

1 Corinthians 16:9-14

Sunday 10/23/2011

Well, if you have your Bibles this morning, I want you to turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 16. Last week, we started the final phase of the book of 1 Corinthians, coming down through the last chapter. This has been a great book. I really enjoyed teaching it, and I look at it as a prelude to what we are going to do in 2 Corinthians. We are going to move right into that one and just take the time to lay that out since we have this one fresh in our mind, because the two really go together. It has been great; I have enjoyed it. I have learned a lot about it myself that I did not know, just by the time I had to put into it.

Last week, we saw in this chapter how the Church of Corinth, who was just about out of line and messed up on everything that they did, was messed up on their concept of giving, not only to their church as individuals, but to other Christians and reaching out to those who were in need. This book is filled, I think personally, with great biblical principles that give so much insight into the area of our lives. I told you before that Paul takes this church literally to task. He deals with them on many, many issues. In him dealing with them, we get a kind of double application. We get to see how they got into the problem, what their problem was, and then we get to see how he deals with it, which is really good for us. Then we learn the principles that go along with it that we can apply to our own lives.

Today, we are going to look at chapter 16, verses 9 through 14. In these six verses, again, you are going to see they are just packed with incredible material for us to learn from. Over the next couple of weeks, we are going to look at some great concepts, I think, to better help us understand what God has called us to do. I have seen it many, many times: the church is only as strong as the individuals that are in it. So, we look forward today to adding one more link to our chain here and strengthening things up.

Now, he says in chapter 16, pick it up in verse 9. He says:

For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.

Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do.

Let no man therefore despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren.

As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time.

Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

Let all things be done with charity.

Now, Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We love You. We thank You for all that You have done for us as a church, for the great people that You have given us. We pray, Father, that with all the busy things this week that we thought about and all the activities we were

involved in, right now, for just a small period of time, we can clear our minds, clear all the things out, that we can stay focused on what You have for us today. Now, Lord, take the Word of God. We are needy people today. God's people, there has never been a time in the history of the church that has needed more than they need today, not necessarily in food and clothing, but in stability and the principles of the Word of God that enact everything in our lives. Help us today to learn, to glean from this, and help us better define today, after today, what You have called us to do and what You have called this church to do, and to reach out and touch the lives of other people, however You may give us the opportunity to do that. We will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

I. The Importance of Keys and Doors

Now, we are not going to get very far in this verse. In fact, as I was briefing over chapter 16, I looked at it and I thought, "Okay." What I usually do is look at the chapter and then I try to break it down into five or six, seven, however many points there are that I think are really beneficial that we can learn something from. Usually, the last chapter in a book, you have to struggle with that because he is just saying goodbye to everybody. It is kind of like *The Waltons*, so you cannot really get anything out of it, but that is not true here. You are going to see that this last chapter, almost verse by verse, almost certainly section by section, it has just got a lot of things in it that we need to look at that we can glean from.

We will not get any farther than verse 9; in fact, we will only get the first part of verse 9 today. He says there, if I may read it again for you, he says, "For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries." This is a great verse with great insight into how God operates in our lives and gives us the things that we need to do. When I first got into the ministry and really got my heart into the Word of God, one of the great studies, one of the best studies I ever took, and I think it is a great study for anybody at any time, is to study two aspects in the Bible. He says here that a great door was opened to him. Doors have keys, and two of the greatest studies you are ever going to get into the Bible are going to study keys and study doors.

Keys open doors, and you will find as you come down through the Bible that there are seven literal keys that he talks about within the Bible, and they are quite incredible to study. Keys, we use it in our terminology today. Keys are always what changes something. In any church, you have key people. If you have people who are doing things, you always have a key man or a key lady that really makes things happen. In history, you will find that if you study history, church history, world history, it does not matter, anybody who writes about history will tell you that this is a key event. What does that mean? It means that it changed things. It went from, we talk about a key opening a door, from a closed door to an open door. We use the term "key" in that sense in everything we do. Somebody will say, "Well, you did a great job," and you will say, "Well, someone is over there; he played a key part in what we were doing."

