

# The High Calling

a bimonthly publication of The Francis Asbury Society

## The Stable Door

By Stan Key

This Christmas edition of *The High Calling* is devoted to doors. What could be more familiar than a door? Already today, I've walked through at least seven of them. But what's so special about doors? I'm so glad you asked!

The dictionary defines a door as "any movable structure used to close off the entrance to a room or building; an entranceway; a means of approach or access." Doors make it possible to move from where we are to where we want to be. And just as importantly, they make it possible for others to enter the space that we currently occupy.

The Bible has a lot to say about doors. Specifically, the Scriptures tell us about one particular door that provides access between this world where we live and that Other

World where God lives. The Celtic tradition of the church talks about "thin places."

The phrase indicates a belief in certain locations where the membrane between this world and the kingdom of Heaven is supposedly so thin that one can almost hear the voices, smell the aromas, and see the faces on the other side. While the biblical support for such notions may be small and circumstantial, there is massive textual evidence to indicate the reality of something far more significant than a "thin place." The Bible talks about a door—an

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## Won't You Come In?

By Mark Van Valin



Mark Van Valin has served as lead pastor at Spring Arbor Free Methodist Church (Michigan) since 2003. He has been married to Linda for 33 years and they have three children. The following is a transcription of a sermon preached during Fall Revival at Asbury University on September 14, 2015. Used with permission.

In the beginning, God made everything. Each part of creation had its place and its purpose. It all fit together beautifully, and everything God made was good. Though some people claim that the universe happened by chance, I simply don't have enough faith to be an atheist. Think about it; God made cocoa beans knowing that one day humans would discover cows, milk, sugar, and peanuts and learn how to mix them together. How can anyone eat a *Reese's Cup* and not believe in God?

People sometimes say, "How can I believe in God with all the suffering that is in the world?" G. K. Chesterton would respond by turning the question around. How do you explain beauty? How do you explain the fact that our eyes are equipped to perceive millions of colors? And how do you explain taste buds that help us taste the amazing flavors of various foods? How do you explain

our sexual pleasure receptors? None of that is necessary for survival. Evolutionary theory simply cannot account for the fact of pleasure and beauty.

The last thing that God made was people. The Bible says he took a lump of dirt, shaped it, and then breathed into it the breath of life. So it comes down to this: a human being is a ball of dirt with the breath of God in him! So if someone calls you a dirtball, you can calmly reply, "You're only half right."

Yes, God made humans in his own image, with a huge capacity for creativity and love. The thing we have to remember about love is that for love to be love it has to be free. We are free to accept God's love or to shake our fist and say, "Thanks, but no thanks." Genesis tells us that is exactly what we humans did. Though he made us and the world in which we live, we shook our fist at him and turned down his offer of love. The world became so full of wickedness and violence that God finally said he was sorry that he had even created people. So he decided to wipe them off the face of the earth and begin again, this

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# The King Who Knocks

By Dennis F. Kinlaw



Dennis Kinlaw is the founder of The Francis Asbury Society and a regular contributor to *The High Calling*. The following article is taken from *The Mind of Christ* (Anderson, IN: Francis Asbury Press, 1998. pp. 39–40).

**G**od loved us so much that he came and lived among us. He stooped to become a mortal man. As one of Charles Wesley’s hymns says:

*Our God, ever blest, with oxen doth rest;  
Is nursed by his creature, and hangs at the breast.  
("O Mercy Divine," 1745)*

How far God was willing to go in order to reach you and me! We don’t expect to find God among the oxen, but that’s where Jesus was. We don’t expect the sovereign God to enter this world in the form of a baby, but that’s how he came. And we don’t expect the One on whom our existence depends to be dependent on one of us, but he was. God loved us so much that he was willing to reverse our roles. He became one of us so that we might have his nature and have fellowship with him. What an awesome truth! Because it is so awesome, the Jews missed him—and so do many of us.



<http://sophias-children.com/tag/david-whyte/>

The Jews knew that the Christ would come as a king. A king enters his kingdom with a throne, a crown, a scepter, and a retinue of servants ready to do his bidding—the symbols of his power. Yet when Jesus the King of kings entered his kingdom, that is not the way he came.... Jesus “came to his own home, and his own people received him not” (John 1:11 RSV). John expands upon this image in the book of Revelation, as Jesus says, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me” (3:20).

