

# The Open Door Church



**Joke:** An accountant dies and goes to Heaven. He is met by St Peter who goes through the usual questionnaire.

"What sort of accountant are you?" says St Peter

"Public Practitioner," is the reply.

"Name?"

He gives his name. St Peter goes through some files and pulls one out.

"Oh, yes. We've been expecting you. You've reached your allotted time on earth," says St Peter.

"How can that be?" says the accountant. "I'm too young to go. I'm only forty-eight"

"No, that's impossible."

"Why do you say that?"

"Well, we've been looking at your time sheets and the hours you've charged your clients. By our reckoning you're at least 93. "

**I want to read out a passage this morning from Revelation.**

**Revelation 3:7** *And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy, He who is true, He who has the key of David, He who opens, and no one shuts; and shuts and no one opens, says these things:*

**Revelation 3:8** *I know your works. Behold, I have given before you an open door, and no one can shut it. For you have a little strength and have kept My Word and have not denied My name.*

**John under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit** is writing here to one of the seven churches, the church in a city called Philadelphia.

Its one of the seven churches Jesus wanted to send a message to in Revelation 2 and 3.

Most of the churches Jesus wrote to, had an issue that needed addressing. .

- **The church in Ephesus** had lost its first love.
- **The church in Smyrna** was undergoing persecution and needed some encouragement.

They were ok and **weren't doing anything wrong.**

- **The church in Pergamum** had fallen into false teaching.
  - **The church in Thyatira** had been overtaken by a religious spirt in the form of Jezebel.
  - **The church in Sardis** was dead.
- The church in Laodacia** was lukewarm.

But like the church in Smyrna, **the church of Philadelphia didn't receive a rebuke.**

**Rather they received a promise.**

**The promise they received is mentioned in verse 8.**

**Revelation 3:8** *I know your works. Behold, I have given before you an open door, and no one can shut it. For you have a little strength and have kept My Word and have not denied My name.*

**I've been a Christian for a while** as some of you have, and there's one thing I've noticed about Christians.

Christians like to talk about the **"open door."**

How many of you have heard the expression mentioned by believers, **"God opens doors no one can shut."**

We like to apply that to our own lives when it suits us.

- **If we're looking for a job**, we might apply this saying to us getting employment.

God has an open door for me somewhere, so I'll keep applying until that door opens for me.

- **If we're looking for a relationship/life partner**, we might apply the same promise.

When things are looking tough and all you're seeing is closed doors, **we'll go to God and believe He will open a door for us.**

**There's nothing wrong in believing God has a way of opening and closing doors** for His people.

Paul even mentions about an **"open door"** he had received in Ephesus when he was writing to the Corinthians.

**1Corinthians 16:8** *But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost.*

**1Corinthians 16:9** *For a great and effective door opened to me, and many are opposing.*

There were a few times in Paul's ministry where he received both open doors and doors that were shut on him.

**I experienced a "closed door" once** when I was on the mission field in Estonia.

**I was once given the opportunity to live in a city in the middle of Russia** for three months.

**That was the first three months of the year 2000.**

**I didn't want to go** but it ended up being a fruitful time there.

**In the following two years I tried three times to go back there**, but every time I tried, I was literally blocked from going.

**Once I was asked to be part of a team that was doing a tent outreach there.**

**I had a visa to enter Russia**, but they wouldn't let me in because one of the pages on my passport was wrinkled because I carried it in my pocket one too many times.

**I could only conclude God closed the door.**

However, when writing to the church of Philadelphia, God promised these people **"an open door."**

I have been doing a course recently titled **"The Bible and Missions."**

It's been interesting and one of the things I've learned is that **God needs different kinds of churches to fulfil the Great Commission.**

**Matthew 28:19** *Therefore go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*

**Matthew 28:20** *teaching them to observe all things, whatever I commanded you. And, behold, I am with you all the days until the end of the world. Amen.*

My take on the Great Commission is that **God has commissioned the church to do something great!**

In doing this course I had a look at three different New Testament Churches and their roles in fulfilling the "Great Commission."

#### **A. The church of the open heaven.**

I had a look at the Jerusalem church.

**Wherever they went, God seemed to move.**

**Acts 8** tells us that **the believers were forced to leave their city due to persecution.**

That scattering resulted in other places hearing the gospel through men such as **Philip who ended up escaping to Samaria.**

**Acts 8:5** *And Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed Christ to them.*

**Samaria was a place that ordinarily Jews didn't go to**, because of the animosity between **Jews and Samaritans.**

**Philip perhaps thought he didn't have anything to lose going there** because if he stayed in Judea, Jews such as Saul would eventually catch up with him.

**But if he went to Samaria, he might get harmed there as well**, but he might as well die trying to reach others for the Lord, so he chose to go there.