You are going to watch the football game this afternoon, and the Chiefs try to beat the Oakland Raiders, and you are going to hear, I guarantee you, either on one side or the other, the sports commentator is going to say, "Now that guy right there, he is a key part of their defense," or "He is a key part of their offense." There are people who are key to different things, and keys in the

Bible are an incredible study. Like I said, there are seven different literal keys coming through the Bible.

Now, my purpose today, I am not going to go into any great detail. We could spend probably 30, 40 minutes in each one of these, but I want to get to where I want to get, but I want to show you the importance of keys and doors because Paul said, "For a great door is open unto me." We want to look at doors in the Bible, a great study, but you cannot study doors without studying keys.

II. Seven Keys in the Bible

- 1.) The Key of Knowledge
- 2.) The Key to the Kingdom of Heaven (Peter)
- 3.) The Key to the Kingdom of God (Paul)
- 4.) The Key of David
- 5.) The Key to the Bottomless Pit
- 6.) The Key to Death
- 7.) The Key to Hell

III. Doors in the Bible

Then you have another great study connected with keys, and that is doors in the Bible, and that is equally, again, my purpose is not to, my purpose is just to excite your imagination and maybe you will go home and study these out on your own. But doors are great.

- 1.) Noah's Ark Door
- 2.) Passover Door
- 3.) Eastern Gate Door
- 4.) Door of Hope
- 5.) The Shut Door (Ten Virgins)
- 6.) The Shut Door (Friend at Midnight)
- 7.) The Door of the Sheepfold
- 8.) The Open Door in Heaven
- 9.) The Judge Before the Door

IV. The First Mention of "Door"

In 1 Corinthians chapter 16, verse 9, right where we are at, you have the definitive passage on doors in your Bible. If you want to understand what doors represent, we start with chapter 16, verse 9, right where we are at. Everything that I gave you about the doors and the keys, no matter what they are doctrinally, how they work themselves out, they are always going to be a picture of the same thing in one way or the other.

You ever see the first time the word "door" is mentioned in the Bible? You have got to see this. Take just a second; this is worth going back and looking at. Come back to Genesis chapter 4, verse 5. This is the first time you find the word "door" in your Bible, and I think it is very instructive. We call this in Bible study the law of first mention, that when you see this and you understand this, it becomes a real deal, quite incredible.

But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?

If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

Now, here is what it says. It says, "But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect," talking about God, "and Cain was very wrath, and his countenance fell. And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wrath? and why is thy countenance fallen?" You know what that is talking about? Let me bring it up to speed for you. You know the Bible says that Cain and Abel brought an offering to the Lord, and Abel brings a sheep, which was the right offering. Cain, he is a tiller of the ground; he is connected with the world; he is connected with the dirt. He brings the first fruits of his fruit. He brings potatoes and watermelons and brings all the cabbage and all of the things that he grew, and I am sure he was a good farmer; I am sure he did a great job. But he brings those to the Lord, and that brings us up here where the Bible says that when God looked at the offerings, He accepted Abel's, but He rejected Cain's, and then Cain got upset about it.

Now, that is what it means there when it says, "Why has thou countenance fallen?" You can, in other words, many people wear their feelings on their face, and you can see exactly what is hurting them or what is bothering them by just looking at them. It is a thing where you know they, and that is Cain. So, He addresses that, and He says, "Why has thou countenance fallen? What is the matter?" Obviously, Cain says, it does not record it here, but I am sure Cain answered back and said, "Well, you know what? You did not do, you did not reject my offering. I worked just as hard as him, and I brought my stuff up here. You took his; you did not take mine."

The Lord said, "Well, why are you upset? Now that you know what I am looking for, now that you know what I want, now that you know what I expect, I will tell you what. So, you did not bring the right thing, no big deal. You go get the right one, and I will accept it." But if you do not, look at the rest of the verse: "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" That is a

question, and the answer to that is yes. "And if thou doest not well, here it comes, sin lieth at the door."