**“Jesus came, not to deal with the Roman menace, but to see whether his people would accept him. So he knocked and he knocked... and he is knocking still.”**

I have been deeply impressed by Holman Hunt’s painting entitled *The Light of the Word*, which hangs at St. Paul’s Cathedral in London. It depicts Jesus standing at a door and knocking. Hunt shows Jesus wearing a king’s robe and priest’s garment; so he is the Intercessor-King. He wears a crown upon his head and carries a lantern in his hand; hence, the title, *The Light of the World*. But Jesus knocks at a door that has no handle, no way of opening it from his side. Greenery has grown over the door frame, suggesting it has been a very long time since that door was opened, if it ever was.

I first saw that painting when I visited London in 1955; I saw it again in 1974. When I viewed it a second time, I thought, *Nineteen years have passed, and he is still knocking*. No head of state has to knock at anyone’s door. The president of the United States does not knock at doors; someone goes before him to open them! His aides are sure that the president never gets in a situation where he can be rejected, for that would be a snub to the nation he represents. No president can afford a public image of rejection.

Yet the King of kings came into the world as One who knocks—One who is vulnerable and rejectable. The Jews did not expect that. They wanted a king who would come in power and pomp to expel the Romans from their land. Yet Jesus came, not to deal with the Roman menace, but to see whether his people would accept him. So he knocked and he knocked... and he is knocking still. ✝

# I Stand at the Door

By Sam Shoemaker



Sam Shoemaker (1893–1963) was an Episcopal priest who served for two years as a YMCA secretary in China. He was rector of Calvary Episcopal Church in New York. Fervent in his zeal for the gospel, he inspired many to make daily efforts to win others to Christ. He helped draft the original “Twelve Steps” of Alcoholics Anonymous. As an evangelist, Shoemaker knew the importance of “the door.”

I stand by the door.

I neither go too far in, nor stay too far out.

The door is the most important door in the world—  
It is the door through which men walk when they find God.

There is no use my going way inside and staying there,  
When so many are still outside and they, as much as I,  
Crave to know where the door is.

And all that so many ever find

Is only the wall where the door ought to be.

They creep along the wall like blind men,

With outstretched, groping hands,

Feeling for a door, knowing there must be a door,

Yet they never find it.

So I stand by the door.

The most tremendous thing in the world

Is for men to find that door—the door to God.

The most important thing that any man can do

Is to take hold of one of those blind, groping hands  
And put it on the latch—the latch that only clicks

And opens to the man’s own touch.

Men die outside the door, as starving beggars die  
On cold nights in cruel cities in the dead of winter.

Die for want of what is within their grasp.

They live on the other side of it—

live because they have not found it.

Nothing else matters compared to helping them find it,

And open it, and walk in, and find Him.

So I stand by the door....

I admire the people who go way in.

But I wish they would not forget how it was

Before they got in. Then they would be able to help  
The people who have not yet even found the door.

Or the people who want to run away again from God.

You can go in too deeply and stay in too long

And forget the people outside the door.

As for me, I shall take my old accustomed place,

Near enough to God to hear Him and know He is there,

But not so far from men as not to hear them,

And remember they are there too.

Where? Outside the door—

Thousands of them. Millions of them.

But—more important for me—

One of them, two of them, ten of them.

Whose hands I am intended to put on the latch.

So I shall stand by the door and wait

For those who seek it.

‘I had rather be a door-keeper

So I stand by the door. 🐾

# The Door: Jesus Christ

By Charles Spurgeon



Charles H. Spurgeon (1834–1892) was a Baptist preacher whose sermons continue to be read and loved by thousands. The following article is an excerpt from a sermon delivered at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London on June 15, 1879, based on the text “I am the door” (John 10:9).

**H**ow very condescendingly the Lord Jesus Christ set himself forth! When he speaks of himself, he is pleased to use no lofty imagery, no far-fetched metaphors. He talks of himself one day as water and another day as bread. Here in John 10:9, he deigns to call himself a door. The illustration is exceedingly simple! Who is there that will not understand it? He has selected this emblem, I think, partly that it may often come before our notice. You will not go out of this place without seeing a door. You will not get into your own house without seeing a door and when you are inside, you will not enter your bedroom without seeing a door. Doors meet your gaze almost everywhere. So our Lord Jesus Christ seems to say to you, “I will meet you wherever you are. Anywhere and everywhere, I will speak with you. I will make the door of every room in your house and the door of every cupboard preach a little sermon to you, and you shall be reminded by it that ‘I am the door.’” 🐾



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# The Door: A Biblical History

