

SEVEN

Church at Philadelphia

Scriptures: Rev. 3:7-13; 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Acts 14:27; Col. 4:2-3; 2 Tim. 3:12; 4:7-8.

1. Read Rev. 3:7-13. If you were the pastor of the Philadelphian church, how might you have felt when this letter dropped through your letterbox? [Note: this was a church of 'little strength' (v8) —it was not impressive and influential, like Ephesus and Sardis, both of which had already been criticised by Jesus]
2. In which way does Jesus' introduction of himself offer comfort to the church at Philadelphia (or indeed to any other church)?
3. Jesus had placed an open door before the church at Philadelphia (v8). What might this refer to? In which way would the concept of an open door have been especially relevant to the Philadelphians?
4. Paul talks about open and closed doors (**Open**—1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:2-3; Acts 14:27; **Closed & Open** —Acts 16:6-9). What doors of evangelistic opportunity has the Lord opened for you? What doors has the Lord closed for you— doors that maybe you wanted to walk through, yet were glad that the Lord closed them?
5. In which ways do you find John Lancaster's words helpful? What are your experiences of this?

"How often we slam our shoulders against closed doors in determined but vain efforts to achieve our own evangelistic programmes and only succeed in bruising ourselves! How often with the bent wire of our own ingenuity we try to pick locks that Christ has closed! When will learn that He is the Director of evangelism and the Lord of the Harvest?"

6. Steve said, "The church at Philadelphia had 'little strength'. . . but they had a great God. A little church with faith in a big God is far more useful than a big church with little faith!" Thoughts? The church was small and insignificant, but what things did it have in its favour?
7. "What I am today was shaped by what I did yesterday. Who I become tomorrow will be informed by what I do today and which OPEN DOORS I am prepared to faithfully walk through." Thoughts?