**Scripture tells us God used him in power** and many were filled with the Holy Spirit and God moved.

**Acts 8:6** *And the people with one accord gave heed to those things which Philip spoke, hearing and seeing the many miracles which he did.*

Why did that happen?

**Philip was simply talking what he was "used to"** in his home church and duplicated that elsewhere.

There was an open heaven over Jerusalem, and **God was moving!**

We need Open heaven churches to fulfil the Great Commission.

### **B. The church of the "Open Hand."**

**The church Paul started in Philippi was such a church.**

**Philippians 4:15** *Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, **no church communicated with me as regards giving and receiving, except you alone.***

**Philippians 4:16** *For even in Thessalonica **you sent once and again to my necessity.***

**They were consistently giving** towards Paul's ministry.

Even when Paul was in prison and supposedly not doing too much, **they sent one of their own Epaphroditus to personally make sure Paul received the offering** they'd collected for him.

**Philippians 2:25** *Yet I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow-worker, and fellow-soldier, but your messenger and he who ministered to my wants.*

**The next few verses tell us that this guy became quite sick delivering this offering**, but because he came from a church that practising giving, he gave to Paul, even though it cost him a lot.

If Jerusalem church was a church that **practised the power of God.**

The Philippi church was a church that **practiced the provision of God.**

- Its also good to be a part of a church that **practises the provision of God.**

**Philippi was a church of the "open hand"** doing their part in reaching people for the Lord.

**But today I want to look at the church in Philadelphia.**

- They didn't have an open heaven like the Jerusalem church did.
- They probably weren't as well known for their open hand as the Philippians were.

**But they did know how to open doors.**

I like to call them **"the church of the open door!"**

From reading these two verses, we can see that **God gave them a promise.**

**Revelation 3:8** *I know your works. Behold, I have given before you an open door, and no one can shut it. For you have a little strength and have kept My Word and have not denied My name.*

Why did Jesus give them an open door?

Jesus gave them a key.

**Revelation 3:7** *And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy, He who is true, **He who has the key of David, He who opens, and no one shuts; and shuts and no one opens,** says these things:*

Jesus opened doors for this church because **He had a key, called the key of David.**

Stay with me but I think **it's worth having a look at this thing called the Key of David** and its significance for our church/es today.

Isaiah also mentions about **"the key of David."**

**Isaiah 22:20** *And in that day it shall be, even I will call My servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah.*

**Isaiah 22:21** *and I will clothe him with your robe, and will fasten your girdle on him, and I will give your authority into his hand. And he shall be a father to the people of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.*

**Isaiah 22:22** *And the key to the house of David I will lay on his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.*

Isaiah wrote these verses in the time of King Hezekiah, one of the few godly kings of Judah.

Eliakim was the governor of Judah, kind of like King Hezekiah's prime minister.

**2 Kings 18:37** tells us as much.

**2 Kings 18:37** *And Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was over the household...*

In this verse Eliakim was part of a delegation who came back from meeting with the Assyrian army who'd surrounded Jerusalem and things weren't looking good for Hezekiah's kingdom.

God fought for His people against the Assyrians but that's another story.

Isaiah 22:20 tells us Eliakim was chosen to replace a man called Shebna who wasn't a godly man.

Shebna was prime minister of Judah, but he'd abused that position and now Eliakim, a godly man was appointed by the Lord to that position.

Here's my point. **As prime minister of Judah, he now had keys to the royal palace.**

That's what the key to the house of David was.

**It was access to where the king lived.**

He was able to open the doors for people to enter the presence of the king.

He was also able to shut and lock the doors as well.

Eliakim is a type of Christ.

**Jesus now has the key of David, access to our king, God Himself,** just as Eliakim had in Hezekiah's time as king.

**Revelation 3:7** *And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy, He who is true, He who has the key of David, He who opens, and no one shuts; and shuts and no one opens, says these things:*

**Jesus has the key now** to allow us access to God's presence/favour/opportunities.

He also has the key to keep us away from things that aren't going to be good for us, so He shuts the door.

But when John is writing to the Philadelphians, **God gave this church this promise.**

**Revelation 3:8** *I know your works. Behold, I have given before you an open door, and no one can shut it. For you have a little strength and have kept My Word and have not denied My name.*

Jesus the **"keeper of the key"** was giving to this church an open door that no one would be able to shut.

How is it that this church was given an open door by Jesus?

**He taught them how to use the key to turn the lock!**

How does that work?

**Matthew 16:16** tells us how Peter told Jesus, he was the Christ, the son of God.

Jesus replied by saying that the reason **Peter was able to say that was because the Spirit of God had revealed that to him.**

There was no other way Peter could have come to that conclusion.

Jesus went on to give Peter a promise, which is applicable to anyone else who declares Jesus is God.

