

## **SUNDAY August 17, 2025 “The Bible as an Open Door”**

**Psalm 119: 105-112 840 VU**

**Proverbs 7:1-3, Colossians 4:2-6 Revelation 3:7-8**

**Matthew 7:7-14**

We continue our summer series “At Your Request” with our focus today on “the Bible as an Open Door” and what this description includes as we share with each other as the body of Christ in this place. The Bible is central to The United Church of Canada because the Bible serves as a source of wisdom, personal prayer, and devotion, and so we believe that reading and studying the Bible can bring us closer to God. These old stories found in the pages of the Old and New Testaments, are a living word that speaks in new and fresh ways to each generation. These are stories of ancient Israel and early Christian church which continued to try to be faithful to God under difficult circumstances. These stories and teachings from the past still hold power to inform us today even though what was experienced and written then does not totally fit with today’s world. Through the Bible we experience God's continuing work of creation and liberation in the world, while offering us forgiveness, healing, and new life in Jesus. As people who believe we also lift up the word of God the Bible because these stories tell the lives of real people and whoever reads this collection, come to understand in new ways the answer to that question, “who is God?”

There is a story about a doctor who is holding the handle of a door. He hears his dog scratching and whining on the other side. Upon opening the door, the golden retriever rushes in, overjoyed to see his owner, leaping into his arms. The doctor remarks that the dog had never been in that room before, yet he entered without hesitation, solely driven by the presence of hearing his master’s voice. This story illustrates a dog's unwavering loyalty and affection. The dog's actions demonstrate that his love for his owner transcends the unknown surroundings. He didn't need to know what was on the other side of the door; he simply knew his master was there and wanted to be with him.

The door was closed to the dog, but when opened the dog leaps up and wags his tale with joy. IF we were to take this story and use the expression “The Bible as an Open Door” what we might discover is all the possibilities, opportunities, risks, challenges and even confidence and encouragement for sharing the Word of God. But are we willing to do this? Share the message which is on the other side of the door? It is a concept that enables people to grow in understanding God and having new experiences or beginning again. This open door invites everyone to walk in and through to risk, to learn and to see for oneself who God is and may be!

A good example of an open door is one which reflects the relationship bosses and staff members might share. Does the boss have an open door policy which may receive people without appointments, schedules or purposes at any time? And does this open door allow those involved to be attentive to ideas, concerns and even to clarify concepts and move forward in tasks. The door remains open for the boss to hear the chatter, the movement and the workers, but what is key is the willingness of the mentor to listen to others. The Bible is open and remains open for each and all of us to read- to reflect and pray about. We just need to know how this might be and where to look!

When one reflects on doors, windows, gates and latches all being a part of a building or parts belonging to churches, businesses and houses, security becomes an issue. What deters the person from entering and stealing valuable items? Yet when we imagine the Bible as an open door-- the clasp on the cover is not locked, the pages may be flipped and read freely. So how do we discern this open door for us as we begin to see that the Bible itself has abundant ways of learning about God? We need to be attentive to these opportunities so that we as a church may move forward in faith, discern God's will, and walk through the doors because God is leading us to do so.

This open door idea may be contrasted to the narrow gate as described by Matthew (7:7-14). A wide gate means the opening for walking or moving is large, so large that it is busy with many people taking it; but what it leads to is often destruction because people are unsure of the path upon which they walk. Yet if one chooses the narrow gate, fewer people will find it but the path it leads to will be filled with hope and opportunity. So what are we supposed to take? The open door or the narrow gate?

As we reflect on the Bible as an open door- one can peak in and imagine-- all the scenes of the stories of people who lived thousands of years ago. All the stories which come to mind-- from Creation and Eden, to Noah and the ark; to the Exodus traveling with Moses in the desert; through the stories of Job who was tested by God, Esther who feared for her people, Elijah and the question of whose God is real to the prophets who wrote about what was to occur with the coming of the Messiah. But we don't just have to peak! We can open the Bible and read these amazing stories!

