St Barnabas Cray

Open Doors: Dream Big, Stay Small

Weekly Devotional Journey

Monday - The Open Door No One Can Shut

Morning Devotion

Today's Verse

These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. (Revelation 3:7-8 NIV)

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Devotional Thought

There is something profoundly humbling about standing before a gigantic oak door as a tiny figure. Andy Hawthorne, whose mission amongst some of Britain's toughest estates has long inspired many, described exactly that image when he was praying at the start of a year — a vast door, a small man, and a quiet word from God: 'I'm putting an open door in front of you that no one can shut.' What makes this image so arresting is not the size of the door, but the smallness of the one standing before it. And yet, that is precisely the point.

The church at Philadelphia, to whom Jesus speaks these words in Revelation 3, was not impressive by any worldly measure. It lacked power, resources, and influence. And yet Jesus says to them — not to the large, celebrated, well-resourced congregation, but to this small, faithful community — 'I have placed before you an open door.' The door is not earned by strength. It is given by the One who holds the key of David, the One whose authority is absolute and whose purposes cannot be thwarted.

This is a deeply liberating truth for anyone who has ever felt that they are too small, too under-resourced, or too ordinary to make a difference. God does not open doors because of our capacity. He opens them because of his faithfulness and because of ours. The commendation he gives this church is not 'you have been mighty' but 'you have kept my word and have not denied my name.' Faithfulness, not power, is what unlocks the door.

As you begin this week, consider where God may be placing an open door before you — in your neighbourhood, your workplace, your family. You may feel small. You may feel you have little to offer. But the one who holds the key is inviting you to step through, trusting not in your own strength but in his. The door is already open. The question is whether we will walk through it.

Reflection Question

Where in your life do you sense God may be opening a door that you have been hesitant to walk through, and what is holding you back?

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From Sunday's Sermon

"Andy Hawthorne told how he was praying at the start of the year and he saw a picture of a gigantic oak door and at the bottom was a tiny little man and he knew that man was himself and he felt God say to him, 'I'm putting an open door in front of you that no one can shut.'"

Today's Application

This morning, take ten minutes to sit quietly before God and ask him to show you one door he may be opening in your life right now. It might be a conversation you have been avoiding, a relationship you have been neglecting, or an act of service you have been putting off. Write it down. Do not overthink whether you are qualified or capable enough — that is not the question. The question is whether you are willing to be faithful. Then, as a concrete act of trust, take one small step towards that open door today. Send the message, make the phone call, knock on the neighbour's door, or simply pray specifically for that person or situation by name. Faithfulness begins with one small, obedient step.

Morning Prayer

Lord Jesus, you hold the key of David, and what you open no one can shut. I confess that I so often measure opportunity by my own strength and capacity, and when I find both lacking, I hold back. Forgive me for the doors I have left unwalked-through out of fear or self-doubt. Today, help me to see the open doors you have placed before me — in my home, my street, my workplace — and give me the courage to step through them. I do not need great strength; I need faithful obedience. May I keep your word and not deny your name, however small and ordinary my steps may seem. Amen.

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Evening Devotion

Reviewing the Day at the Threshold

Evening Reflection

As this Monday draws to a close, it is worth pausing to look back over the hours that have passed. Did you notice any open doors today — moments where God seemed to be inviting you into something, a conversation that opened unexpectedly, a need that presented itself, a nudge towards someone you would not normally approach? Sometimes we only recognise the open doors in retrospect, when the busyness of the day settles and we can see more clearly.

The church at Philadelphia kept going not because every day felt significant, but because they were faithful in the ordinary rhythm of discipleship. Faithfulness is rarely dramatic. It is mostly quiet, mostly small, and mostly unremarkable to outside observers. And yet God sees every act of faithful obedience. He says, 'I know your deeds.' Nothing is hidden from him. Nothing is wasted.

Rest tonight in the knowledge that the God who opens doors is also the God who walks through them with you. You are not alone in your mission. He goes before you, and he remains beside you. Tomorrow there will be more opportunities. For now, rest.

Evening Reflection

Looking back over today, where did you sense God's presence or an invitation that you may have missed or responded to?

Evening Prayer

Father, thank you for this day and for your faithfulness in it. Where I walked through open doors, give me gratitude. Where I hesitated or missed the moment, give me grace and another chance. As I rest tonight, remind me that you hold the key — and that tomorrow's doors are already in your hands. Amen.