Now, that is the first time you find "door" in the Bible. You know what that verse does? That verse will work right there alone; it takes away every excuse you and I ever had of not doing what is right. That verse right there takes away, once and forever, every excuse you and I have because we do not like the way something happens, so we get our nose bent out of joint, our countenance falls. You see, you do not think you have got a fair deal; you do not think you should have got this or you should have done that. God's people are famous for getting their nose bent out of joint about stupid things, and the truth of the matter is, there is always an opportunity for you to do the right thing. Somebody says, "Well, I do not like going to church because I do not have any friends." The Bible says, "He that hath friends must show himself friendly." See, there is your opportunity. You do not take it; you are right when Cain's bow. You see, that is how it works. Once and forever, that verse takes away from us the excuse, whatever we may offer, of why we do not serve God and do not do what is right. It is your choice, just as it was his choice. God did not say, "Well, because you did that, I am booting you out of here, and you are not ever going to be around." God did not say that. God said, "Why are you upset?" And he said, "I am upset because you did not take what I brought." God says, "Okay, I will tell you what I will do. You go get the right thing, and I will take it." See, it really was not about what he brought or what he did not bring, and most of the time, it is never with God's people what they really say the problem is. But that is a great thing; that is a great verse, and always, it is always our choice. That passage about the door and given to Cain takes away any excuse you and I have for not doing what is right. You always have two choices in life: one of them to go through this door and do what is right, the other one is to, as Cain did in verse 16, he was so upset, you know what he did? He left the presence of the Lord over an opportunity that he had and a door that God gave him that he would not go through. It is always two doors in your life, I am just telling you, always two doors in your life. I do not care what situation you are faced with; I do not care what problem you come up against; I do not care who did what to you or who you think did what to you. You have always got two different choices, two different doors, and Cain is a great picture of that. That is the first time you find the word "door" in the Bible.

V. The Effectual Door and Opportunities in Ministry

All right, now back to 1 Corinthians chapter 16, verse 9. It says, talking about doors here now, "For a great door and effectual is open unto me." Now, he says a great door and effectual. Now, effectual means this door has some kind of effect; it is not a random door. In other words, the door that Paul is talking about was going to have an effect on somebody. Every door in the Bible that I gave you so far to look at, when you go back and study them out, you will find that every one of those doors changes something about somebody. It may be history in general; it may be an individual person, but the great door Paul is talking about, an effectual, means an opportunity in ministry. You see, that is the defining factor of a door in the Bible. A door is always going to be an opportunity, and God opens doors for people. You find it all through here; it is an effect of our lives.

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

You see, that is prayer with a purpose; it is effectual, effectual prayer. It has a purpose behind it; it is going to have an effect on something. He says God opened up a door that is going to have an effect. Now, let me just say this to you: an open door in your life without an effect is worthless. But when God opens a door in your world or my world or this church, God's purpose behind it is to have an effect on something, and that is what Paul is talking about.

One of the great illustrations of that is found in Revelation chapter 3, and there you have the story of the great Philadelphia church age. He says in Revelation chapter 3, verse 7 and 8:

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

Now, that is a great illustration, and when this door got open, it affected the whole world. Here we have a door with a key called the key of David. Now, I do not know if you know what the key of David is or not, but the key of David was the key to David's relationship with God, and that was his attitude of heart toward the Word of God. That would be Psalms 119.

You find churches today, you find churches today, some of the old style churches, they have been around for a long time, they still have the old biblical names, but nothing but biblical anymore. I love the idea of a church being called Antioch Baptist Church. It shows you that at one time, maybe they do not know what it means now, and probably do not, that shows at one time somebody understood their Bible. They understood that it all started back with Antioch in Acts chapter 11. That is to me, that is very instructive. Now, probably if you ask 25 people, even the pastor himself, the real pastor is probably long gone, "What is the significance of that?" He would not know.

Then you find churches that are called Open Door Baptist Churches. You ever see that? I guarantee you, whoever originally called that church Open Door was basing their ministry in Revelation chapter 3. Probably is not today, probably is not today. Now, when we picked the name for our church, we got it out of Jeremiah chapter 6. We called it Old Paths Baptist Church, because the Bible is in Jeremiah chapter 6 that you and I are to look for the old paths. The new path everybody is on is not any good; you have got to get back to the old path. So, you know, we kind of made our, I mean, that is better than Grace Fellowship, better than Sweet By and By, or nothing. It has got a little more doctrine to it.