By Stan Key



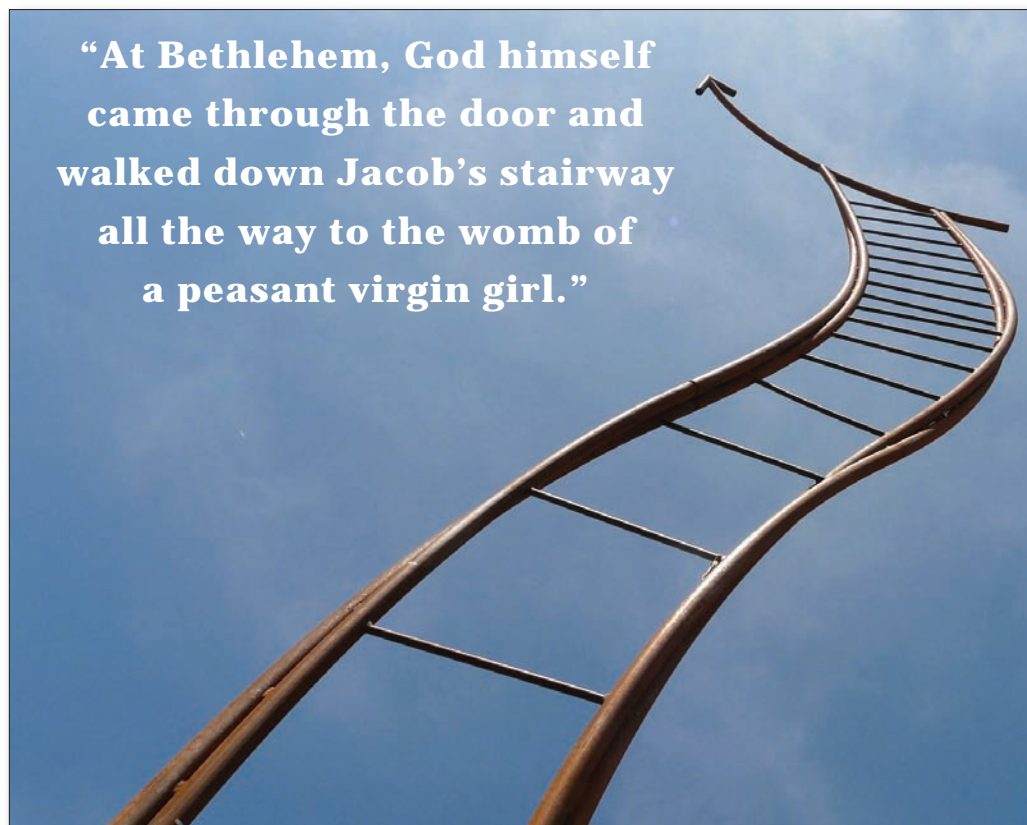
Stan Key has been president of FAS since 2014. He is married to Katy (38 years) and they have three children and four grandchildren. Before coming to FAS, Stan served for 10 years as a missionary in Europe and for 18 years as pastor of an independent church in Albany, New York.

*Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down! (Isaiah 64:1)*

**T**hinking of heaven perhaps as a curtain or a tent, Isaiah pleads with God to tear open the fabric that separates our world from his world and come down! From the beginning of time, this has been the prayer voiced by citizens of planet Earth everywhere: “Hey God! Could you make an opening in the sky and lend us a hand? We could use a little help down here.”

A survey of Biblical history reveals a series of key moments when the heavens were indeed opened and God came down. There is a door between this world and God’s world! But unless you know the gospel story, that door will remain both elusive and locked shut! Walk with me through the pages of Scripture as we find references to this wonderful door that leads us to God and his Kingdom.

*God drove out the man and at the east of the Garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life. (Gen. 3:24)*



**“At Bethlehem, God himself came through the door and walked down Jacob’s stairway all the way to the womb of a peasant virgin girl.”**

When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit in willful disobedience to God, they were expelled from Eden. The door was shut! An angel with a flaming sword stood at the entrance, forbidding access. And what God closes, no man can open. Ever since this tragedy, humans have been homesick, wandering about “east of Eden” trying to find their way home (Gen. 4:16).

*Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens...” (Gen. 11:4)*

Though God had shut the door, human arrogance was determined to find a way to reopen it! The tower of Babel was man’s first and most spectacular attempt to reach the gate of heaven (Babel in Hebrew means “gate of god.”). But their heroic attempt ended in failure, confusion, and judgment. The tower builders of Babel became an eternal reminder of the woeful inability of human efforts to find the doorway that would lead us back to God.

