

A Door Opens
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There is a famous saying, "*When one door closes, another door opens.*" The full quote gives more understanding: "*but we often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door that we do not see the ones which open for us.*" This popular adage, often attributed to Alexander Graham Bell, serves as a timeless reminder that setbacks and disappointments are often stepping stones to new opportunities. It encourages us to maintain a positive outlook, even in the face of adversity, and to believe that better things are yet to come.

It is not always obvious when a door is closed, and opening doors is not something that just happens spontaneously. It takes effort, thoughtfulness, and prayer to determine when to. It is also not a solitary task. When we work alone, it is more difficult to see the whole picture clearly.

Even Jesus, as he was doing ministry, sent people ahead to herald the word (**Luke 9:6-12**). A key phrase in this passage is, "*The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.*" Christ knew that time was a precious commodity, and many hands make for quicker work

Paul is a perfect example of the door subject. Before Christ intervened, his path was to become a Pharisee. He studied the law and prophets under excellent teachers. He was sure his path was righteous when he dragged men and women into prison to stop "The Way" in its tracks.

Christ didn't just shut that door, but slammed it tight on the road to Damascus. Many new doors were opened that day. There were many positive responses to Paul's ministry. He was obviously a gifted teacher, although his analysis of his own in-person teaching skills was self-deprecating. He labored day and night to repair the damage from his pre-conversion efforts.

Even with his many successes, doors continued to close; still, he was not deterred. He simply moved on to the next opportunity. His old life friends were never far behind him, making every effort to destroy his successes. The phrase "*two steps forward and one step back*" applies very well to his ministry, but even there, he was always gaining a step.

The book of Acts lists multiple examples of doors slamming shut on him and what he did next. In **Acts 13:14-52**, he preached in Pisidian Antioch to Jews and Gentiles. **Acts 13:48-51** conclude,

When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed. The word of the Lord spread through the whole region. But the Jewish leaders incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. And the door is shut. So they shook the dust off their feet as a warning to them and went to Iconium.

This process was typical of many of the places where Paul preached the word during his ministry. His style was not just to preach until opposition made it impossible to continue, and then move on to the next opportunity. Sometimes he would return to those same places once the dust had settled to strengthen the believers (e.g., **Acts 14:23-28**).

Paul was not a one-man show. Other dedicated teachers traveled with him. Sometimes they worked together, and sometimes their paths diverged. See: **1 Timothy 1:3**, **Titus 1:5**, and **1 Thessalonians 3:2**.

Paul acknowledged the work of others who were working in the field. In **1 Corinthians 3:6**, Paul noted that while he planted the seed and Apollos watered, it was God who brought the growth. Apollos was a gifted speaker, and once he had been brought up to speed by Priscilla and Aquila (**Acts 18:24-26**), he was an extremely valuable tool in spreading the Gospel. The letter to the Corinthians follows up in the very next verse by saying, *“So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.”* The ultimate arbiter in any of our earthly efforts is God.

Here are a few simple steps that may help when spreading the word in Christ's ministry.

1. Establish the groundwork for your dialogue before jumping into the meat of your message. If we establish a personal relationship with people, they are much more likely to be receptive to the message we bear.
2. If you don't get a positive response, move on, but don't be too hasty in any conclusion. All good things take time.
3. That doesn't mean that you should give up. It may just not be the right time. The seed may take a while to take root. Come back later. It may also be possible that someone else may be able to open the door that was closed to you.