

HOW TO DISCERN BETWEEN OPEN AND CLOSED DOORS



Doors are mentioned in the Bible many times. Sometimes it refers to physical doors as literal points of entry. It is true, however, that doors also have symbolic and spiritual meaning and significance. There are several Biblical principles by which we can discern through the help of the Holy Spirit whether a door before us is within the will and purposes of God for our lives, and also when such a door – which may seemingly look good – has the potential over time to lead us astray from God's will and purpose for our lives. Following are a few points that may help us discern open and closed doors in the different seasons of our lives.

How do I know if an open door or opportunity is from the Lord?

1. It must agree with the principles of God's Word

Psalm 37:23-24 - The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the LORD upholds him with His hand.

Whenever an opportunity comes our way – however good it may sound and look – it is very wise and will help us avoid possible mistakes if we inquire of the Lord about each one. Throughout the Bible, neglecting to ask God's will about a matter led to negative repercussions. Never be in a hurry to take a decision. Ask questions like: 'What impact will this have on interpersonal relationships?' and 'Will this hamper my relationship with the Lord?'

2. Will God be glorified?

The Bible counsels us in everything to be sure that what we do in life glorifies the Lord. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, “*So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*” When you consider the given opportunity, what is the motive and intention of your heart? Will it glorify God? Will it bring Him honour? Ask the Holy Spirit to clearly show you these things so your own desire will not blind your decision-making.

3. Discern what is good and acceptable in Christ

The Bible encourages us to cry out to God for discernment until we have clarity on a matter, Proverbs 2:3-5 - *Yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for*

understanding, if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.

Romans 12:2 - *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

It may happen that you are put under pressure to make a quick decision. Never succumb to such pressure. Rather spend the necessary time to enquire of the Lord and get a full perspective on the consequences of your decision.

4. Wait for the peace of God

There is great encouragement in Philippians 4:6-7, *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

Never take a decision on a matter without that inner peace of the Lord in your heart and spirit. If you struggle, take some time in fasting and prayer. The peace spoken of in Philippians 4:7 is given by the Holy Spirit and will bring your emotions and thoughts to rest and set you on course for the future. A wise man once said; "Until you hear God tell you to do a next thing, stay with the last thing you surely heard Him say."

5. Seek wise counsel

Sometimes a matter can be so overwhelming that we struggle to clearly hear God's voice. The remedy for this can be found in Proverbs 15:22 -23 - *Without counsel, plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors they are established. A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, and a word spoken in due season, how good it is!*

Walking through God-appointed doors can be both exciting and challenging. It is wise, however, not to jump to conclusions too quickly. Prayerfully sharing opportunities given to us with a wise friend or mentor can bear much fruit in our lives. Godly people who are given to prayer will not answer us according to our desire, but be able to look at our lives and the calling of the Lord resting on us. Remember, they do not decide for us – but their wisdom help us make wise rather than emotional decisions.

6. Put God's will first

When confronted with something we really want and the Lord's answer is 'no', it can be the hardest thing to accept. This is simply because we only have momentary insight. God sees our whole lives at once, and knows of other opportunities that are lined up in perhaps a different way.

Then we can find our consolation in Proverbs 3:5-8, - *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh, and strength to your bones.* Patiently wait for the right opportunity in the right season – do not be in a hurry and make unnecessary mistakes.

7. Read and consider Scripture

Psalms 119:105 - *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. 130 The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.*

Something wonderful happens when we read Scripture. It washes and cleanses our conscience and when we persevere in spending time in the Word, suddenly wisdom and understanding come to us, with clarity of mind as to the will and purpose of the Lord in a certain situation. Never underestimate the role of simple Bible reading and meditation.

What closed doors in the Bible tell us

There are quite a few verses in the Bible about closed doors. The first doors known in Scripture are the gates of Paradise, the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were forced to leave Paradise after falling into sin. The gates of the garden were shut, and an angel was set at the gate to guard against their re-entry. Now that is a closed door!

1. A closed door is not necessarily a locked door

Ecclesiastes 3:1 - *To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven...*

Sometimes a 'good thing' is not the 'right thing' at a specific time. Sometimes we are not yet strong or established enough in God to steward a great opportunity well. We must trust the Lord at such times and wait to see where He leads us and what new doors may open. It often happens that our estimated expectation and timing for something are different from the Lord's.

2. God may be putting a hedge of protection around you

We may sometimes find ourselves deeply disappointed about a lost opportunity or when a door suddenly closes for us. When it happens that God closes a door, it may be because He wants to protect you. Possible examples are: being in a wrong relationship, losing a contract, missing a flight, etc. Several testimonies were told in 2001, when the Twin Towers in New York fell after a terrorist attack, of people who missed their flight that day or who were rescheduled for another –

and it saved their lives! However frustrating a closed door or missed opportunity may seem, God is watching over us.

3. A closed door may be a redirection

Job 36:11 - If they obey and serve Him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures.

Sometimes it can happen that we get so emotionally and mentally entangled in a situation, that we lose our focus on life, and slowly start to slip away from God. Our walk and relationship with God are the most precious in all the earth, and we should guard it with our lives. God is not unable to open other doors – never forget that. It does happen however, that He sometimes allows a season of closed doors in our lives to redirect our attention to what is needed for a season ahead.

God wants to guide us

Much more can be said on the significance of open and closed doors in the different seasons of our lives. The compass throughout however is this – to bend our knees and pray, and to submit to God's Word and His Spirit. We can trust the Holy Spirit, our Counsellor, to guide us according to the will and ways of our Father (John 16:13). *Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," Whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left.* (Isaiah 30:21).

Paul writes to the Philippians - *The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.* (Philippians 4:9). The peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard us in every decision we make (Philippians 4:7).