*And Jacob dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder [stairway] set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And the angels of God were ascending and descending on it!... And Jacob said, “How awesome is this place! This is... the gate of heaven.” (Gen. 28:12, 17)*

What the builders at Babel had failed to do, God did! There is a doorway between this world and the next and it’s open! Two-way communication between man and God is a real possibility!

*Then Elisha prayed, “O Lord, please open his eyes that he may see.” So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. (II Kgs. 6:17)*

A huge angel army had passed through the door and entered our world, ready for combat, but Elisha’s servant didn’t even know it. The real problem in life is not the absence of God but the blindness of man! Until God opens our eyes, we simply cannot see the reality of his presence all around us.

*And when Jesus was baptized... behold, the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” (Matt. 3:16-17)*

The coming of Jesus means that the door is open: the Father is speaking, the Spirit is descending, and the Son has a mission to fulfill. At Bethlehem, God himself came through the door and walked down Jacob's stairway all the way to the womb of a peasant virgin girl.

*I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.... I am the way... no one comes to the Father except through me. (John 10:9; 14:6)*

Not only does Jesus show men the door, he *is* the door! In these verses, Jesus is not just talking about what happens when we die. He is announcing the startling possibility of living in the reality of the Kingdom of Heaven now, here, today! *Through* Jesus we have "obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand" (Rom. 5:2).

*And when Jesus had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. (Acts 1:9)*

At his ascension, Jesus went back through the door to sit down at the right hand of his Father in heaven. But here's the best part: he left the door open! As often happens when a door is not completely shut, there is a draft. The wind of the Spirit, the breath of heaven, is now blowing through that door so that all who believe in the Son may be filled with the sanctifying Spirit of God.

*After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." (Rev. 4:1).*

John's revelation of the future triumph of the Lamb was the result of what he saw when he responded to the invitation to look through the open door. This door remains open and for those who look inside, the vision of the throne room of heaven gives certain hope and joyful confidence to those who yet live in the evil empire of the Great Prostitute.

*Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. (Rev. 19:11)*

The door will play a final and decisive role in human history when Jesus and the armies of heaven come thundering through it and the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever (Rev. 11:15). Then there will be a new heaven and a new earth (Rev. 21:1). In the New Jerusalem the gates of the city will never be closed (Rev. 21:25). Those outside the city remain there not because

the doors are shut but because their hearts are hard. Forever they have chosen to "love and practice falsehood" (Rev. 22:15).

Here, then, is the message of the door:

1. *There is a door.* There is a way for those in this world to connect with God and his world. If you feel lost and homesick, be of good cheer: there is a door that can lead you home.
2. *Jesus is the door.* Don't just look at him... look *through* him. To know Jesus is to know the Father and have access to the kingdom of God here, now.
3. *Christ knocks but we must open the door.* The abundant life Christ offers is freely available to all. But not everyone hears him knocking, and among those who hear, not everyone opens the door. Will you? ✠

## "Knocking"

By Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896)

*"Behold, I stand at the door and knock."  
(Revelation 3:20)*

Knocking, knocking, ever knocking?

Who is there?

'Tis a pilgrim, strange and kingly,

Never such was seen before;--

Ah, sweet soul, for such a wonder

Undo the door.

No,--that door is hard to open;

Hinges rusty, latch is broken;

Bid Him go.

Wherefore, with that knocking dreary

Scare the sleep from one so weary?

Say Him,--no....

Ah, that door! Why wilt Thou vex me,

Coming ever to perplex me?

For the key is stiffly rusty,

And the bolt is clogged and dusty;

Many-fingered ivy-vine

Seals it fast with twist and twine;

Weeds of years and years before

Choke the passage of that door....

Though forsaken and betangled,

Ivy-gnarled and weed-bejangled,

Dusty, rusty, and forgotten;--

There the pierced hand still knocketh,

And with ever patient watching,

With the sad eyes true and tender,

With the glory-crowned hair,--

Still a God is waiting there.



# Have You Knocked at Every Door?

**I**n the novel *Les Misérables*, Victor Hugo tells the story of Jean Valjean and how his life was transformed. After serving 19 years in prison for stealing some bread to feed hungry children, Valjean is a bitter man. He has nowhere to go, so he wanders aimlessly, looking for a place to stay. But everywhere he goes people are frightened by this ex-convict and refuse him entrance. One door after another is slammed in his face.