But you are going to find when we come a little bit farther down the line in Revelation chapter 3, verse 20, we have got a church with a closed door. You see, this church was great because God set before them an open door, and nobody could shut that door, and that door literally ran from 1600, if you know your church history, up to the beginning of the 1900s. The reason why it was the church of the open door is found in verse 8, because it says, "For thou hast kept my word." The key to having God open doors in your life and the keys to having God open doors in our

church is your attitude toward the Word of God in both cases, and that is the way it works. That is the key to building your own individual life, and that is the key to us building our church. That is why I have told you many, many times, from day one when we started our church, my whole goal was to build a Philadelphia church, a church of the open door, and a Laodicean church period, a church of the closed door. In fact, if you go to Revelation chapter 3, you will find that in that particular verse, this is the Laodicean church. Now, Jesus Christ is knocking on the door of His own church, trying to get back in. The door is now closed. Great study, great study. We do not have the time to get into it this morning, but a great study.

In our text here, Paul said, "A great door and effectual," a door that is going to have an effect, "was open unto me." He said that in our text in 1 Corinthians 16:9, "For a great door and effectual is open unto me." You ever lose your keys? I have lost my keys. You ever see my keys? They are the biggest wad of keys you will ever find, and I have to have them because I have solved a lot of my problem. I put three big screws in a wall, and every time I come in from whatever, I hang my keys on that deal, and that is the best thing I have ever done. But when you lose your keys, you are done. You cannot get in your house; you cannot get in your car.

I remember one time, I had a little, and I worked for an organization, and I had a little white Ford Ranger I used to drive around, and I used to work and come back. What I did one time was, I did it twice, I could not believe it. You pull up to your house, and you have your paperwork, you have your computer, you have all the stuff you get, and you have to lock your truck because all your equipment is in it. You do not want to haul everything in, but you take your gear, hands are pretty full, and then you get out, you close the door, and I went into the garage, and I just remembered I locked my keys in my car. Now, this is my work truck, and so I, you know, what are you going to do? I have got to go to work, and I am on call. If I get an emergency, I am really in trouble. So, I called the key guy, lock guy, whatever he does, and he is a key man if you are locked out. Anyway, I think he went to Yale, but anyhow, you will get it. He comes over, one of those Jiffy things, and he is in my car in 10 seconds, and I am saying, "Well, I am appreciative." And he says, I said, "How much?" "Forty dollars." "Okay." I mean, what am I going to do? I mean, the price of stupidity is high. So, I gave him the 40 dollars. Honest to goodness, it was not two weeks later, I am not kidding you, two weeks later, I did the exact same thing in the same spot, and I call this guy, and I am embarrassed at this point. I am really embarrassed. So, I called this guy up, and he said, he laughs, he said, "No problem." So, I come back over, he comes back over, same thing, boom, boom. So, I am getting out my money, I said, "How much?" He says, "Thirty dollars." So, I said, "Thirty?" I said, "Last time it was 40." I said, "I am just, thank you." He said, "No," he says, and he put his hand on my shoulder, he was kind of kidding, he says, "We give a discount for stupid."

Hey, let me tell you something, the only thing I know in life, even a little bit, is the Bible. You do not want me fixing your car. But I live by myself, when I live by myself, I called, my washing machine would not work. Put the clothes in, put the soap in, and it would not work. I finally called the guy, and I said, "I do not know what is the matter with it." He came out, this cost me 25 dollars. This was back in the 70s, so this was a lot of money back then. So, he comes over there, and he looks at it, and I said, "I do not know what is going on with it." So, he pushes a

couple buttons, puts the lid down, and it starts to run. I paid 25 dollars to find out you have got to put the lid down before you push the button. You do not want me washing your clothes either, I am just telling you. But you know, it is a, that is where it is at. You lose your keys, you lose everything, and you cannot function. I am telling you, when you do not have the right keys to the Bible, you are just as dysfunctional.

