

University Heights Church
of Christ
445 Columbia Ave.,
Lexington, KY 40508
(859) 255-6257
www.uheightschurch.com

WORSHIP SERVICES

Sunday

Bible Study: 9:45 AM

Worship: 10:45 AM; 6:00 PM

Wednesday

Bible Study: 7:30 PM (This is immediately followed by a short worship period)

First Friday of Each Month

Singing: 7:30 PM

LEADERSHIP

Elders

David Collins

John Thompson

Troy Antle

Evangelist

Adam Litmer

Deacons

Richard Brundige

Matt Thompson

Adam Litmer

Bill Morelan

Jim Parsons

Pat Seabolt

Adam Daniels

Jamie Powell

From Jesus

Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in Him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees Him who sent me. I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.

John 12:44-46

IN NEED OF PRAYERS

Mildred Collins, Luke Ramey, John Thompson, Declan Weatherholt, David Seabolt, Jeff Howerton, Rhonda Boyd (and her sister, Dorothy), Louis Harrod, Paul Atkisson, Ed Allison, The Bays and Robbins family, Sheila Lawson, Keia Burton, Robert Brundige, Susie Burton, Valerie and Barry Boyd, Janett's mother and stepfather, Sandy Driver, Erlene Young, Larry Sells, Evelyn Damron, Jennifer Dunbar, Jean Gartland, John Blessing, William Roberts, Paul Lyda, Pete Soro, The Smith family, our brethren in southern Philippines, our brethren in Zimbabwe, Jamie Powell's father, Bruce Feltner, Harleigh Spartman, Fay Thomas, Mattie Johnson

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Ignoring The Open Door

Adam Litmer

In His letter to the brethren in Philadelphia, Jesus said, *I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut...* (Revelation 3:8). This is a case in which some background knowledge of the city aids in understanding our Lord's words to the church located there. Historians tell us that the reason Philadelphia was constructed was to advance the spread of Hellenism (Greek culture, language, and practice) into the east. In a very real sense the city of Philadelphia was the "open door" to the east.

This materially poor and persecuted church had kept the words of Jesus, refused to deny His name, and patiently endured throughout their difficulties (3:8-10). If one were to have interaction with a Christian they would find those of the highest quality among the brethren in Philadelphia. Free from any form of rebuke, these brethren received only commendation and encouragement from Jesus. Of all the church's addressed in these letters, it is the one in Philadelphia for whom the door was opened widest when it came to spreading the message of Jesus Christ.

I believe it is significant that Jesus tells them that no one can shut the door that He had opened for them. Despite the hatred and persecution directed at them from the Jewish community in that city (3:9), their enemies would be powerless to slam the door shut. They could not stop our brethren in Philadelphia from spreading the message of Jesus Christ, nor could they convince every person in the city to refuse to give our brethren a hearing. Jesus opened the door and there was nothing His enemies could do to shut it.

Having said all of this, just because a door stands open does not necessarily mean the people to whom it is opened will make use of it. I am convinced that what Jesus said to the brethren in Philadelphia could have been said to countless congregations throughout the years. Indeed, *all of them*. It is

true that some congregations have found themselves in extremely favorable conditions to lead souls to Jesus Christ, either because of the quality of the brethren who comprise that congregation, the general receptiveness of the community itself, or both. However, I have never known of a congregation of the Lord's people in this country comprised of members without basic communications skills and thus an inability to communicate with others. Thus, there is a definite sense in which Christ has opened a door for *all* His people.

Satan, however, has never been one willing to admit defeat. He knows that one need not shut the door to make it ineffectual, he just needs to encourage the ones to whom it is open to ignore it. There are several methods he uses to accomplish this.

Too busy. We're busy people. We've got commitments and deadlines. We've got to do this, that, and the other thing while the clock seems to conspire against us. We're in a hurry, rushing from one thing to the next, struggling to get as much into a single day as we can. Put a spouse and children into the equation and a whole new set of commitments and time restraints are added to the mix. Don't think Satan hasn't noticed all of this. Not only has he noticed, he is happy to help us add more and more to our already busy schedules.

An observation from my own life may be helpful here. I have noticed that when I become "too busy" to pray, study, or consider the needs of the brethren, speaking to someone about Jesus Christ often slips entirely from my mind. Do you notice this in your life? Our brethren in Philadelphia had jobs, families, and hobbies just like we do. In fact, we're not one wit busier than they were. Even with their schedules, deadlines, commitments, and time restraints, Jesus opened a door before them. They just had to step through it.

A final thought on this point: it *is* entirely possible to become so busy things must be prioritized off our schedules. Is there wisdom in removing Jesus Christ and His priorities from our busy schedules? Yes, but not the kind we want to be associated with (James 3:15).

Too oblivious. Busy schedules lead to busy minds. Busy minds tend to become so cluttered as to render one oblivious to the opportunities before them. Let me give you an example. Just yesterday a man knocked on the door who is new to the area and seeking to establish his business. He was introducing himself to the area. I had just gotten home from the office after picking Alexander up from a school camp he is attending. I was using about a quarter of my mind on fixing the

kids lunch, a quarter on the "check engine" light shining brightly in my car, a quarter on Alexander's next orthodontist appointment, and the final quarter on the college age/young adult class I will be teaching in less than a month. I didn't have any room left for the guy introducing himself. I invited him in so he wouldn't have to stand in the heat and "listened" to him speak for a few minutes, my mind racing all over the place. It wasn't until he was just about to walk out the door that this thought finally shoved its way to the front: "Adam, you have a non-Christian who came to you standing in your living room and you're about to send him on his way without a word about Jesus Christ." The providence of God opened the door wide *in my own living room* and I nearly let it pass unused. Why? The temporary spiritual obliviousness of a busy mind.

Too disinterested. The too busy and too oblivious mind tend to go hand in hand. They are symptoms of spiritual problems that can generally be fixed by reprioritizing one's life. The person struggling with these problems loves the Lord and the souls of men. He or she just needs to slow down, refocus, and remember what's most important. The disinterested heart, however, is in a terrible state.

The disinterested heart is in a desperate need of recovering the love it had at first, if such a person ever truly had it to begin with (2:4). It is the heart that can see the open door, note the opportunity presented by it, and simply not care enough to take advantage of it. What a terrible state! May such never be true of us.

This list could go on for quite some time. Sometimes saints are too afraid, too timid, too shy, too lacking in knowledge, too this, or too that, to take advantage of the door Jesus opened before them. However, it seems the saints in Scripture who took advantage of the open door provided by Jesus did so because they loved Him, trusted Him, and wanted others to have what they had. Greater knowledge and wisdom comes with continued study and faithful prayer (James 1:5-7). As with all things, we learn to better spread the message of Jesus Christ by doing it.

There is an open door before us. Satan can't shut it but we can ignore it. Let's not!