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Tuesday - Dream Big, Stay Small: The Way of Relational Mission

Morning Devotion

Today's Verse

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.' (Luke 10:1-3 NIV)

Devotional Thought

There is a phrase from the sermon that deserves to be written on the walls of every church: 'Dream big, but stay small.' It sounds almost paradoxical, and perhaps that is why it is so easily missed. We are drawn to one or the other — either grand visions that lose touch with people, or a comfortable smallness that never dares to believe God for anything beyond the familiar. But Jesus holds both together, and his sending of the seventy-two is a masterclass in how.

The harvest is plentiful — that is the big dream. God's mission is vast, urgent, and full of possibility. The needs of the world are enormous. The longing of human hearts for meaning, belonging, and forgiveness is immeasurable. We should never shrink our vision of what God can do. But then notice how Jesus sends them: two by two, into specific towns, to specific houses, to sit at specific tables. 'When you enter a house, stay there.' The big mission is carried out through small, relational, unhurried presence.

This is the genius of the gospel's advance throughout history. It does not primarily spread through programmes or platforms, but through people — ordinary people who learn someone's name, who sit at someone's table, who notice who is on their own and choose to stay rather than move on. The seventy-two were sent with almost nothing — no bag, no purse, no extra sandals. Their resource was not material but relational and spiritual: the peace of Christ they carried with them and the power of the kingdom they announced.

The challenge for us today is to resist the twin temptations of grandiosity and smallness. God invites us into a mission that is genuinely big in its scope and genuinely intimate in its method. Learn one person's name today. Sit at one table. Offer one word of peace. That is how the harvest comes in.

Reflection Question

In what ways might you be tempted either to dream without staying grounded in real relationships, or to stay comfortable without daring to believe God for something bigger?

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From Sunday's Sermon

"Dream big because God is big. His mission is big. The needs are big. But we stay small by getting to know people, getting to know what the issues are, and praying one person at a time for what's ahead."

Today's Application

Today, identify one person in your life who does not yet know Jesus — a neighbour, a colleague, a family member, a regular face at the school gate or the local shop. Write their name down. Commit to praying for them by name every day this week. Then take one small, relational step towards them: a greeting, a question about how they are doing, an offer of help with something practical. Do not aim to share the gospel in its entirety today. Aim simply to be present, to listen, and to let your peace rest on them. Mission begins not with a programme but with a person. Let this be your person this week.

Morning Prayer

Lord of the harvest, I confess that I sometimes wait for the perfect moment, the perfect words, or the perfect opportunity before I step out in mission. But you sent your disciples with almost nothing and trusted that your presence would be enough. Today, help me to dream of what you can do while staying small enough to be truly present with the person in front of me. Give me eyes to see who you are placing in my path, and the courage to stay rather than move on. May your peace rest on every house I enter today. Amen.

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Evening Devotion

The Table You Sat At Today

Evening Reflection

Jesus told his disciples, 'When you enter a house, stay there.' There is something quietly radical about that instruction. In a culture of constant movement, endless options, and perpetual busyness, staying is a countercultural act. To stay is to say: this person matters. This conversation is worth more than my schedule. I am not in a hurry to be somewhere else.

As you reflect on Tuesday, consider the tables you sat at — literally or metaphorically. Were there moments when you chose to stay rather than move on? Were there conversations you lingered in, or ones you cut short? Were there people who needed your unhurried presence and found it, or found you distracted?

Relational mission is built on the accumulation of small moments of genuine presence. It rarely feels significant in the moment. But over time, those moments of staying become the soil in which trust grows and the gospel takes root. The person whose name you prayed this morning — did you think of them again today? Did you take that one small step? Even if you did not, tomorrow is another opportunity. God's mission moves at the pace of relationship, and he is patient.

Evening Reflection

Was there a moment today when you chose to stay and be present with someone, and what did that feel like?

Evening Prayer

Jesus, you are the one who stays. You did not pass by the lonely or the overlooked but stopped, asked questions, and sat at tables with people others avoided. Teach me to stay. Forgive me for the times I rushed past people today. As I sleep, may your peace settle in me, ready to be carried out again tomorrow. Amen.

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Wednesday - Five Loaves in God's Hands: The Miracle of Offered Smallness

Morning Devotion

Today's Verse

Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to distribute to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. (Luke 9:16-17 NIV)

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Devotional Thought

There is a moment in Luke 9 that must have felt utterly absurd to the disciples. Thousands of people. One evening. Five loaves and two fish. And Jesus says to his bewildered followers: 'You give them something to eat.' The disciples' response is entirely understandable — 'We have no more than five loaves and two fish — unless we go and buy food for all this crowd.' They are doing the maths. The maths does not work. And yet, what happens next is one of the most profound pictures of how God's kingdom operates: Jesus takes what little they have, gives thanks, breaks it, and distributes it. And it is more than enough.