I saw that years and years and years ago, and when Paul saw it, and he saw how important that keys were, because keys opened doors, and he knew all about keys and doors. That is why he said in 2 Corinthians chapter 2, verse 12:

Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord,

See that thing? Then he said over in Colossians chapter 4, verse 3:

Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:

Now, there is a door of utterance. You see, now for you and for me, that concept of keys and doors really comes into two different aspects. It really does. The first ones would be opportunities for this church, God opening doors and God closing doors, and that is very important. You know, one of the things that I saw very early, you take the word "God" and you take the word "gospel." I saw very early when I was starting in my Bible in Genesis chapter 1 that the Bible says the Spirit of God there, and I think it is verse 3, it says, "He had moved upon the face of the waters." You know that is a strange verse that he said that because the Spirit of God is always moving through the rest of the Bible. There is never a place from that verse that the Spirit of God is not going somewhere.

Now, I do not want to get theological with you, but your job and my job is to find out the pattern, the flight plan of the Holy Spirit of God is given in the Bible, and you are supposed to know where God is at and what God is doing so you can be part of it. You see, that is how it works. But you think that thing that the Holy Spirit of God is always moving. You take God, you know God wants you to do something after you got saved, you know that? There are some places He wants you to go. He wants to give you open doors; He wants to give this church open doors, but you have got to go through those doors when He gives them to you. You take the word "God," you know you cannot spell "God" without the word "go." He said, "I am going to preach the gospel." You know you cannot preach, you cannot spell "gospel" without the word "go." In other words, when you got saved, God wants you to go somewhere, do something, but the way you get there is through the door God opens for you. That is true of this church, true of you and me. It is just that simple, taking the opportunities that God gives us. I mean, just that simple. God will continue to grow you and grow this church as God gives us open doors, just like He did with Paul, and then we go through them. You see, then that is the aspect, first of all, is for our church.

Then the second aspect is for you and for me. For you and for me, God has opportunities; He has doors for you every day of your life. Now, this is where you have got to be careful because this is like wearing snowshoes through a minefield, because you know and I know that we can, and we

are all famous for this, we get something we want to do, and even though it is not what God wants us to do, it is what we want to do. So, we orchestrate the circumstances to get what we want and then try to drag God along and say, "Look what God did." I am always interested when I talk to people when they start to tell me about certain things in their life, and they will say about some great decision or something they did, and they will always say, "Well, God really spoke to my heart." That always gets my little ears up, and I always want to hear that process because I know that usually that process is going to lead to a disaster because they do not even know how God speaks to them.

I had a guy say one time, "Well, you know what? God led me." And I said, "How did He lead you? Come down with a leash or a hand, or how did He do that? Big stick pushing along, how did He lead you?" Somebody else said, "Well, God told me to do that." "Really? What were you doing? Did He just come over your radio? I mean, did it cancel out your Howard Stern you were listening to and coming through that? Is that how it went? I mean, how, you know, how did He tell you? How did He do that?" I get intrigued by things like that because I have dealt with enough people, and I know enough people because God, you know, most people cannot recognize the doors that God puts right in front of them.

Last week, I gave you a great verse in Jeremiah chapter 44, verse 26, when it talked about how that when you go back down to Egypt, God does not go. We can make the Bible say whatever we want it to say; we do it all the time, and that is a very dangerous thing. I see God's people do it all the time. They get into some relationship, and because they want the relationship so bad, in their mind, they think, "Well, this person is saved." "He has to be saved." "Why does he have to be saved?" "Because he uses God's name all the time." Oh, yeah, that is a good idea. We are famous for taking crowbars and opening doors that God never opened and claiming God did it. But you see, that is the mark of the Laodicean church, is it not? Because the word "Laodicea" means "rights of the people," and we live in a church age that that is exactly what it is. We always find a way to get what we want and then make everybody try to believe that God is the one who did it. That is the way we do it. That is the way we do it.