**Matthew 16:18** *And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

**Matthew 16:19** *And I will give the keys of the kingdom of Heaven to you. And whatever you may bind on earth shall occur, having been bound in Heaven, and whatever you may loose on earth shall occur, having been loosed in Heaven.*

**The keys of kingdom are now given to believers.**

**They turn the lock** so we can open or shut doors through binding and loosing.

For praying for something or praying against something!

Jesus promised us that those of us who are believers will be given **“the keys of the kingdom of heaven”** so we are able to bind and loose, **open doors and shut them.**

**That was the open-door** Jesus promised to give this church in Philadelphia.

Jesus was going to give them an open door **because they were a church who knew how to pray.**

Because they knew how to pray, to use the keys given to them, **God was going to give them an open door!**

- **We need churches like the church in Jerusalem.**

**Churches who know how to operate under an open heaven.**

The church in Jerusalem was such a church.

- **We need churches like the church in Philippi.**

**Churches who operate with an open hand**, who are generous and don't hold back with their giving.

- **But we also need churches who know how to open doors.**

**Philadelphia was the church of prayer, binding and loosing**, because they were working together with the Lord **in the business of opening doors and shutting them.**

**Prayer opens and shuts doors for the gospel!**

**Prayer is the key that turns the lock that opens the door for the gospel to advance.**

**We had the youth outreach last Sunday** and by all accounts it was successful.

Daniel came home and he really liked it. Contacts were made and they'll go back next Sunday to do it all again.

We've been talking and praying about doing something like that for a while now.

The Willoughby outreach has been something that we've been praying about for a while **and now it's happening!**

Would Sunday have been as successful if we hadn't prayed and just went without praying?

Daniel came home with a heat rash on Sunday night, and he was in a bit of discomfort.

**My first response was to pray for him**, then he went online to see how to get rid of it.

**We prayed that God would take away all discomfort** by Monday morning and He did.

**We used the key to turn the lock** that opened Daniel to the healing he needed.

**Prayer opens doors** and the more we realise that as a church, the more effective we'll be in Missions.

British philosopher and historian **Stephan Gaukroger once said**, *“Prayer needs no passport, visa or work permit. There is no such thing as a ‘closed country’ as far as prayer is concerned ... much of the history of mission could be written in terms of God moving in response to persistent prayer.”* —

**I owe much to the power of persistent prayer.**

**Estonia and other former Soviet Union states got their freedom** and opened their doors to the west because Christians all over the world were praying for the fall of communism.

**That meant I was able to go there and marry the best-looking girl** who I never would have met if the door wasn't open for me to go.

**Prayer was the key to turn to lock that opened that door!**

**There is war in the middle east.** I believe God will turn that situation around for His glory and doors will be opened for Christians to minister to Palestinians and Jews in Israel.

**Prayer will be the key to turn the lock to open that door.**

- As a church I want us to **live under an open heaven.**
- As a church I want us to **live with an open hand.**

But I also want us to be a church that **knows how to open doors.**

**I want us to know how to bind and loose** because we know how to use the key that gives people access to the presence of God.

- **Eliakim had the key** that allowed people into his king's presence!
- **We have the key that allows people into our king's presence!**

**It's the key of prayer!**

**How do we turn the key to open the lock?**

**How can we pray as a church so that doors will be open for others to go?**

**Paul asked the Colossian Christians to pray for an open door.**

**Colossians 4:2** *Continue in prayer and watch in it with thanksgiving,*

**Colossians 4:3** *praying together about us also, that God may open to us a door of the Word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I also have been bound,*

**How can we pray so that doors will be opened?**

**1. When you pray, PUSH!**

There is an old saying Pentecostals used to use called **"praying through."**

They would pray until they got a result.

One preacher said he used to **use to the PUSH principle.**

**Pray Until Something Happens.**

We see that in Daniel's life.

**Daniel 9:2** *in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood the number of the years by books, which came of the Word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.*

Daniel understood something was **"up in God"** and that the time of exile for the Jews was coming to an end.

**Daniel 9:3** *And I set my face toward the Lord God, to seek by prayer and holy desires, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes.*

As an old man, Daniel set himself to pray until the Jews would be released to go back home again.

- **Daniel 9** gives us an account of how Daniel prayed.
- **Daniel 10** gives us an account of how Daniel fasted and prayed.

This went on for about two years.

Daniel 10 also tells us of a vision Daniel had, to confirm to him his prayers were making a difference.

**Daniel 10:12** *Then he said to me, Do not fear, Daniel; for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and to chasten yourself before your God, **your words were heard. And I have come for your words.***

**Daniel 10:13** *But the ruler of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days. But lo, Michael, one of the chief rulers, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.*

This angel came with Daniel with a message.

**Daniel, you've been praying the right way**, but there's been a delay because I've had to fight the Prince of Persia, the principality stopping the Jews from returning.

