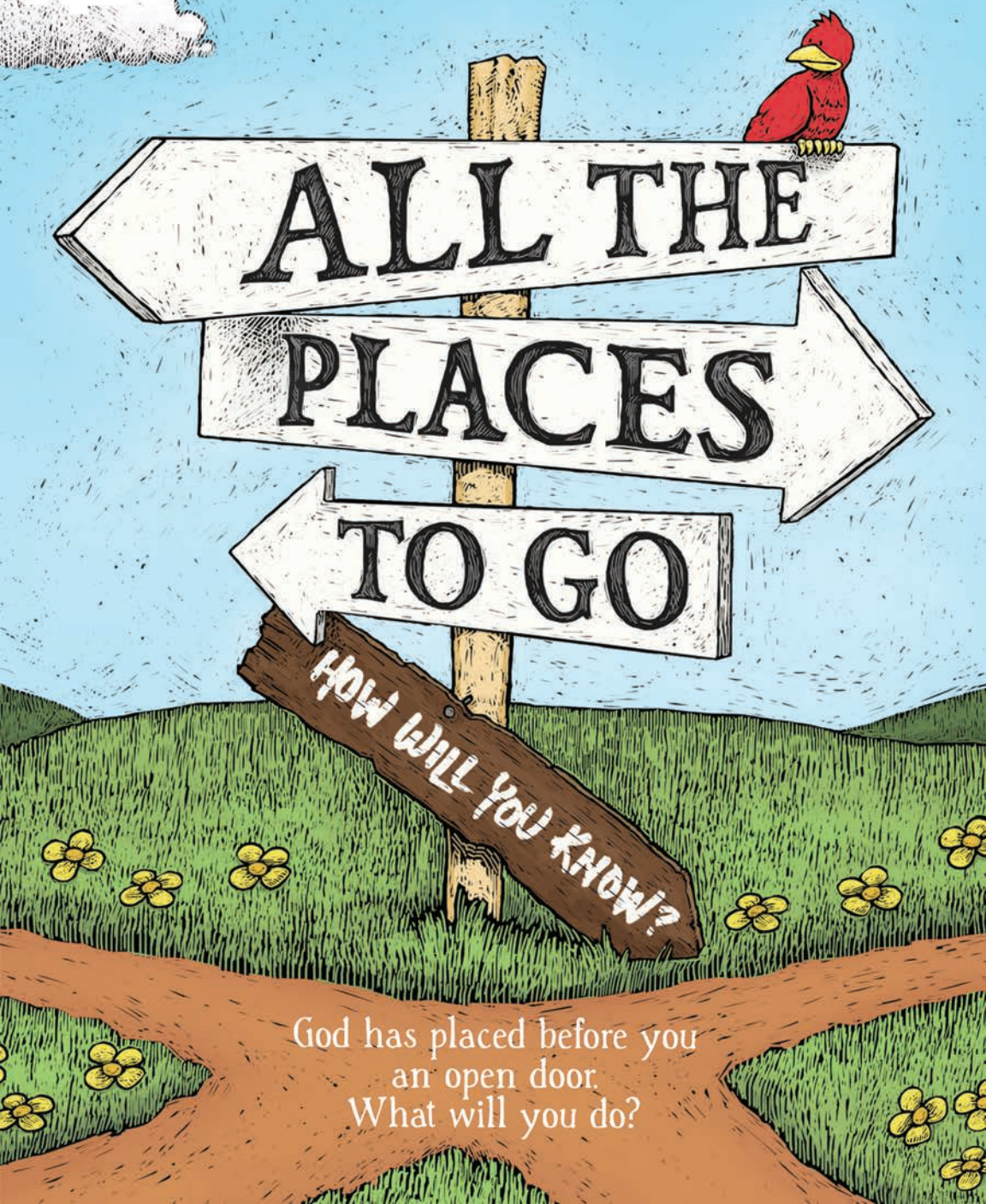


JOHN ORTBERG



ALL THE

PLACES

TO GO

HOW WILL YOU KNOW?

