

## Open Door Series – Part 4

### Preached 6/11/2017

I've got to admit that recently I've become a little jealous of **Pastor Dave Johnson** because, at least for this sermon series, he has the church with a perfect name: **Church of the Open Door**.

I'm in part 4 of the series on the open doors that God frequently provides us with throughout our lives. The series is based out of the Letter to the church in Philadelphia in the book of Revelation where God says, “

**Revelation 3:8 (NIV)** *See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.*

And my premise is that this is not just a statement of fact to the church at Philadelphia in the first century, but it's also a promise to Knollwood Christian Church and to each of his followers as well. God is in the business of opening doors constantly for each of us so that He can use us for His glory our transformation into Christlikeness and for us to share God's love with the world.

Pastor John Ortberg summarized this principle very well: *“Open doors are divine invitations to make our lives count, with God's help, for the sake of others.”*

Last week I ended the sermon with a short video entitled “Who's Your One?” which challenged us to think proactively about who we are strategically reaching out to in order to share with them God's love and message of Jesus and to walk with them as they mature in fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. We should all should be constantly seeking out who we can share God's love and message with and then encourage them to do the same and the cycle of open door walkers for Jesus keeps growing larger and larger exponentially until by the end of our lives over a one billion people's lives will have been influenced by our courage to consistently walk through the open doors that God has provided us with.

I was reminded of the urgency of this challenge this past week when I heard that a friend of mine, **Kirk Hargrove** unexpectedly passed away. I'm guessing Kirk was probably in his early 50's. It's quite a shock, but I got thinking of the impact of Kirk's life. For the past 10 years Kirk has been a huge influence at 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade camp, enthusiastically leading worship, leading kids in Bible sword drills, teaching God's Word, joking around with lots and lots of faculty and campers alike and just showing God's love in powerful and personal ways to these campers. I often saw large man, who could be very intimidating if he wanted to be, weep tears of joy in seeing a camper come to know Christ as his Lord and Savior. And I thought that if everyone of those campers who's lives he touched over the past 10 years went on and touched someone else's life with the love of Christ and so on and so on – we're got a real life example of the “Who's Your One” video lived out.

And so I find myself challenged to think much more seriously about how strategically I am living my life fully so that I can influence as many people as possible to come to know the love of Christ. Am I taking full advantage of the many doors of opportunity that God gives me to show others His love, or am I becoming comfortable in my relationship with God so that I no longer care about those around me who may spend eternity separated from God because I didn't walk through the open door God provided me with to share His message of love with them.

I want to share with you right now a video of a song that was recommended to me last Sunday as a great fit for my sermon series. It's by a local boy, Jason Grey and it's entitled “With Every Act of Love”. Many of you may have heard it on local Christian radio station. Let's play it and talk about it afterward.

“God put a million, million doors in the world for His love to walk through. One of those doors is YOU!!” Do you believe that? That God wants to use you to touch the world with His love that is

filling you up from the inside out and spilling out and on those around you. You see evangelism and disciple making shouldn't be just a ministry of the church that you get involved in. Telling people about Jesus and showing the world His love should be an overflow of what's happening inside of us every single day. As we spend time with God on a daily basis, God astounds us with Himself and we are filled with wonder and His love.

I love how the Gospel writer, Mark, recorded people's reactions to Jesus.

**Mark 9:15 (NIV)** *As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him.*

I love that verse and I want people who know me see that in me. That my life was one of running to greet Jesus out of a sense of being **overwhelmed with wonder**.

What overwhelms you with wonder about Jesus?

You see sometimes we shrink back from stepping through open doors and sharing our faith with others because we feel we don't know enough or we don't want to offend others. But instead of concentrating on your knowledge and knowing all the right answers to everyone's questions about Jesus – your time would be way better spent simply running to Jesus and being overwhelmed with wonder at Him. Because I guarantee that if you're overwhelmed with wonder with Jesus, God's love will naturally flow out of you and onto others.

And that's one of the things I so appreciate about Jason Grey's song – because if you know his story you realize that he's not a super gifted dynamic speaker for Jesus with all the proper theological training.

Jason Grey's background: Jason was born and raised in Minnesota . His mother used to make her living by performing in bar bands for a long time and touring around the bar scene. When he was just six his parents went through a bitter divorce and custody battle. His mother remarried but Jason's step-father became increasingly abusive and turned into drug dealing and got involved in organized crime. His mother left him after he threatened her life and the life of her kids after she became a Christian and decided to quit singing in the bars in favor of singing in church.

