jesus.