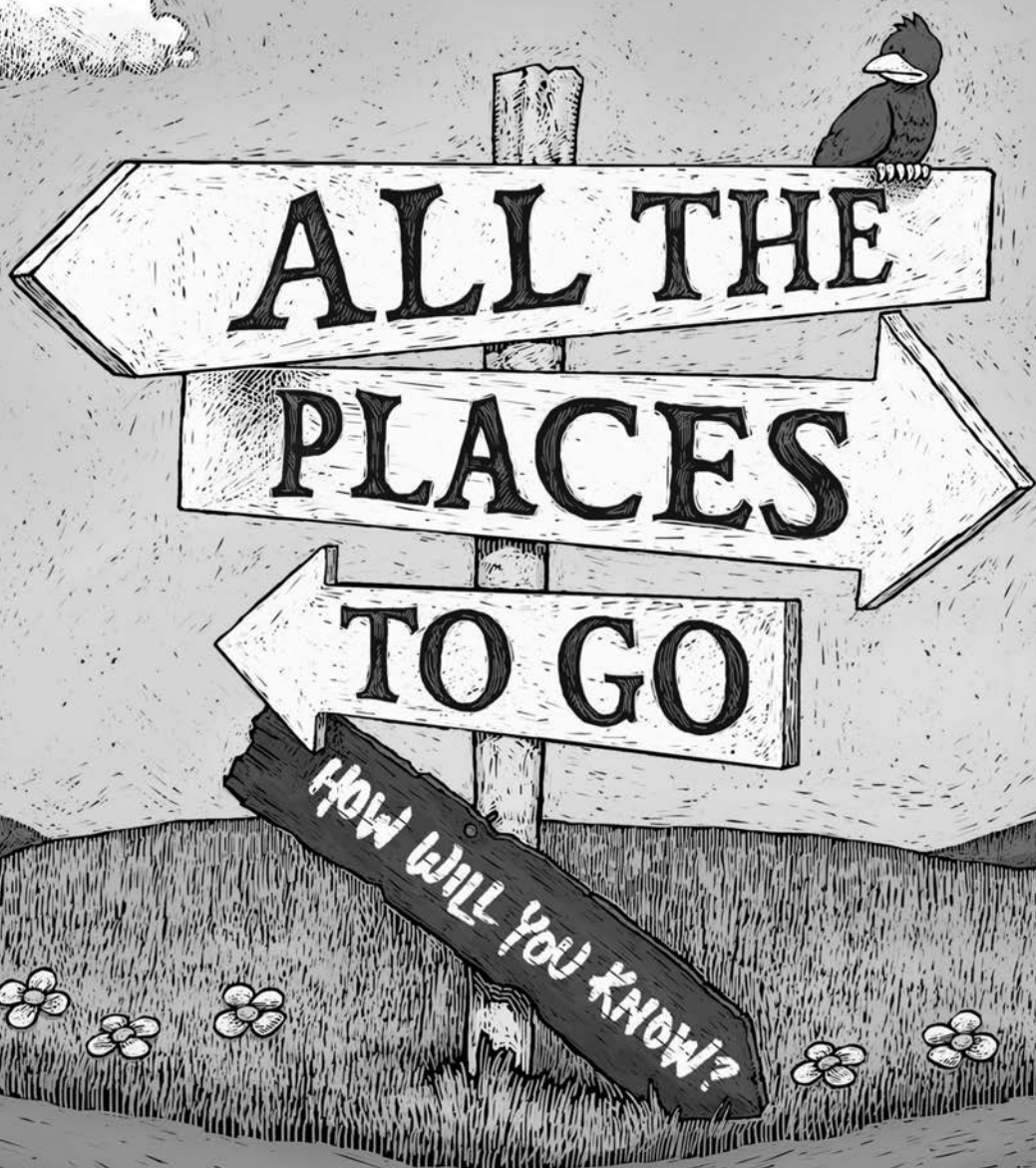
God has placed before you
an open door.
What will you do?

All the Places to Go . . . How Will You Know?
Participant's Guide



Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.
Carol Stream, Illinois

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Published in association with Yates & Yates (www.yates2.com).

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ISBN 978-1-4964-0460-2

Printed in the United States of America

21 20 19 18 17 16 15
7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Contents

	Introduction	<i>vii</i>
	Materials Needed	<i>ix</i>
	Leader Tips	<i>xi</i>
	A Word to Leaders	<i>xiii</i>
	A Word to Participants	<i>xv</i>
SESSION 1	The Open Door	<i>1</i>
SESSION 2	Door #1 or Door #2?	<i>17</i>
SESSION 3	How to Cross a Threshold	<i>39</i>
SESSION 4	The Doors We Open for Others	<i>57</i>
SESSION 5	The Jonah Complex	<i>75</i>
SESSION 6	Thank God for Closed Doors	<i>93</i>
	About the Author	<i>109</i>

Introduction

THANK YOU FOR CHOOSING to discover the God of open doors and to learn how to respond to the options set before you. This discussion guide is designed to accompany the *All the Places to Go . . . How Will You Know?* video curriculum. Our hope is that you will use this guide in a group setting such as a Bible study, Sunday school class, or other small group gathering to work through the study.

