

Grace to You :: *esp Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

When God Closes a Door, He Opens a Window

Scripture: Psalm 37:23–25; Romans 8:28–30

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Christians sometimes find their theology in the strangest places.

That's not meant as an indictment—most of us are not *searching* for truth outside the confines of Scripture. But the church seems to have a nasty habit of allowing the world's influence and wisdom to encroach upon territory that rightfully belongs to God alone.

That's why we're occasionally dumbfounded by other believers who boil down Christ's work of salvation and regeneration to little more than His taking up residence in your heart. It's why we have to patiently correct and disciple others who are sincerely confused when they can't locate the Bible verse that says we need to first love ourselves before we can love others. Frankly, it's why we've undertaken this blog series on debunking popular Christian clichés—there aren't enough biblically minded gate keepers in the church.

What makes the cliché before us today all the more embarrassing is its bizarre origin. Given its pervasive use in the church, you'd think it came from some pseudo-theological work or apocryphal book—something close to the truth, in relative terms.

But no. Instead, it comes from *The Sound of Music*.

To be fair, Rodgers and Hammerstein should not bear all the blame for popularizing the notion that “when God closes a door, He opens a window.” While they may have first spelled it out in those terms, the general sentiment had been around for much longer. For example, both Helen Keller and Alexander Graham Bell are credited with very similar statements about life's doors closing and opening; however, neither included a direct reference to God.

Regardless, it's the version popularized by *The Sound of Music* that has become a prominent Christian cliché, giving hope to many that God will always find a way to satisfy their hopes and fulfill their dreams.

The phrase is most commonly deployed as a reassurance in the face of missed opportunity.

So you didn't get the job, the spouse, the home, the (blank) of your dreams? Don't worry! When God closes a door, He opens a window.

The implication is that although things don't always go according to our plans, that doesn't mean God won't have some *other* way to fulfill our desires. In that sense, God's sovereignty means He has infinite ways to get us what we want and where we want to be. And when He does close a door, it's

not that He's actually saying no to us—He's merely calling "Over here!" from an alternate path to our fulfillment.

That mindset has a lot in common with another popular misconception we covered last year as part of our blog series on [Frequently Abused Verses](#). The false hope that God will always find another path to our satisfaction is essentially the same error as expecting Him to cause "all things to work together for good" in the here and now.

Far from a promise that believers will always come out on top, we saw that Romans 8:28 is [a promise of eternal blessing](#). In its larger context, it's clear what "good" Paul is emphasizing.

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. (Romans 8:28-30)

In his sermon "[Groanings Too Deep for Words](#)," John MacArthur explains the assurance and comfort we ought to take from Paul's promise.

The point is this: Because of the plan of God and the provision of Christ and the protection of the Holy Spirit through His intercessory ministry, God is causing all things to work together for our final, eternal, ultimate good. Not everything in this life works out for good—far from it. Oh, you might draw a good lesson from it. You might draw a good outcome from it. You might be drawn to the Lord. It might increase your prayer life. It might strengthen you. It might give you patience. It might perfect you, mature you. It might make you able to counsel other people and strengthen them because . . . you've been comforted by God in the same struggles.

All of those are wonderful realities, but that's not the good that's being spoken of here. The good that dominates this passage is that ultimate, final good that is the glorification of true believers. We are secured to that final good, that which is the best.

That same perspective ought to guide our understanding of how the Lord supposedly closes doors and opens windows in our lives. It's not a matter of fulfilling *our* hopes, plans, and desires—God moves in our lives and throughout all of history to bring about *His* will. Our temporal satisfaction is not a factor. And instead of always counting on Him to creatively pave the way to our happiness, we need to humbly accept that God has the authority to say no to us without having to say yes somewhere else.

Moreover, we need to humbly submit our lives to His sovereign control, and accept that our disappointments don't make Him any less good, loving, or faithful. Sometimes He closes a door because He wants us right where we are.

Rather than worry about how the Lord will fulfill our hopes and dreams, we need to focus on the path He lays out before us and be willing to go wherever He leads—both through doors of blessing and of trials—with firm confidence in His sovereign care and our future with Him.

Our lives need to echo the assurance of David proclaimed in Psalm 37:23-25:

The steps of a man are established by the Lord,
And He delights in his way.
When he falls, he will not be hurled headlong,
Because the Lord is the One who holds his hand.
I have been young and now I am old,
Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken
Or his descendants begging bread.

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