This is not merely a story about a miraculous multiplication of bread. It is a theology of offered smallness. The miracle does not begin with abundance; it begins with surrender. The disciples had to place what little they had into Jesus's hands before anything could happen. And that act of surrender — of handing over the insufficient, the inadequate, the embarrassingly small — is where the miracle begins.

The Community Fridge described in the sermon is a beautiful contemporary echo of this story. Nobody knew where to start. The resources were modest. And yet, week after week, something like feeding the five thousand took place — not just in the distribution of food, but in the gathering of people, the offering of hospitality, and the growth of a community where guests became brothers and sisters in Christ.

What do you have in your hands today? It may feel laughably small — a little time, a modest gift, a limited skill, a fragile faith. But Jesus does not ask for much. He asks for what you have. When you place it in his hands, give thanks for it, and let him break and distribute it, you will be astonished at what he can do. The question is never 'Is it enough?' The question is always 'Will I give it?'

Reflection Question

What is the 'five loaves' in your life right now — the small, seemingly insufficient thing that you have been hesitant to offer to God?

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From Sunday's Sermon

"We didn't know where to start, but because of Transform Bromley Borough and wonderful volunteers, we've been able to make so much more of so little. And that's a bit of a picture of how we put what little we've got into God's hands, and he gives thanks, he breaks it and gives it out."

Today's Application

Today, take a practical inventory of what you have to offer. This is not an exercise in self-promotion but in honest, humble stewardship. Consider your time, your home, your skills, your relationships, your money, and your faith. Identify one thing — however small — that you have been withholding from God's mission, perhaps out of fear that it is not enough. Then make a specific, concrete decision to offer it. This might mean volunteering for something at church, inviting someone to your home for a meal, offering a skill you have been keeping to yourself, or giving financially to something you have been putting off. Write it down and take the first step today. Remember: Jesus does not need your abundance. He needs your willingness.

Morning Prayer

Lord Jesus, I confess that I often wait until I feel I have enough before I offer anything. I want to give from strength, not from dependence. But you took five loaves and fed a multitude. Today, I place what little I have into your hands — my time, my gifts, my faith, my willingness. Give thanks for it, break it, and distribute it as only you can. May what feels embarrassingly small in my hands become more than enough in yours. Amen.

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Evening Devotion

Broken and Given: Seeing the Communion in the Ordinary

Evening Reflection

Every time we share in Holy Communion, we re-enact the miracle of the loaves. Bread is taken, thanks are given, it is broken, and it is shared. The pattern is always the same. And it is the same pattern by which God works through ordinary human lives: he takes us, gives thanks for us, breaks us open through the experiences of life, and distributes us into the world for others.

The breaking is not incidental. It is essential. A loaf that is never broken cannot be shared. And so the difficulties, the disappointments, the moments of vulnerability and weakness that we experience are not signs that God has forgotten us. They may be precisely the moments when he is preparing us to be given to others in ways that whole, unbroken, self-sufficient people never could be.

As Wednesday draws to a close, sit with the image of the broken bread. Where have you felt broken today — in your patience, your confidence, your energy, your relationships? Offer that brokenness to Jesus. It is not wasted. In his hands, even broken things become the means of feeding others. He is still giving thanks for you.

Evening Reflection

Where did you feel insufficient or broken today, and can you offer that to God as something he can use rather than something to be ashamed of?

Evening Prayer

Father, thank you that you take what is broken and make it a gift. I offer you the places where I felt small or inadequate today. Give thanks for me even in my brokenness. Break me open in ways that allow your grace to reach others through me. And let me rest tonight in the knowledge that I am held in your hands. Amen.

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Thursday - Stretch the Tent, Deepen the Pegs: Growth That Endures

Morning Devotion

Today's Verse

Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes. For you will spread out to the right and to the left; your descendants will dispossess nations and settle in their desolate cities. (Isaiah 54:2-3 NIV)

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Devotional Thought

Anyone who has ever camped in a British summer will appreciate the practical wisdom of this verse from Isaiah 54. A tent with wide curtains but shallow pegs will not survive the first storm. And a tent with deep pegs but narrow curtains can shelter only a few. The vision God gives in Isaiah 54 is for both: stretch wide and go deep. More room for more people, and deeper roots to sustain it.