Each group should have a leader who is responsible for starting the video, keeping track of time, and guiding discussion. The leader is also the person who may read questions aloud, prompt group members to respond, and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate.

This study is meant to complement the book *All the Places to Go . . . How Will You Know?*, written by John Ortberg. Group members are encouraged to have a copy of the book, although the study can be completed with just the participant's guide and the video.

We are excited that by participating in this study, your group will be ready to step out in faith and embrace all the extraordinary opportunities that await.

Materials Needed

IN ORDER TO GET THE MOST out of studying *All the Places to Go . . . How Will You Know?*, the following materials are suggested in addition to the participant's guide:

- *All the Places to Go . . . How Will You Know?* book
(one per group member)
- Television or computer monitor
- DVD player
- Watch or clock for monitoring time
- Bible (one per group member)
- Pen or pencil for each participant

Leader Tips

THE FOLLOWING ARE TIPS that will help you lead a successful *All the Places to Go . . . How Will You Know?* study.

- The study works equally well in both church and home group settings.
- Preview the part you will be studying on the DVD, and familiarize yourself with the video teaching notes, the discussion questions, and the Bible study prompts before your group time begins.
- Gather the necessary materials for each session before your group time begins.
- You may not have time to discuss all the questions during your group time—that’s okay! Choose those that best fit your group, and encourage everyone to participate.
- Make sure to read “A Word to Leaders” on page xiii prior to starting your study. This is written to help you reflect on the main theme of the study and to consider your own hopes and desires for the group you’re about to lead.
- Please read “A Word to Participants” with your group before starting your study time together. This section will help your group prepare for the study together.

ALL THE PLACES TO GO . . . HOW WILL YOU KNOW?

- Before closing your group time, be sure to encourage participants to dig deeper into the lesson by completing the suggested activities given at the end of each session.

A Word to Leaders

THANK YOU FOR YOUR WILLINGNESS to lead a group through this study of *All the Places to Go . . . How Will You Know?* As your group begins, remember that you are a leader because God has put a desire in your heart to help people gain the full measure of understanding what it means to follow Jesus.

Our prayer is that God will use this video curriculum to open the eyes of the people in your group to the numerous opportunities God gives them each day and that, by stepping through the open doors, you and your group will grow closer to him.

A Word to Participants

OPEN DOORS MAY EXCITE YOU—or terrify you. Whatever your response is, you will approach many open doors throughout your life. What will you do?

As you study *All the Places to Go . . . How Will You Know?* our prayer is that you will learn to recognize open doors and trust the God who gave them to you as you walk through.



SESSION I

THE OPEN DOOR

Every morning is an open door; every moment can become one. Some of us see the doors and seize them, and so life becomes a divine adventure. Some of us shrink back or fail to see. A room with no door is a prison. To fail to embrace the open door is to miss the work God has made for us to do. If we want to experience more of the Spirit of God in our lives, we need to train ourselves to look for and respond to moments of divine opportunity.

ALL THE PLACES TO GO, CHAPTER 1

VIDEO TEACHING NOTES

As you watch the video, use the space below to take notes. Some key points and quotes are provided here as reminders.

David's Story

Frustrated by a lack of opportunities in global health, David created an opportunity, starting a clinic in Mexico to provide basic health screenings for poor people.

Teaching 1: John Ortberg

What can a door mean? What does it mean when it's open? What does it mean when *God* has opened it?

How can you recognize divine opportunities?

Open doors are not necessarily . . .

- thrilling.
- pleasant, smooth experiences.
- free of hardship and struggle.
- a guarantee.
- a set of detailed instructions.
- easy to choose.



QUOTABLE: "God doesn't say, 'I've set before you a hammock.'"

An open door is an opportunity provided by God, to act *with* God and *for* God.

The example of Abram leaving his home in Ur (Genesis 12).

QUOTABLE: "To find out what's on the other side of an open door, you'll have to go through."

Ally's Story

After winning the American Gladiator competition, Ally used her fame to set up fitness camps. While her organization is not exactly a Christian ministry, its Christian leaders have found numerous opportunities to share God's love and truth.