VI. Discernment and God's Will

You know what? If you really want to do what is right and you want to get to the point where God is going to use you, then you have to have a process. If you think I just get on my horse and put my cowboy hat on and yell, "Yee-haw!" and run off into the sunset about building a church, that is not the way it works. I have very little respect for most pastors, not because they are not nice guys, but I have very little respect for most pastors. You know why? This is my own personal thing, maybe I should not even tell you this, but I have very little respect for most pastors. You know why? Because they never produce what they preach. You see, you may not like me, and you may not like the way I preach; you may not like my style of ministry, and that is okay. But there is one thing you have got to give me: I produce what I preach. It may not be what people like, but it is what the Bible says you are supposed to do.

I hear guys get up there preaching all the time, and they never produce anything out of their preaching. I mean, if you have got a church, and you are, you know, in there 10, 12 years, and

you have got things to be done, and you are still doing everything, or you need a song director, or you need a youth guy, or you need this, and you cannot reach down inside your own church because you have not trained anybody, you are falling short of what you are preaching is, or maybe you are not preaching anything, I do not know. But I look at things like that because I am telling you, there is no reason why, once you get a handle on the Bible, that you do not understand that God puts doors in your life every day of your life. Every day of your life and my life, we have opportunities, doors that God puts in front of us. You know what? If you want, if you want to get involved and you want to really do something for God, my suggestion to you and your prayer life is, ask God to give you a door of ministry in your life. Ask God to give you a door, and when He does, when He does, then you go through it.

Now, keep in mind, it may not be the door you wanted, and it may not open as fast or the way you think it should. That is your material. But when God presents a door to you, and it is based on the biblical principles, and God has all kinds of opportunities, He wants us to go through doors every day in our life. You know the great model that is in Acts chapter 8 with the Ethiopian eunuch. Here is a guy named Philip, who is an evangelist, and he is one of the deacons out of Acts chapter 7, verse 6. He is a great preacher, and he is down there in Samaria because the revival has broken out in Samaria based on his preaching, and thousands of people are coming to Christ. But God gives him another door of opportunity and has an Ethiopian eunuch on the backside of the desert out here in Gaza, nowhere. He picks up Philip, who is the absolute key evangelist in what is going on in Samaria, transports him out of there, and then plops him right down in the desert, giving him that guy.

When you study that passage, you have a picture of exactly what God wants to do in your life and in my life. That is a picture of an opportunity of an open door for you and for me. When you study Philip's reaction to it, the Bible says he ran. He never questioned the fact. You see, in Philip's mind, that probably was not the door that he thought. I mean, if I was having a revival someplace, and a hundred thousand people would show up, I would think that that would be the door. But then God shut that door and opened the door for one person. Now, in human reasoning, in human thinking, that does not sound very logical, does it? But in God's thinking, it does. I mean, here is what happened historically: you either take 10,000 people here, or you go over here to one guy who takes it back to his whole nation, and the whole nation gets saved from the one evangelist you send back. Now, the other idea is, you know what? When God closed the door in Samaria, Philip did not worry because Philip knew that the real key was not him anyhow. God always has somebody else to take the place when He closes one door and sends us someplace else. But doors do not always open and close the way we want, you see, because we are Laodicean Christians; we want our rights; we want justice. Oh, you are going to, we are all going to get justice here, not food going down the line.

Now, chapter 16 is an incredible chapter, and you know, the problem we all have is, "How do you know when God opens a door?" I mean, let us just face it, "Okay, Bob, that is nice stuff so far, but how do I know when God opens a door?" Well, I have already told you. I mean, how do you keep from getting into the wrong door, opening the door yourself? I already told you that models a church at Philadelphia that says there in verse 7 and 8 that that church has kept His

Word, and because they kept the Word, that they opened up the door. God opened up the door, and let me tell you something, when God opens up the door, nobody shuts it. Nobody shuts it. Somebody says, "Well, you know what so-and-so is saying about your church?" I could care less what they are saying. You know why? Because God opened this door, and there is nothing anybody out there is going to ever say that is going to shut it, because the promise is that when God opens it, no man can shut it. But the downside of that is, when God shuts it, no man is going to open it either. So, it is a thing where that is true of your life and my life. He says, "Thou hast kept my word." God never violates His own principles.

