

## **A Constant Presence**

*By Henry H. Mitchell, 2025*

### **Knock, Knock**

Jesus says, “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.” (*Revelation 3:20*)

Jesus knocks. It is up to us to hear and open the door. That is how God becomes a constant presence in our lives. The instruction is startlingly simple. The doing of it can be frustratingly elusive.

### **More Promises**

“ . . . surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (*Matthew 28:20*)

“ . . . God has said, 'Never will I leave you; ever will I forsake you.'” (*Hebrews 13:5*, quoting *Deuteronomy 31:6*)

“ . . . the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” (*John 14: 26*)

“ . . . for where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” (*Matthew 18:20*)

### **Unlock from the Inside**

There are two implications of Jesus's quote “. . . if anyone hears my voice and opens the door. . .”. The first is that those inside may be turning a deaf ear to his knock. The second is that the door has to be unlocked from the inside.

What is blocking us from hearing and opening? It's our need-meter. We have to know that we have a *need* for Jesus's company. If we think we have everything under control, we don't need a helping visit from anybody, and that includes Jesus. But if we know we are needy, we want to hear, and we open. (See the first step in *DivineOutline.com*.)

### **Is Our Job to Enter, or Is It to Open?**

A lot of Christians I know are very aware of their need, and they go to great effort to “enter His presence.” That may involve intense meditation, uplifting music, occupying a beautiful natural zone or a stunning manmade architectural space. Some seek a congregation of others. Some seek solitude. Some pray in tongues. Some pray in tongues and then interpret the prayers. Some reserve a specific block of time at a specific time of day. Any and all of this, and more, can be very good. Reverence and

self-discipline are high virtues and necessities, as long as they do not become ends in themselves. The fact is that Jesus will meet us any time, any place, as long as we actually open the door to him.

A cautionary note is that exemplary rituals of reverence and self-discipline can themselves become doors that block Jesus – coverings like Adam and Eve's fig leaves – that deny Jesus open, easy access to our inner selves and prevent him from communicating with us in a wide variety of ways. We need Jesus in our house at our table all the time, not just the times and styles of our choosing.

Most discussions about entering God's presence are in an Old Testament context (see, for example, *Psalms* 100:4), many related to Tabernacle or Temple worship. That was under the Old Covenant, in which access to God's presence was strictly and severely limited because of the imminent danger. In our New Covenant, established by Jesus through his death on our behalf and resurrection, we have confident, free, safe access to God's throne (*Hebrews* 4:16). Of equal or greater importance, now the Temple of God is our very own bodies, and we are inside that Temple all the time (*I Corinthians* 6:19). So if we are born-again and have received God's indwelling spirit, we don't have to "enter in" to find God! We're already together in this Temple right here, right now! (See *DivineOutline.com*.)

Back to the first Scripture listed above, Jesus says that if we hear and open, "I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me." In this promise, he is entering our presence, not the other way around! And the expectation is for friendly and open mutual sharing around the table.

## **Hearing, and the Other Senses**

Jesus is knocking at our door, whether we allow ourselves to hear him or not. In Matthew 13 he directly quoted from Isaiah 6 to explain that a hardened heart is responsible for unresponsive senses: "You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them." He talked similarly regarding the identity of his cousin John the Baptist, "Those who have ears, let them hear." (*Matthew* 11:15)

So opening up one's senses has to do with softening/opening up one's heart and that sounds like the same process as opening the door when Jesus knocks. It all works together.

I like to extend the senses-principle, and this is why. In the same way that our time-defined universe is a small restricted area within God's invisible infinite eternal spiritual domain, our five senses must also be small restricted appliances within God's invisible infinite eternal spiritual communication system. Small system, small appliances. Big system, big appliances.