Teaching 2: John Ortberg

Characteristics of people with a "closed-door mind-set":

- believe there is only a fixed amount of talent in the world
- try to assure success in life
- don't risk failure

Characteristics of people with an “open-door mind-set”:

- ready to embrace the challenge
- unhindered by uncertainty
- understand that they are blessed in order to bless

VIDEO GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What did you learn from the examples of David and Ally? What open doors did they encounter, and how did they respond? You may not be a med student or a fitness champ, but what divine opportunities might come your way?

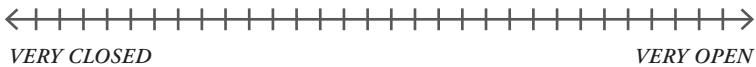
2. We encounter various opportunities every day. How do you know whether God has opened a particular door or whether it's just your own ambition, the nudging of a meddling relative, or sheer coincidence?

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

3. God's call for Abram to leave Ur and go to Canaan was a divinely opened door. What divinely opened doors have you experienced in your life? How have you responded?

4. How would you describe the difference between the closed-door mind-set and the open-door mind-set? Do you know people who exemplify one kind or the other?

On the continuum below, where would you put your own mind-set? Put an X at that spot.



Where do you think you were, say, ten years ago? Put an O at that spot, and then draw an arrow from the O to the X. What's your trend? Are you opening or closing?

5. A divine opportunity is never just for your own benefit, John Ortberg said. We are blessed in order to bless others. In the video, Ally was a good example of this, using her temporary fame to create a camp program that would help others both physically and spiritually. Have you seen this sort of thing happen in your world? Do you know people who have seized opportunities to help others?

As you think about the possibilities in your own life, is there a particular group of people you would like to bless—or a particular way you might bless others?

GROUP BIBLE EXPLORATION

1. Read together Revelation 3:8:

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.

This passage was written to Christians in a town of Asia Minor (modern Turkey) known as Philadelphia. The context indicates

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

that they were facing persecution. What else can we surmise about these believers from just this verse?

Why would it be important for God to tell them that “no one can shut” the door he opens? How would that make them feel?

Do you think our deeds have anything to do with the open doors God sets before us? Why or why not?

2. Read together Genesis 12:1-3:

The LORD had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.

*“I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.
I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you.”*

ALL THE PLACES TO GO . . . HOW WILL YOU KNOW?

Where was Abram leaving *from*? Where was he going *to*?

How do you think he felt about this calling? Excited? Scared?
Flattered? Challenged?

Five times in these verses we find the word *bless* in some form.
Who is doing the blessing, and who is getting blessed?

What do you think this “blessing” means? It’s clearly more than
good wishes after a sneeze. *How* will people be blessed?

3. Read together Genesis 12:4-6:

So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran. He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

acquired in Harran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there. Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land.

How did Abram respond to God's calling? How do you think his wife felt about this?

Apparently this was a two-step migration. It seems that Abram got his father, Terah, to uproot the whole family and go as far as the city of Harran (see Genesis 11:31). On the Fertile Crescent, curving from the Persian Gulf to Canaan, Harran is about halfway between these locations. What hints do we get in verses 4-6 about what their life was like at this halfway point?

While he was still in Harran, do you think Abram had gone through that "open door" yet? As we seek to follow God's call, do halfway measures help us to get there or distract us from following through?

This passage ends with the news that “Canaanites were in the land.” What would this mean for Abram and his family? What sort of “Canaanites” might be on the other side of the open doors God sets before us?

4. Read together Numbers 13:1-2, 27-28 (NLT):

The LORD now said to Moses, “Send out men to explore the land of Canaan, the land I am giving to the Israelites. Send one leader from each of the twelve ancestral tribes.” . . .

This was their report to Moses: “We entered the land you sent us to explore, and it is indeed a bountiful country—a land flowing with milk and honey. Here is the kind of fruit it produces. But the people living there are powerful, and their towns are large and fortified. We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak!”

In this case the “open door” also leads to Canaan, but it’s centuries after Abraham. After years of slavery in Egypt, Moses is leading the Israelites through the wilderness, *back* to their Promised Land. How does *God* describe Canaan in verse 2?

How did the twelve leaders describe Canaan?

How do you think they felt about seizing this divine opportunity?

5. Read together what Joshua and Caleb said in Numbers 14:7-10 (NLT).

“The land we traveled through and explored is a wonderful land! And if the LORD is pleased with us, he will bring us safely into that land and give it to us. It is a rich land flowing with milk and honey. . . . Don’t be afraid of the people of the land. . . . The LORD is with us!”