**But keep on praying because a change is coming** and what you've read will come to pass because **your prayers are opening the doors.**

**Sure enough, the Jews were allowed to leave Babylon** and return to Jerusalem just as Jeremiah had prophesied.

**But it required Daniel and others to push** until that actually happened.

**I was working on an apartment block down in Caringbah on Tuesday.**

I had to change a few emergency lights (about 40 of them) and **some of them were in the fire escape corridor.**

They gave me a key to get in, but **because the doors were heavy, they didn't open easily.**

**I had to use some force to push them open** after I'd turned the key.

**It's the same way with prayer that opens doors.**

Sometimes you have to **"push on the door"** a little bit before it actually opens.

I love what it says about the church in Philadelphia.

**Revelation 3:8** *I know your works. Behold, I have given before you an open door, and no one can shut it. **For you have a little strength** and have kept My Word and have not denied My name.*

The strength they had was used to **"push on the door"** until it opened.

That was one of the reasons God gave them an open door.

**They knew how to push.**

They had a little strength, but they used it to push on the door after they'd turned the key.

But here's something else I've discovered about opening doors.

**Some doors don't need much to push open** because there's a hydraulic mechanism that does the pushing for you.

**When I was working at this strata complex, the front entrance had a door** where you simply pushed a button and the door opened for you to enter the street,

**Entering from the street you pressed your "lift key"** against a panel, the door opened for you and you didn't have to do too much.

**I tried to push it open, but it was easier just to let it open by itself.** All I had to do was "give it a nudge."

Praying in the Spirit is like that.

**Romans 8:26** *Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, **but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.***

Its almost as if **the Holy Spirit is doing the heavy pushing for us.**

All we have to do is ***“give the door a nudge”*** and the Spirit is like that hydraulic mechanism that does most of the pushing for us.

**I was in the Philippines once** and I was due to fly from Manilla to Iloilo where I was due to speak at a youth camp.

**Unfortunately, there was an air traffic controllers strike** on and there were no flights out of Manilla.

**I arrived Sunday night and was due to arrive in Iloilo on the Monday morning** to go to the camp.

**Monday came and the strike was still on**, so I had to go back to my hotel and book for another night.

I wasn't sure what to do so **I stayed in my hotel room and started to pray.**

**I prayed in tongues believing God would give me a way to get down to Iloilo**, even though I had no idea how.

**I prayed most of the day in tongues**, believing for some kind of breakthrough.

**The following day was Tuesday, and I was supposed to be down there already preaching** but I was still stuck in a place I didn't want to be in.

**I caught a taxi to the airport** and went to rebook my ticket.

**To my disappointment nothing had changed.** There were no planes leaving Manilla and there seemed to be no way for me to get to my destination.

Suddenly a local Filipino asked me, ***“Do you want to go to Iloilo?”***

I said, ***“Yes but there's no way I can get there.”***

He said, ***“Yes there is. Come with me.”***

**We jumped in a van with two other guys**, and we drove down to the local port where this guy put me on an overnight boat that left Manila that afternoon and arrived in Iloilo the following morning.

**I arrived on Wednesday morning** and was able to preach for the next three days at my friend's youth camp.

**Do I think there was a connection between me praying in the Spirit** and suddenly finding a guy who knew how to get me to my destination?

**I know there was a connection between the two** or a very strong coincidence

All I had to do was ***“give the door a nudge”*** and allow the Spirit to push the rest of the way until the door was fully open.

How many times has a church prayed into an open door, **because they prayed in the Spirit.**

Daniel obviously knew how to pray, but **he didn't have the Holy Spirit to help Him.**

**How much more we can push through in prayer** because we allow the Holy Spirit to intercede for us when we don't know how to anymore.

I think that was one of the reasons why Jesus gave the church in Philadelphia ***“an open door.”***

They had a little bit of strength to pray till something happened.

But they also knew when to **allow the Spirit to do the pushing for them.**

**Revelation 3:8** *I know your works. Behold, I have given before you an open door, and no one can shut it. For you have a little strength and have kept My Word and have not denied My name.*

**I've seen God shut doors on me.**

**But I've seen God open doors as well**, because I've learned to PUSH.

I've learned to pray until something happens.

**God has given us a key, the key of David.**

It's a key that enables us to allow others to **enter into the king's presence.**



It enables us to ***“open the door”*** so others can enter in.

**The key is the power of prayer.**

It's a key that enables us to be an ***“open door church.”***

Are you willing to be part of a church that knows how to ***“open doors”*** so that the gospel can advance.

- It might mean that like Daniel, **we have to push a little bit.**  
It might mean **we have to allow the Spirit to push for us.**

**But if we use the little strength we have, like the Philadelphians,** God will open doors, and no one will shut them.

**Amen!!!**

**Revelation 3:13** *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*