

Great Doors of Opportunity

BY **GREG PARSONS**

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No matter your view of globalization and its influence on the world, there is no question that many major (and some minor) events ripple around the world. Two that have been in the global news recently are the coronavirus and the death of Kobe Bryant. As I write, we are just beginning to see the downstream economic impact of China's handling of the coronavirus. Factories that shut down there have impacted supply line and production around the world. Even as the death of Kobe Bryant fades in the minds of some, many have been profoundly impacted by his life. He was their hero.

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I have tried to pay attention in each of these situations—with a spirit of prayer. I've been watching how people respond, here and around the world. I've reached out to friends who I knew might be struggling. When people are questioning life and death matters, we need to be ready. It

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In the case of Kobe's death, a friend and mission leader was close to the family of someone else on the same helicopter. He and his wife were asked to come to the memorial to support the family. Please pray for them.

Opportunities come in ways we wish they would not.

There is a danger in focusing too much on events in the news as we share with others and teach the Word of God. Things also fade from people's minds and hearts. When we illustrate our Bible teaching from current events too much, it takes the focus off of God and the truth in His Word. It is easy to use the culture around us in our teaching. Studying the Bible is hard work! But often, evaluating culture is a guess—we rarely know what really happened in any given event.

Still, we should be both students of the Word *and* the newspaper, as Howard Hendricks told me, if for no other reason than that we: 1) understand what the people around us, our church and beyond are experiencing; and 2) to inform our prayers. We want to see God work in so many people's lives—from family, to those near us, to those we hear about around the world. Are you praying for those impacted by the coronavirus? Both for non-believers and for your brothers and sisters who live there? Did you know some of them were going out on the streets in full protective clothing to share the gospel?

I hope I am wrong, but it seems to me that we don't really believe James 4:2b “you do not have because you do not pray.” This verse should

convict all of us regarding our prayer life and our faith. I fail so often. I would be overwhelmed with guilt if I didn't believe and experience God's grace. It is natural to get absorbed in life near me—what I can see and touch. But if that verse is true, then we should be praying for God to do amazing—even unbelievable things. John Piper said of this verse, that “God causes things to happen that would not happen if you didn't pray.” Think about that. As crazy as that sounds given the sovereignty of God, it is what the verse says.

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So...are we praying for God to move in our day to spread the truth about Jesus with those who are far away from Him? Do you pray for specific people groups like those mentioned daily in the Unreached People of the Day app (See JoshuaProject.net)? These are the “opportunities” we all have before us. Think of the specific people and opportunities you have in your life which you should pray about.

Like Paul, we all have a “great door of opportunity” wide open before us. (1 Cor. 16:9) What are the opportunities God is giving to you? Are you walking in them by the Spirit and in faith-filled prayer? 