Ten of the twelve leaders refused to enter this giant-infested land. Only two, Caleb and Joshua, wanted to move through that open door. Did Caleb and Joshua disagree with the facts presented in the majority report? Did they question the goodness of the land? Did they dispute that there were giants there? What was the one point on which they differed?

How can we bring the Caleb and Joshua Factor (“The Lord is with us!”) into our lives as a regular tendency?

IN CLOSING

As you end the study today, pray together for openness. Open yourselves up to God’s calling. Ask him for the courage to be open to his leading—no matter how many “giants” you’ll have to face.

Before session 2, complete the “On Your Own between Sessions” section. You might want to start the next session by asking other members of your group to share what they learned from these exercises.

ON YOUR OWN BETWEEN SESSIONS

1. In the story we studied from Numbers 13–14, there were twelve leader/scouts, and they voted 10 to 2 *against* seizing the opportunity God was giving them. Now let’s imagine that you have twelve voices in your head. This is not a referendum on your sanity, but we all have ways of thinking through the issues we face. When you have an open door before you, do you race to go through it without a second thought? Then your vote is 12 to 0 *for*. If for every positive reason you generally think of eleven reasons *not* to do something, then maybe you’re 11 to 1 *against*. Or maybe you’re right in the middle, yes or no, 6 to 6. On the chart below, draw a line dividing the yeas and nays, indicating what your general tendency is when confronted with a divine opportunity.

SEIZING THE OPPORTUNITY

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

The truth is, there’s often value in being careful, but once we know the Lord has opened a door, we need to open ourselves to those possibilities. If your natural tendency is to “go for it,” great, but you might seek to cultivate wisdom about what you “go for” (and our next session will help with that). If you’re generally closed to new opportunities, even if they’re coming from God, then openness will be something to work on.

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

2. Read the story of David and Goliath in 1 Samuel 17. If you're used to a particular translation, mix it up a bit by going with a new one, just to get fresh eyes on the story. This is a familiar tale—you know what happens—but let's pay special attention to the open mind-set and the closed mind-set. Who is open in this story and who is closed? What details support this?

WHO?	OPEN OR CLOSED?	EVIDENCE
DAVID'S BROTHERS		
SAUL		
ISRAELITE ARMY		
DAVID		

The scouts who explored Canaan were right: there were giants in the land, like Goliath. But David took him on, armed with the same attitude that propelled Caleb and Joshua—the Lord is with us (see 1 Samuel 17:37).

How can that attitude help you confront the “giants” in your life?

3. Read the story of the rich young ruler in Luke 18:18-30, but first put aside any assumptions or defenses. Imagine yourself as the rich young ruler's personal assistant, watching this story

ALL THE PLACES TO GO . . . HOW WILL YOU KNOW?

unfold. What do you see and hear? How does this make you feel?

What “open door” was set before the man? What did he do about it? Why? Let’s consider his reasoning. Putting yourself in the rich young ruler’s place, fill out the following chart as best you can.

REASONS TO DO WHAT JESUS SAID	REASONS NOT TO DO WHAT JESUS SAID
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Do any of those reasons, on either side, come into play as you’re considering some (possibly) divine opportunity? How do you weigh those reasons?

4. Life Experiment: Open Day. Pick a day this week to experiment with openness. Shortly after you wake up, talk with God. Indicate your desire to be open to whatever he brings your way that day—whatever that means. Then, as you go through the day—breakfast, commute, work, lunch, family time, a trip to the corner store, hanging with friends, etc.—keep this in mind. You're being *open*. You don't need to plan to do anything religious. Just be open to what God brings.

This might mean paying attention to the people around you. What needs do they have? How can you show them the love of Christ? It might mean taking some extra time with a friend or a family member who needs to talk. It might mean enjoying a sunset or a great piece of music. Or God might throw a challenge your way. Will you face it openly, trusting in his help?

5. Life Experiment: Follow-Up. After trying the Open Day experiment, talk about it with someone else. Was it good, weird, hard, instructive, life changing, pointless, etc.?

Consider talking about it when you gather for the next session of *All the Places to Go*.

RECOMMENDED READING

In preparation for session 2, you may want to read chapter 5 of *All the Places to Go . . . How Will You Know?* by John Ortberg. To review the material from session 1, read chapters 1–2.