Arriving in one particular village, he tries the hotel, a restaurant, a local home and even the dog kennel, but at every door he finds only rejection. Finally, Jean slumps down on a stone bench in the center of town. It is night and he is hungry, cold and dejected.

*Just then an old woman came out of the church. She saw the man lying there in the dark and said: "What are you doing there, my friend?" He replied harshly, and with anger in his tone: "You see, my good woman, I am going to sleep."... "Upon the bench?" said she. "For nineteen years I have had a wooden mattress," said the man; "tonight I have a stone one."... "Why don't you go to the inn?" "Because I have no money." "Alas!" said Madame, "I have only four sous in my purse." "Give them then."*

*The man took the four sous, and Madame continued: "You cannot find lodging for so little in an inn. But have you tried? You cannot pass the night so.*

*You must be cold and hungry. They should give you lodging for charity." "I have knocked at every door." "Well, what then?" "Everybody has driven me away."*

*The good woman touched the man's arm and pointed out to him, on the other side of the square, a little low house beside the bishop's place. "You have knocked at every door?" she asked. "Yes." "Have you knocked at that one there?" "No." "Knock there."*

Reluctantly, Jean walked to this door he had not seen before and knocked. A priest answered the door and welcomed him inside. And it was in that house of welcoming love that Jean Valjean's redemption and transformation began. It all began with a knock at the door—the *right* door! ✠

† Victor Hugo. *Les Misérables*. Translation by Charles E. Wilbour and abridged by James K. Robinson. New York: Fawcett, 1961. pp. 10–11.

**"It all began with a knock at  
the door—the *right* door!"**

# Knock

# Knock

*The Bible states two realities that at first seem contradictory. On the one hand, Christ is the one who knocks on the door. He is seeking entrance into our lives, into our world. He knocks, but we must open the door. On the other hand, we are encouraged to knock on the door. For the blessings of that other world to penetrate this one, we must ask, seek, and knock. We knock, but Christ must open the door. This double-knock reality of the gospel is illuminated in the following two articles. William Barclay describes the Christ who knocks while E. Stanley Jones describes the Christ who opens the door—but only when we knock.*

## Jesus Knocks

By William Barclay



William Barclay (1907–1978) was a minister in the Church of Scotland and professor of divinity at the University of Glasgow. The following selection (abridged) is taken from a chapter of his commentary on the book of Revelation entitled “The Christ Who Knocks” (*The Revelation of John*. Vol 1. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959. pp. 185–87).

**I**n Revelation 3:20, we have one of the most famous pictures of Jesus in the whole New Testament. “Behold,” says the Risen Christ, “I am standing at the door and knocking.” This picture has been derived from two different sources.

It has been taken as a warning that the end is near, and that the coming of Christ is at hand. The Christian must be like the man who is ready to open whenever he hears his Lord knocking (Luke 12:36). When the signs come,

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## We Knock

By E. Stanley Jones



E. Stanley Jones (1884–1973), as a Methodist missionary to India, became an evangelist with a world-wide impact. A prolific writer, the following selection (abridged) is taken from his book entitled *The Christ of the Mount: A Working Philosophy of Life* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1931. pp. 277–280).

**J**esus says, “Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened unto you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened” (Matt. 7:7–8). Never was such *carte blanche* given to human need.

Ask, seek, knock—the first letters of these three words spell “ask.” They all mean the same thing, yet there are degrees of intensity in the words Jesus uses. Some ask,

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the Christian will know that the [Lord] is near, even at the doors (Mark 13:29; Matt. 24:33). The Christian must live well and live in love because the judge is standing at the door (James 5:9).

We cannot say that meaning is impossible, and yet it does not seem to fit the context, for the whole atmosphere of the passage is not so much warning and threat as it is yearning and love. It is much better to take this saying of Christ as expressing the appeal of the lover of the souls of men. The origin of the passage is much more likely to be in the tenderest of all passages in *Solomon's Song* when the lover stands at the door of his beloved and pleads with her to open to him. "It is the voice of my beloved that knocks saying, 'Open to me my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled'" (*Solomon's Song* 5:2-6). Here is Christ the lover knocking at the door of the hearts of men. And in this picture we see certain great truths of the Christian religion.

We see the pleading of Christ. No other religion has the vision of a seeking God. The National Christian Council of Japan, in a document which sought to set out the distinctive difference of Christianity from all other religions, found that difference in "man not seeking God, but God taking the initiative in seeking man."