This image, which God laid on Jen's heart for the church community described in the sermon, captures one of the most important tensions in Christian community life. There is always a temptation to choose between the two — to focus on growth and breadth at the expense of depth and rootedness, or to focus so intently on depth and internal community that we forget there is a world outside the tent that needs to come in. But Isaiah holds them together, and so must we.

Stretching the curtains wide means making room — genuinely making room — for people who are different from us, people who are messy, people who are not yet fully formed in faith, people who might make us uncomfortable. It means keeping the table big, keeping the kettle on, and keeping the door open. It means resisting the slow drift towards comfortable homogeneity that threatens every church community.

But strengthening the pegs means going deeper in prayer, deeper in Scripture, deeper in honest community, deeper in dependence on God. Wide curtains with weak pegs means the tent blows away — mission without roots burns out. Strong pegs with no stretching leaves a tiny tent covering only a few — depth without outreach becomes spiritual self-indulgence.

Today, ask yourself honestly: which side of this tension do you lean towards? Are you a stretcher who needs to go deeper? Or are you a digger who needs to stretch wider? Both movements are essential, and both are an act of faith.

Reflection Question

Which do you find more natural — stretching outward to welcome new people, or deepening inward through prayer and spiritual formation — and what might God be calling you to develop in the other direction?

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From Sunday's Sermon

"That verse asks us for two things together: to stretch the curtains wide so there's more room for more people or different people, but also to strengthen the pegs so that we go deeper — deeper into God's love, deeper into prayer. Because with wide curtains but weak pegs we know tents blow away. But strong pegs with no stretching just leaves a tiny tent only covering just a few, and that prayerless mission burns you out."

Today's Application

Today, take a deliberate step in whichever direction is harder for you. If you tend towards busyness and outreach, carve out thirty minutes of unhurried prayer — not for anything specific, just to be with God and let your roots go deeper. If you tend towards the interior life of faith and find outreach uncomfortable, identify one specific person outside your usual circle and take one step towards them: an invitation, a conversation, a message. Then consider your church community: is there someone new or on the margins whom you could intentionally welcome this week? Stretching the tent is not an abstract vision — it begins with one specific, welcoming act towards one specific person.

Morning Prayer

Lord, you call me to both — to stretch wide and to go deep. I confess that I find one easier than the other, and I tend to neglect the harder path. Today, strengthen the pegs of my prayer life and my rootedness in you. And stretch the curtains of my welcome, my courage, and my willingness to make room for those who are different from me. May my community be a tent wide enough for many and deep enough to weather every storm. Amen.

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Evening Devotion

The Tent That Held Through the Storm

Evening Reflection

The sermon recalls with warmth and humour the experience of camping with plastic marquees from eBay — missing poles, snapping straps, and busted tiles. And yet, despite the imperfections and the storms, young people and leaders met with God powerfully in those moments. The tent was not perfect. The conditions were not ideal. But God showed up anyway.

This is deeply encouraging for those of us who feel that our faith community, our family, or our personal spiritual life is held together with metaphorical cable ties and borrowed poles. We do not need to have it all perfectly assembled before God can work. He works through the imperfect, the improvised, and the occasionally chaotic. What matters is that we keep stretching and keep pegging — keep making room and keep going deeper — even when the tent looks a little rough around the edges.

As Thursday evening settles around you, reflect on where God showed up today in the imperfect and the ordinary. Was there a moment of unexpected grace, a conversation that surprised you, a glimpse of something bigger than your circumstances? The tent does not need to be perfect. It just needs to be open.

Evening Reflection

Where did you glimpse God's faithfulness today in something imperfect, ordinary, or unexpected?

Evening Prayer

Father, thank you that you do not wait for perfect conditions before you show up. You meet us in leaky tents and borrowed marquees, in messy conversations and imperfect communities. Tonight I thank you for the imperfect beauty of the life of faith. Keep me stretching. Keep me deepening. And keep me trusting that you are at work even when I cannot see it clearly. Amen.

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Friday - Joy-Fuelled Mission: The God Who Dances Over You

Morning Devotion

Today's Verse

The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing. (Zephaniah 3:17 NIV)

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Devotional Thought

There is a Hebrew word in Zephaniah 3:17 that is almost too wonderful to contain in a single translation. When the text says God will 'rejoice over you with singing,' the original language pictures something more exuberant than a quiet hymn — it is the image of God spinning with joy, leaping, dancing, unable to contain his delight. As the sermon notes, the Hebrew term pictures God doing a little jig, or moshing, or break dancing — whatever kind of dancing floats your boat. It is an astonishing image: the Creator of the universe, the Holy One of Israel, breaking into dance because of you.