Why? As Christians, as believers in God, as people of faith-- we *should* want to share these stories as we serve God. We should want to keep God's word and his commandments with us as Proverbs 7 states. This is so that we will live a righteous life knowing that God's teachings are for us to live life following God's intentions for us all. God takes an active role so

that these 'openings' will happen and his purpose may be fulfilled. But we must recognize these moments as gifts from God in order to act and speak our faith with others.

So how are we to do this? We are to discern His will so that we can step into the moment of understanding and praying. It means seeking God's guidance, and trusting in God to provide. This might be difficult in some situations, but one must be ready to act when an opportunity arises.

God opens doors of faith to people in different ways. In Acts 14, the communities to which Paul and Barnabas have travelled are listed. Returning to Antioch, they called the church together. Once the church had gathered, they related all that God had done with them and how he had opened a door of faith for the Gentiles. God opened the door of faith. Of course Paul and Barnabas did not have a "Bible" to read out of, but their stories of faith and how they faced challenges and changes as they shared God's message of hope were heard. The people received their message and this shows to us who can now read their account of establishing the early church that God was acting in all the lives of people- Paul, Barnabas and the Gentile listeners!

This was also the situation as Paul taught the people in Colossae about their tasks: devote themselves to prayer, keep alert in it with thanksgiving, pray for them that "God would open to them a door for the word," so that they may declare the mystery of Christ. They were to also conduct themselves wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time, speak graciously and listen. What this open door refers to is the hearts and minds of people who might be open to receive Christ's message.

But how do we keep the doors open to share the Good News of Jesus' love? We need to be observant about what is happening around us and put our faith into action- show others you care- as Jesus did. One may not be able to share your faith openly right away, but when one engages in service and compassion with another ministry in Jesus' name occurs. When one shares with another person the concerns of the heart, both benefit. And this is when it is possible for the open door to be entered.

The Bible is filled with stories that many people have explored through the decades. But each time a person reads about a character, situation and teaching of God, it is like a new door has opened because this person learns about God and themselves and not necessarily at the same time or in the same way.

In Revelation 3:8: Jesus says, "I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut". We have been given 'open doors' as believers and faithful followers of Jesus. The open

door is not just about physical doors or geographical locations, but about opportunities to serve the Lord, to advance God's kingdom, and utilize all the gifts we receive from Christ.

As a result of faithfulness, the church is loyal to the teachings of the Bible but we must listen with hearts open to understand that times change yet what remains is what we need for our lives/ our sake our hope for tomorrow. God is the one who may close that door no one else- but His promises to those who are faithful lead us to be rest assured that the covenant God made to us many generations ago still remains. "I love you and gave to you Christ to save and redeem you. But you must listen to my word and believe."

Where do we seek God's guidance? One place is in the words God inspired to be written and distributed- the Bible. It is a narrative story of God's love from creation to end times with covenants and promises made and fulfilled in order that God's relationship with people would be made clear. God is actively involved in our lives and His desire for us is to participate in His work. It calls for faith, discernment, and a willingness to step out in obedience when He opens a door. The question is are we willing to go through that door to find new hope, life and possibilities? Are we willing to see what god's words says for us today? Are we wanting to see those biblical characters come alive for us again as we see in them who we are and might become in our time and generation?

The Bible is an open door. God is on the other side and wants us to trust him enough to walk through the door, experience the stories of people who lived died and came to know Him in their time. This is so that we might love God in faith and grow spiritually trusting Him to show us the way forward. This path is where we see the word of God as a lamp and light to the future. Are we ready to go through the open door in faith?

Let us pray

Holy God of Grace we praise you and thank you that the Bible is present for us this day so that we might grow in faith, trusting in you to light our way in the days to come. We pray O God that we will understand how the Bible is an open door and its pages are calling us to study them anew so that our hearts may lead us to knowing who Jesus is for each of us now. Hear now our prayers. SILENCE> Amen.