We see the offer of Christ: "I will come in and sup with him." The word translated sup is *deipnein*, and its corresponding noun is *deipnon*. The word is very significant. This was the evening meal, the main meal of the day, where people lingered and sat long and talked over the day, for the work was done. There was time now for unlimited and unhurried fellowship together. It was the *deipnon* that Christ would share with the man who answered his knock.

We see human responsibility. Christ knocks; a man can answer or refuse to answer that knock. Christ does not break in; he must be invited in. Jesus Christ will never force himself on any man; he must be an invited guest. Christ pleads, Christ offers, but it is all to no avail if a man will not open the door and bid him enter. 🌿



**"Some ask, fewer seek, and fewer still knock."**

fewer seek, and fewer still knock. I may ask about a man, and that is one degree of intensity; when I seek out the road to his house, it is another; but it is still another when I stand at his door and knock to be admitted to his presence. At the knocking stage, I am right up against the problem and there I press my demand for immediate fulfillment. In trying to link up with the Spirit's resources, some of us ask, rather feebly in most cases, and leave it at that. Others seek with more or less spiritual intensity, but stop short. Only those who come face-to-face with the matter and knock, and insist upon knocking until something happens, ever find the resources of God thrown open to them.

You may say, "It is not true that everyone that asks receives, for we ask many things of God and we do not receive." Jesus said, "He that asks receives"—not necessarily what he asks; but he receives, if not the thing asked for, then something better, namely, the patience of character that trusts where it cannot see.

**God sometimes says "No" in order to say a higher "Yes."**

A little girl in her prayers asked God for something that was beyond the purchasing power of her father. After some days he felt that he should see if her faith had been hurt by no answer from God. So he said to her, "God hasn't answered your prayers, has he?" "Oh, yes he has, Daddy. He answered 'No.'" "No" is an answer, sometimes the best answer that God can give, for he says "No" in order to say a higher "Yes."

But this being compelled to say "No" to us is only in the realm of the material. There is one realm in which God does not say "No"—the realm of finding the Spirit. Here everything is open—always! Here we can ask, seek, and knock with real assurance. In the tenderest words that ever fell from lips, Jesus draws the parallel between the human father and the divine, ending with this great climax: "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:13). Although you are "evil"—and he puts all in that category—yet you "know how to give good gifts." It is not merely a spasm of kindness, it is a groove cut into your very natures. Then "how much more" will your heavenly Father, in whose nature is no evil, give the Holy Spirit to his children?

The perfect God opens to us the resources of his own nature for realizing that perfection being demanded of us in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:48). This is not a law—it is a gospel! The only thing that keeps us from perfection is our own imperfect response to this offer. 🌿



time with a man named Noah, who was righteous and walked with God.

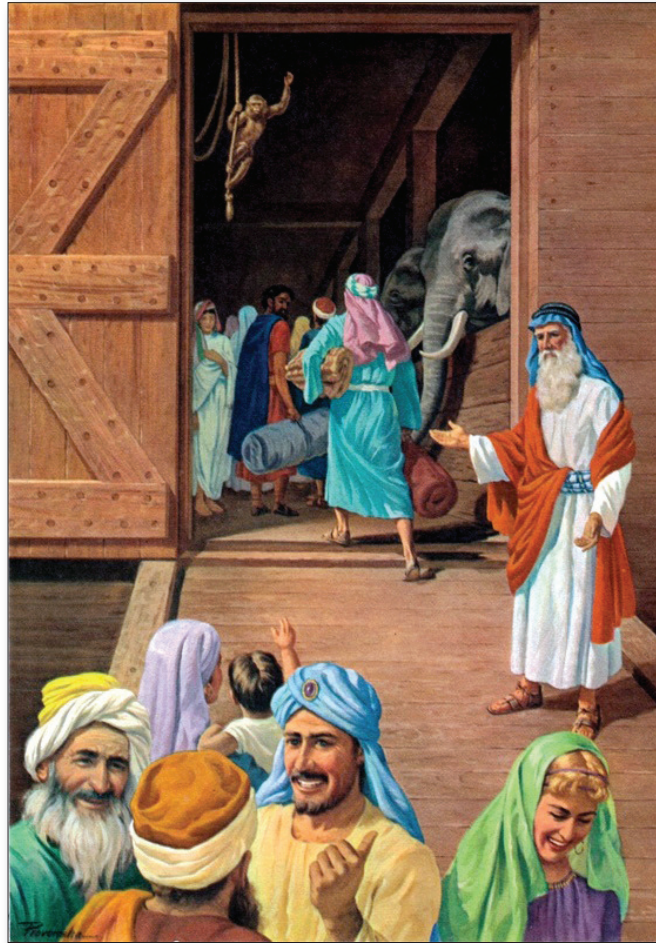
“Noah, I am going to destroy the earth,” God said. “Build a big boat because I am going to save you and your family.” Noah began working on the boat when he was 500 years old. It was the size of one-and-a-half football fields. “What are you doing, Noah?” his neighbors must have asked. “I’m building an ark,” he replied. “Right! What’s an ark?” For those who would listen, Noah explained that a great flood was coming upon the world because of human sin and violence. He would hammer and preach, preach and hammer; then he would invite people to repent and join him. “Come, there’s room in the ark for you too.” But nobody took him up on the offer.