## **Like a Child**

I have a personal theory about this. I have very early childhood memories which have been verified, all the way back to my immobile infancy. But here I want to talk about a set of my early memories that are, by their nature, unverifiable. They linger from the period when I was attempting to master language sufficiently to communicate in words and sentences with my parents. There were things occurring around me that I tried to talk to my parents about, and they always said it was just my imagination. That was frustrating. These occurrences seemed to operate by different rules, especially

freedom from gravity. Of course, I had no concept of what gravity is, just that the movements of these things were different from what I saw with self and family. In order to avoid mutual frustration with my parents, I stopped talking about these things and tried to ignore them. Eventually I stopped seeing them. Much later I wondered if, as a tiny child, I had been sensitive to the spirit world?

From *Matthew* 18:3: “And he said, 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.’” There are many aspects of childhood ways that Jesus could have been alluding to, such as trust, ability to learn anew, lack of tradition and encrusted prior assumptions, and openness without subterfuge. The list could go on. I have wondered if he was also suggesting that young children have unfettered access to the spirit world, before they learn to suppress it. I don't have an answer to this, and I suppose it doesn't matter. The truth is that we need to use all our senses and abilities to communicate with God and receive communications from him, just as we need those senses and abilities to communicate with our fellow humans. And in the case of mutual communications with God, he has infinite ability to not only use our five known senses, but also extend those five senses and introduce other senses we have not previously known.

### **Effective Prayer and Recognizing Answers**

In *Mark* 11 Jesus and the disciples have a very interesting discussion regarding faith and the death of a fig tree. In verse 24 he says, “. . . I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”

I admit that I have not fully tested the promise of that verse. I am usually uncertain as to the detailed specifics of God's will in a given situation. But I do often talk to God about what to do, and how. I expect answers. I do not know the manner in which the answers will arrive. Sometimes an acquaintance will tell me the answer I need. Sometimes a surprising object will appear, for sale at an agreeable price or discarded. Or I will wake up after sleeping with an answer reverberating in my head. There are too many different types of occurrences to list. Often the timing is so incredible that it has to be nothing other than an answer from God.

Occasionally I have heard God's voice, literally. It is such a monumental experience I don't seek it. For one thing, I usually sense some deep correction, gentle but requiring significant reordering of my thoughts and priorities. And the same is true for several visionary experiences I have had while participating in intense group worship. Those are powerful and unforgettable incidents, happening infrequently. All that is truly wonder-full, but it is the daily over-the-kitchen-table-with-Jesus stream of discussions and resulting coincidences-that-aren't that make up the warm, familial Constant Presence that I am discussing here.

Note that this Constant Presence can neatly dovetail with every aspect of Paul's exhortation in *I Thessalonians* 5: 16-19, “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit.”

As a result of this pattern, over the past 50 years I have constantly reminded myself to be alert to surprising possibilities. That, in my opinion, is a big part of keeping the door open for Jesus – praying, believing he is answering, receiving a surprising and delightful answer, and recognizing and being thankful that he sent it.

In my daily conversations with acquaintances, I can't help talking about these meaningful events. Sometimes I get the question, “Why doesn't this ever happen to me?” My answer is, “It probably does.”

“But I don't recognize it?” “Could be!” – As I did in my childhood, we may train ourselves to ignore the naturally unexplainable.

## **God's Messengers**

The Bible is filled with accounts of out-of-the-ordinary messengers. Sometimes God communicated directly. Bible scholars believe some of these God-appearances were “pre-incarnate” God-the-Son (Jesus). On many occasions he sent angels. He gave nighttime dreams and daytime visions. He gave messages to one person to give to another. He spoke from a burning bush. There were signs in the heavens, in the weather, in earthquakes, in the winds, in moving water. He turned one physical thing into a different thing. A donkey spoke. There are miracles documented throughout the Bible.

Nothing has changed. He can and still does all these things and more. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” (*Hebrews 13:8*)

## **Conversations of a Marriage Made in Heaven**

In the same way that, over time, we through constant loving familiarity learn subtleties of communications with our spouse, we can learn to discern and interpret the substance and significance of our communications with Jesus. After all, marriage is a picture of our relationship with Jesus, and our relationship with Jesus is a picture of marriage (see *MysteryOfMarriage.com*).

Hear the knock, open the door, keep talking over the kitchen table. Enjoy and thrive in the Constant Presence of Jesus!