You learn and recognize the hand of God in our lives, and when it is God and when it is not, simply by understanding biblical principles in the Bible. This is called discernment, and in the early chapters of the Proverbs, you are told how to get discernment. Discernment is the ability that most God's people do not have, that when they see a situation, when they see the situation, they do not know, cannot tell if it is God or not. You know why? Because one, they do not know how God operates because they do not know the principles, so they are kind of got to roll the dice, and boy, let me tell you that the devil will have a field day with that. There should be nothing in your life that does not happen, that is not opened up, that you cannot tell if it is of God or not, based on the principles you are already knowing in the book you are already living in and the Word of God you are already keeping. This is discernment, simply learning the patterns by which God does things.

You know, that is the whole key; that is the whole bottom line is understanding the pattern of God, how God does what He does, how He accomplishes what He accomplishes. You know, I look back in my whole life, and my whole life has been nothing more than God opening up doors in my life. I think of how I got to Kansas City. Most of you do not know this story, but my father in the Lord, who meant more to me and means more to me than any mortal man, was Mel Sabaka, who took me in after my father died and did everything for me. He basically, him and his wife, became my mom and dad, and his son Dan became my brother, and Linda became my sister, and we just had a, they just took me in, and everything I learned about the ministry, I learned from him. Him and I had talked; we traveled together, and I would lead singing for him and do all the things that I was doing was part of his ministry. I would preach his class when he was gone and teach his Bible studies when he was out of town. Him and I had talked many, many times of going out and starting a church somewhere, and I want to tell you that was the desire of my heart to be with him for the rest of my life would have been absolutely the greatest thing I could ever have. But you know what? God had other plans.

I remember back around 1973, it was, maybe 1974, I guess it was, that the recession hit back then, and everybody lost their jobs. I was working at that time at the Hoover Company, which made vacuum cleaners, washing machines, and you know, it was a thing where I had a good job for the time. I worked nine to five, and I could work when I did not want to work on weekends. I, you know, I could do whatever I want to do. It gave me plenty of time for my ministry and what I was doing. When they had high school camp and junior high camp, I would go out and take my vacation, do the whole week out there, and just spend doing, that is where I really learned aspects of ministry, and I had a great deal going. What happened was, the economy went to pieces. I got

bumped off of my job and pretty much got bumped from the main plant down to another plant and basically got bumped out. At that particular time in my life, I did not, you know, I did not, I did not have anything. I lost my job. I just got married, and you know, and we, the thing where I did not, you know, I did not know what I was going to do.

My brother-in-law, who, my barber's side of the family has always been in groceries, renting grocery stores, and they had a large grocery store, and my brother-in-law, great guy, he says, "Hey, look, come in, work for me. You are part of the family. Come on in and work for me." He made me the produce manager, sent me off to spend a lot of money teaching me about, you know, fruits and all those things. You have got to care about how you say that today. It taught me a lot of different things about that. You know, and it was okay. I, but I lost all my freedom. I had to work now Saturday; I had to work weird hours. I got Sunday off, but even would go in on Sunday afternoon, and I would, I would just, I would struggle with things like that. You know, but I had to do what I had to do, and so God gave me that. But then right after God did that, about not more than three months later, Mel gets up and decides he is going to go to New York to build a church. Now, he has been in Canton for 56 years. He has been in the ministry 30 years here in this church, and now he is going to go to New York City where nobody does not know anybody, and God gave him a burden to build a church, and certain key people are going with him. But I am stuck. Now, the dream that I had to go with him was now that door was slammed shut. I cannot go to my brother. I have worked with him for a year now, who probably is not saved. I am going to go to him now after he has invested all this money in me and tell him that I am sorry, thank you, but I have got to leave now. I could not do that. I mean, I could not, I could not do that after he did that, and it was the hardest thing in my life. It was the hardest single thing in my life to ever have happened to me that he was leaving and going to New York. The world was coming to an end in Canton, Ohio, as far as I was concerned, because the guy they put in there was a zero compared to him. Everything that was, everything had evaporated when he went to New York, and I am left here.