God gave Noah specific instructions about cutting a door in the ark. When the rain began, Noah and his family went through that door into safety. I think the door remained open for a long time. As the rain continued, those on the outside must have paused to consider what they should do. Perhaps some believed Noah’s message in their heads but never took the steps necessary to go inside.

God himself finally shut the door (Gen. 7:16). As the flood waters rose, everyone’s attention must have been on that boat and, specifically, on that door! People soon were tripping over one another trying desperately to reach it. But it was too late.

When the flood waters finally receded, Noah and his descendants repopulated the earth. But once again, the world was soon filled with sin and violence. Because God

had vowed never again to destroy the earth with a flood, people wondered how God would respond this time. What would he do? The Bible tells us that in the fullness of time, God loved the world so much that he sent, not a flood of destruction, but a flood of grace! He sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, to earth to live and walk among us. He lived well, loved well, and obeyed perfectly. But once again, men and women, in their freedom, shook their fists at God and put his son to death.



The evening before he gave his life for the sins of the world, Jesus looked at his disciples and said: “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?” (John 14:1–2). That’s wedding language! In that day, when a young man found the woman he wanted to marry, he would go and build a house. When he finished, there would be a wedding, and then he would take her to their new home. When Jesus said he was going to prepare a place for his disciples, he was actually proposing to them!

The disciples were amazed. A wedding? A new home? But when? How? Jesus continued: “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going” (John 14:3–4). Completely befuddled, Thomas asked him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going. How can we know the way?” (John 14:5). Jesus’ response is one of the most significant things he ever said: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). In other words, Jesus himself is the door!

Everyone is searching for fulfillment in life. They are looking for the way: the way out, the way in, the way through. Jesus is the way. He is the truth. He is the life. Jesus is the door. From the outside perhaps, there is nothing spectacular about that door. It looks so ordinary and normal. Maybe you’ve never even noticed it before. But when the storm comes, then you, like everyone else, will be frantically looking for the door. You will be looking for *him*! Why wait for the storm when you can decide now, today? Why wait until it’s too late? When God shuts the door, no one can open it. But for today, the door is still open! Won’t you come in? ✠

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# The Wicket Gate

By John Bunyan



John Bunyan (1628–1688) was a Puritan writer and preacher best known for his classic work, *Pilgrim's Progress*, in which he describes the journey of a pilgrim from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. One of the most important moments on his journey was when Christian came to the wicket gate. The following (amended) text tells what happened next.<sup>†</sup>

**I**n the process of time, Christian reached the Gate, over which was written, “Knock and the door will be opened to you.” So he knocked several times. At last a serious-looking person came to the Gate. His name was Goodwill, and he asked, “Who’s there, and where have you come from? What do you want?”

Christian replied, “I’m a poor burdened sinner. I’ve come from the City of Destruction, but I’m going to Mount Zion so I can be delivered from the wrath to come. Sir, since I’ve been informed the way there is through this Gate, I’d like to know if you’re willing to let me in.” Goodwill then said, “I’m willing with all my heart.” And with that he opened the Gate.

As Christian was stepping in, Goodwill reached out and pulled him inside. Then Christian asked, “Why did you do that?” Goodwill said, “A short distance from this Gate stands a strong castle of which Beelzebub is the ruler. From there, both he and those with him shoot arrows at those who come up to this Gate, hoping they’ll die before they can enter in. “I rejoice and tremble,” said Christian.

So after Christian entered in, the man of the Gate asked him who directed him there, and Christian answered, “Evangelist directed me to come here and knock, as I did, Sir. He said you would tell me what I must do.”