Additionally, Jason struggles mightily with stuttering. He has great difficulty talking to people, but he's discovered an outlet to communicate God's love through song. So, if you want to try to use the excuse that I'm not confident enough or gifted enough or smart enough to share God's message of love – just look at how Jason Grey is doing it with his tough upbringing and the impediment of stuttering.

Jason says: *"When I'm willing to work out of my weakness, there are more chances for God to show up and for the unexpected to happen. Pain, loss, even failure...these things don't get to have the last say over our lives. God has the final word, and his word over our lives is love."*

I'm just about done reading this wonderful book, Love Does by Bob Goff and then it will be placed in the church library. I would encourage everyone to check it out and read it or get your own copy. It will challenge you to rethink how you're living your life. Here's a guy who lives life to it's fullest and all for the glory of God and the benefit of others. And in chapter 11 of the book entitled "There's More Room" he says this.

*Jesus told a story about a great banquet in heaven and the core message is that there's plenty of room – for the common people, for the rejected. I think God sends out His messengers to tell everybody there's plenty of room and there's free food and conversation and adventure and a wonderful and generous host who has invited us by name. God keeps saying that there's more room to those who really want to be invited to where He is. God pays attention to our hearts and enjoys when people want to get closer to Him. He knows our sadness and the brokenness we want to hide from Him, and He sends people to look for us.*

*Jesus told his followers that they should think of themselves more like the ushers into a banquet than the bouncers, and it would be God who decides who gets in. We're the ones who simply shows people their seats that someone else paid for.*

*A couple of other things happen when we accept Jesus' invitation to participate with Him in life. Obstacles that seem insurmountable aren't. Impediments that we believe disqualify us don't. When we show up to participate with Jesus in the big life, we're participating with the very being who made life in the first place. He gently asks us how we are and invites us to get better with Him.*

*Accepting the invitation to show up in life is about moving from the bleachers to the field. Jesus is looking for us to accept the invitation to participate. When we accept life's invitation, it's contagious too. Other people will watch us and start seeing life as something more amazing, more whimsical than before. When you show up to the big life, people (the type who don't think they're invited) start seeing invitations everywhere as thick as colorful fall leaves. They don't think about their pain or their weakness any longer. Instead, they think about how incredible a big life really is and how powerful the one who is throwing the banquet is too.*

This is where this door comes into play this morning.

If you're familiar with Jesus' parable of the banquet that Bob Goff referred to you know that the parable has the host going out to tell those who had been invited that everything was ready and it was time to come to the banquet. But all those invited gave all sorts of excuses why they couldn't come. Here is the host of the banquet, i.e. God's, response.

**Luke 14:21 (NIV)** *"Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.'*

Notice the servant is not told to invite these social outcasts to the party, because it's likely they'd think it was a trick or a mistake that they'd received an invitation. Nobody ever invited them to anything let alone a fancy banquet. So, God instructs his servants to simply bring them in. Do whatever it takes to convince them that this banquet is for them. God's offer of grace and forgiveness and salvation is sometimes too good to believe. So, do whatever it takes to get these outcasts to my party – because once they are here in my house they will understand how fully I love them and want them. And they will no doubt marvel at the goodness and the love and the generosity of God.

This door is like those outcasts in the parable. Sarah and Lynn found this door yesterday in the parking lot at Home Depot. It would appear that someone had purchased a new door at Home Depot and had no need of the old one so they just discarded it there in the parking lot. But God opened a door for Lynn and Sarah to be there at just the right time to notice this door and reclaim it so that it could be a sermon illustration this morning.

Some of you, similar to this door, were discarded on the trash heap of life. Maybe you have hurts or heartaches or addictions in your past or even your present that you struggle with. Maybe it's your family situation that's dysfunctional – and what you need to know is that God wants you and wants to use your mess to form it into a powerful message. He wants you to be overwhelmed with wonder by His son, Jesus and accept His invitation to spend eternity living with Him in heaven.

Others of you know people who badly need to here this message of hope and redemption and that they have value and that their Heavenly Father has an invitation with their name on it. But you know what – God's not sending me to them – He's sending you to tell them about Jesus. I want to strongly encourage you to walk through that open door and with God's strength and wisdom tell them about the difference Jesus has made in your life and how you are running toward Jesus and in love with Him and marvel at Him. That's a message people will listen to, much more so than coming to church and hearing a message preached by me. Accept God's invitation to walk through His open doors and get in the game of life where you're impacting lives with His love and grace.