This is not a picture of a reluctant God who tolerates his people. This is a picture of a God who is genuinely, exuberantly, unreservedly glad when his people follow him and carry his love to others. And this joy is not merely God's emotional response — it is the fuel that sustains the whole mission. When Jesus sent out the seventy-two and they returned with stories of lives changed and people set free, Luke tells us that Jesus was 'full of joy through the Holy Spirit.' Mission and joy are inseparable in the kingdom of God.

This matters enormously for how we approach the Christian life. If our faith feels like a duty, a burden, or a performance, we will eventually run dry. But if we are rooted in the knowledge that God delights in us — not because we have been impressive, but because we are his — then joy becomes the natural overflow of that security. And joy is contagious. When people see ordinary believers who are genuinely glad to be with Jesus and glad to be with each other, it causes them to wonder why. That wondering is the beginning of a question. That question is the beginning of a conversation. That conversation is the beginning of a life transformed.

Today, let the joy of the Lord be your strength — not a performance of happiness, but a deep, settled gladness rooted in the knowledge that you are beloved, and that the God who made you is dancing over you right now.

Reflection Question

What would change in your daily life and your relationships if you genuinely believed that God rejoices over you with singing — not when you perform well, but simply because you are his?

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From Sunday's Sermon

"When people see ordinary people like them who are glad to be with Jesus but glad to be with each other too, then that causes them to wonder why. And Jesus was full of joy through the Holy Spirit. That is what I believe God has felt about St Barnabas, when you have been following Jesus and letting others know of his love for them. And he is glad of you."

Today's Application

Today, begin by spending five minutes simply receiving God's delight over you. This is not a time for confession or petition — just sit quietly and let the truth of Zephaniah 3:17 settle into your heart. God is rejoicing over you. Then carry that joy outward. Consider how you might express genuine gladness to the people around you today — not a forced cheerfulness, but the authentic warmth of someone who knows they are loved. Look for one opportunity to share something of that joy with another person: a word of encouragement, a shared laugh, an expression of gratitude, an invitation to something good. Joy in mission is not an add-on; it is the engine. Let it run freely today.

Morning Prayer

Lord God, I can barely comprehend it — that you, the Mighty Warrior, the Holy One, would rejoice over me with singing. But I choose to believe it today, not because I feel worthy of it, but because you have said it and you do not lie. Let this joy be the foundation of everything I do today. Where I have been heavy, lift me. Where I have been joyless in my faith, renew me. And may the gladness that comes from knowing you overflow into every conversation and every encounter, so that others begin to wonder why — and find their way to you. Amen.

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Evening Devotion

Keep the Door Open, Keep the Kettle On

Evening Reflection

As this week draws to a close, it is worth gathering together the threads that have been woven through these five days of reflection. An open door that no one can shut. A mission that dreams big but stays small. Five loaves placed in Jesus's hands. A tent stretched wide and pegged deep. And a God who dances over his people with joy.

These are not separate ideas — they are facets of a single, glorious vision of what it means to follow Jesus in the world. The door is open because he holds the key. The mission is relational because that is how he chose to advance his kingdom. The multiplication happens when we offer what little we have. The tent endures when we both stretch and deepen. And underneath it all, sustaining it all, is the joy of a God who is not disappointed in his people but delighted by them.

The closing words of the sermon are worth carrying into the weekend and beyond: keep the door open, keep the kettle on, keep the table big, and keep sharing bread with fellow sinners so that they can know they have a place to belong. Keep stretching the tent but keep the pegs deep. Keep showing good news by serving, and do not forget to speak Jesus — that people might know him for themselves.

This is not a complicated strategy. It is a way of life. And it begins again tomorrow.

Evening Reflection

As you look back over this week, what is the one thing God has been saying to you most clearly, and what is your response going to be?

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Evening Prayer

Father, thank you for this week — for every open door, every small step of faithfulness, every moment of offered smallness, every stretch and every deepening. As this week ends, I bring it all to you: the moments I got it right and the moments I fell short. Keep me faithful. Keep me joyful. Keep me open. And may I carry into the days ahead a heart that keeps the door open, the kettle on, and the table big — for your glory and for the sake of those who have not yet found their place at your table. Amen.

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