

OPEN DOORS FOR US

To the church of Christ in Philadelphia, Jesus said, *I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.* (Rev. 3:8) Does God still open doors for churches today? Yes. Will He open doors for us? He is—

1. Each week, there is a door open for those who want to work together and grow (Heb. 10:24-25). Are you using this open door?

2. For the present time, we have a voice in the community, in the newspaper articles. Some churches have been “shut out” from the newspaper because of the truth that they speak. As a church, we are using this open door. These articles can open doors for you to talk to people you meet from day to day. Are you using this open door?

3. The fair booth (July 19-23) is an open door. Who will we meet? Maybe nobody will stop at our booth, maybe one or two people will stop, maybe hundreds will stop. Do results define our duties? No, open doors define our duties. Are you preparing to do your share of our work in this area (Eph. 4:16).

4. Our Summer Bible Series (July 25-29; 7:00-8:15PM) is an open door. Your presence is needed, young or old (there will be an adult class). Because there are willing students and teachers, this is an open door God is providing. Will you use it?

-- *Editor's Note:* Our *Arkansas Weekly* article this week is primarily an announcement of our booth at the fair and upcoming Summer Bible Series. Clip it and use it to begin making people aware of these things.

Church of Christ—Quail Valley
4104 E. Harrison St.
Batesville, AR 72501
Office- (870) 793-6700

Evangelists:
David Halbrook 569-4491
Lenoard Westbrook 612-8409

The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*

Church of Christ--Quail Valley

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“WITH ALL READINESS”

Marc W. Gibson

The Berean Jews were noted as “more fairminded” than the Jews in Thessalonica “in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11). The key detail is that they received with all readiness the word preached by Paul. The word “readiness” (Gk. *prothumia*) has the meaning of eagerness, willingness. This describes an attitude of mind that each of us should want to imitate.

Many will receive the word of God today in a much different manner. They receive the word, not with eagerness, but with skepticism. Unlike the Thessalonian Christians, they receive it as man’s wisdom instead of the word of God (1 Thess. 2:13). Sadly, they end up casting it aside and not giving heed to the truth therein.

Others receive the word with weariness. They have lost their interest in gaining spiritual knowledge and are more interested in worldly learning and fleshly recreation. Personal Bible study is avoided and Bible class time is spent daydreaming. Similarly, others receive the word with apathy. They listen and learn, but no significant change is observed in their lives. Bible lessons are quickly forgotten because no thought is given to personal application. Thus, no preparation is made for eternity.

“Readiness of mind” is an attitude that pleases God and bears fruit in our lives, because we will search and apply the Scriptures. Do you have a ready mind?

(The Knollwood Reminder, Knollwood church of Christ; May 22, 2011)

DILIGENCE

Mark Mayberry

Introduction

Proverbs 4:23 says, “Watch over your heart with all *diligence*, for from it flow the springs of life” (NASB95). The noun “diligence” is defined as “(1) earnest and persistent application to an undertaking; steady effort; assiduity; (2) attentive care; heedfulness.”ⁱ The adjective “diligent” describes that which is “marked by persevering, painstaking effort.”ⁱⁱ Diligence is vitally important, regardless of one’s station in life. It impacts both the spiritual and secular realms. However, diligence doesn’t occur automatically: this quality must be cultivated and nurtured.

In Serving God

First, we must diligently seek to know the truth. Moses affirmed the importance of this principle (Deuteronomy 4:9; 6:5-9), as did also the wise man Solomon (Proverbs 8:12-17). In like manner, the New Testament admonishes us to diligently seek God’s approval regarding how we handle the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).

Abigail Adams once rightly said, “Learning is not attained by chance, it must be sought for with ardor and attended to with diligence.”ⁱⁱⁱ If this principle is true for secular education, of how much greater importance is it to our spiritual development? Yet, it is not enough for one to simply know the truth, he must do the will of the Father (Matthew 7:21-27; John 13:17). In the Old Testament, Moses said abundant blessings belong to those who diligently obey the Lord (Deuteronomy 6:16-19; 28:1-14). In the New Testament, Peter describes the spiritual riches belonging to those who appropriate God’s word to their lives (2 Peter 1:5-11). Lethargic, half-hearted service will not suffice; diligence is the key (vs. 5 & 10).

In Serving Brethren

We must diligently serve our brothers and sisters in Christ. Titus, and an unnamed associate, are examples in this regard (2 Corinthians 8:16-24). The widow who is worthy of permanent support from the church treasury also manifests this trait (1 Timothy 5:9-10). As an apostle, an elder and preacher of the gospel, Peter felt the weight of his evangelistic responsibility (2 Peter 1:12-15). Elders carry the same burden (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).

We also must partake of this spirit, diligently serving one another (Romans 12:6-13, esp. vs. 8 & 11), and diligently striving to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:1-6, esp. vs. 3). Nevertheless, one cannot rest upon past

accomplishments (1 John 3:17-18). Deeds of the past, however commendable, must be matched by present performance (Titus 3:13-14).

In Serving Family

We must diligently serve our family. Husbands and wives must fulfill their various responsibilities (Ephesians 5:22-33). So also must parents and children (Ephesians 6:1-4). Diligence should be required of children (Proverbs 13:24). Slothful habits developed in childhood will often ossify as one becomes an adult. In contrast, industriousness learned in youth will contribute to future success. Parents should establish standards, assign chores, and expect results. Reward obedient children by entrusting them with greater responsibility (Matthew 25:21; Luke 16:10).

In Serving Others

We must diligently apply ourselves to our service to others. As Cervantes once said, “Diligence is the mother of good fortune.”^{iv} The Wisdom Literature repeatedly counsels diligence in one’s secular endeavors (Proverbs 10:4-5; 12:24, 27; 13:4; 21:5). In a similar vein, the apostle Paul affirms that we should manifest a hearty and enthusiastic spirit, whatever our life’s work (Ephesians 6:5-8; Colossians 3:23-24).

Conclusion

As you can see, diligence is a vital concept. Spiritual sluggishness will not see us through to the end; only those who diligently serve God will inherit the promised reward (Hebrews 4:11; 6:9-12, esp. vs. 11). However, we must not make the fatal mistake of neglecting this upright quality until it is too late (Proverbs 1:22-31, esp. vs. 28). Will you not obey God while there is time and opportunity: “Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless” (2 Peter 3:14)?

ⁱ *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition*, (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1992), s.v. “Diligence.”

ⁱⁱ *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition*, (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1992), s.v. “Diligently.”

ⁱⁱⁱ Abigail Adams, *Letter to John Quincy Adams* [May 8, 1780], quoted in *Bartlett’s Familiar Quotations*, 15th ed., (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1980), p. 393:2.

^{iv} Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, quoted in *Bartlett’s Familiar Quotations*, 15th ed., (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1980), p. 170:34.