“An open door has been placed before you, and no one can shut it,” said Goodwill. “But why did you come alone?” “Because none of my neighbors saw their danger as I saw mine,” answered Christian. “Did any of them know you were coming?” Goodwill asked. “Yes,” said Christian, “my wife and children saw me first and called after me to turn back. Also, some of my neighbors stood crying and calling after me to return, but I put my fingers in my ears and continued on my way... But now here I am, certainly more fit for death than to stand talking with you like this, Sir. But, oh, what a privilege this is to me to be admitted entrance here!”

Goodwill then said, “In spite of everything people have done before they come here, we make no objections against anyone. No one will ever be driven away. Therefore, Christian, travel awhile with me, and I’ll teach you

about the way you must go. Look in front of you. Do you see that Narrow Road? That is the way you must go. It was constructed by the Patriarchs, Prophets, Christ, and His Apostles; and it is as straight as a ruler can make it. This is the way you must go.”

“But,” asked Christian, “are there any turns or twists through which a stranger might lose his way?” “Yes,” answered Goodwill, “there are many paths adjacent to this one, and they are crooked and wide; but you can distinguish the right one from the wrong one because only the right one is straight and narrow.”

Then in my dream I saw that Christian asked him further if he could help him remove the burden from his back, for as yet he had not gotten rid of it, nor could he by any means get it off without help. Goodwill told him, “Concerning your burden, be content to bear it until you come to the Place of Deliverance, for there it will fall from your back by itself.” Then Christian began to prepare himself to set out on his journey. ✝

**“In spite of everything people have done before they come here, we make no objections against anyone....”**



<sup>†</sup> Excerpted from *The Pilgrim's Progress in Modern English*. Alachua, FL: Bridge-Logos, 1978. pp. 27–32.

The Stable Door *continued from page 1*

actual opening between this world and the Other World where access from one side to the other is possible.

Christmas is the most definitive statement in human history about the reality of this doorway between earth and heaven. In a manger in Bethlehem some 2,000 years ago, God himself stepped through the door and entered our world. And after stepping through, he left the door open! Now, it is possible to have access from one world to the other. Thank God for the open door!

In *The Chronicles of Narnia*, C.S. Lewis loved doors. In *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, he introduces us to an entryway to another world: Narnia. The beautiful land of Narnia wasn't far away at all, nor was it located in some distant future. In that fair land, time and space had to be understood differently. Travel to Narnia required only one simple task: stepping through the wardrobe door.

In the final book, *The Last Battle*, Lewis gives his most detailed description of "the door." A great battle is taking place between the forces of good and the forces of evil. The conflict reaches its defining moment in a struggle one dark night around an old barn, a stable. No one knew exactly what was inside the stable but superstitious fears gripped the hearts of all the combatants fighting outside. Tirian, the leader of the forces of good, was captured and forcibly thrown into the stable, through the open door. But rather than finding himself in a dirty, smelly old barn, he discovered a new world full of beautiful mountains, meadows, sunny skies and, best of all, dear friends

from a previous life! To his astonishment, this ordinary stable door had ushered him into the Kingdom of Aslan.

*"It seems, then," said Tirian, smiling to himself, "that the stable seen from within and the stable seen from without are two different places."* "Yes," said Lord Digory. *"Its inside is bigger than its outside."* "Yes," said Queen Lucy. *"In our world, too, a stable once had something inside it that was bigger than our whole world."* (p. 161)

As you read the articles included in this issue of *The High Calling*, don't just look *at* the stable door, look *through* it. That humble entrance has the capacity to introduce you to a world that you never imagined even existed. Merry Christmas! ✨



## High Calling

*The High Calling* newsletter is sent to regular donors and event attendees as a ministry of The Francis Asbury Society. To be good stewards of our resources and to maximize the effectiveness of this newsletter's ministry, we periodically must update its distribution.

Therefore, if you find *The High Calling* to be a valuable resource and would like to continue receiving it regardless of your donation history or event attendance, please contact our office at 859-858-4222 or email [fas@francisasburysociety.com](mailto:fas@francisasburysociety.com) (be sure to include your mailing address). On **February 15, 2016**, we will update our newsletter distribution. Thank you for understanding. We hope to hear from you soon!

**"...don't just look *at* the stable door, look *through* it. That humble entrance has the capacity to introduce you to a world that you never imagined even existed."**

# Prayer



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