

**more ready**

**than you realize**

**Hi Brian (do you prefer to be called brian?) this is april, the harpist from your book signing party. i read your book this morning. it caused me to think a lot about a lot of things. i actually would like to tell you about it, but im afraid this e mail will be very lengthy...**

**i don't want to burden you (i understand you listen to a lot of people every day!) so im not sure... but i really need to talk to someone and i dont know, I just felt good about reading your book and about talking to you... and I cant think of anyone else i can talk to about religion.**

**i know this probably sounds psychotic considering i just met you last night, and under what circumstances i met you... i dont know. im nervous to say anything at all, really... well, ill try to make it quick and you dont have to respond, probably more im just writing for myself... or not... i don't know. in any case, please dont feel any pressure to respond**

**like i said to you last night, recently i have been feeling like I want to become a christian, and maybe even start going to church and stuff. but there have been two problems:**

**1)whenever i go to any church, or read any church literature I change my mind**

**2)my boyfriend is a christian. he belongs to a non-denomenational church in the area, and its very liberal, and hes very liberal, but even despite this, whenever we talk about religion, i feel nauseated. i get so angry (and i dont know why, because i havent had any overly negative experiences with the church) and i get these horrible visions of brainwashing and the like.**

**the bad thing is, his church IS NOT LIKE THAT. i KNOW im completely unjustified in what i feel. but i cant help it. and every time i talk with him about it (which is usually when im feeling closer to some kind of conversion) i leave feeling worse.**

**this is sort of what happened last night. while i was waiting for him to get back from mass with his parents, i read a couple chapters of your book. ...we were talking about it and i told him about reading the book and everything. i really opened up about all that i had been feeling and he was really wonderful with it... he didnt act super happy and didnt ask too many questions... he knows how to handle me (the same way i meant how you "handle" your readers... which im still not sure on, by the way), but inevitably, eventually, we got into an argument about it.**

**its so frustrating for me, because i see so much of what i say is... blown out of proportion, or something. but then i also feel like i dont owe christianity any breaks and that it deserves the tough microscope i put it under. and i dont know if i really believe that. i also know a lot of what i say to him (my boyfriend) is rooted in pride (perhaps my biggest downfall as a human being)- meaning that i dont want to let him "win" the christianity argument, or whatever.**

**that is so messed up because our relationship isnt like that, and i dont think im really like that about anything else, but when we began dating we set up two groundrules, being**

**1) he doesnt try to convert me and 2) i dont demand that he gets involved with the gay rights movement (which i am very much involved in). so its soooo stupid, i know it is, but i really feel like its a real force keeping me from accepting christ, and actually, accepting god.**

**when i was reading your book today at certain parts i felt so good, and at certain times i actually felt like i was about to cry, because it felt like something was really getting through to me. but i feel like theres something holding me back, theres some sort of defense mechanism in me that tells me not to believe any of it.**

**i guess thats probably why i asked you what i did last night. i need to make sure that im not being "lured in", just to find out once i go ahead and believe that a whole bunch of other stuff comes along with it that i cant feel comfortable with, and then my whole person will change and ill become closed minded and bigoted and brainwashed and everything bad... i just cant feel that i can trust it. i dont know what to do.**

**oh well. at the very least, i really enjoyed reading your book. i thought it was really funny (in a good way) and really insightful, and it was clear you really understood how a persons mind in that situation works. it met me at every corner. that was frustrating, in a way, but in a healthy way, like eating veggies or soemthing. ill try to write a review of it online when i get a chance. hope you had a good easter.**

**april**

**hi brian, sorry its taken me so long to write back. i wanted to wait until i had something specific to say. i still dont. im not feeling the same drastic pull i was feeling a little while ago towards god. its frustrating and i have so much going on in my life right now that often I just push it out of my head and say "err... ill deal with it later."**

**thats no good, i know, and i wish i could just believe in god. i like the idea of it, i like the feeling i get when i feel like i do believe. I like the security of faith. but i just cant seem to bring it on. i cant really pray anymore, either, and thats frustrating. it sounds ridiculous to say that i cant pray, but thats what it is.**

**i used to pray all the time, even after i rejected a lot of what i was shown of christianity. sometime last semester, it stopped being sincere. i just didn't feel like i could connect with god anymore. ive been thinking about checking out a unitarian church. what do you think? but i dont even know if i could do that in good faith. maybe i could. i dont know. Hows stuff with your book doing? i hope everything is going well. i ran into lisa from your church at a concert last night. take care- april**

**i went to the church my boyfriend goes to this morning. the sermon ("message", as it was called) made me so angry. it was all about hw we should remember to take time out from our busy days (as related to the sabbath) which is fine, but somehow, the pastor managed to say that christians shouldnt date or marry non-christians and its christians responsibility to tell sinners and non-christians what they are doing wrong and to lead them to Jesus.**

**He was saying that the "sinners" would be thankful they were told what they were doing wrong... i was like, man, who are you kidding? it's like that Nietzsche quote in your book "It would be easier to believe in Christ if it weren't for the Christians..." or whatever the exact quote was. its confusing for me because ive seen a lot of evidence supporting the fact that this church is pretty open-minded, its definitely very diverse and has seemed really accepting.**

**But that just makes me so much more scared about jumping in and believing, like all the good things i think about christianity are just an illusion im creating or being shown and then after i believe and put my heart into it i wont have a choice but to conform to everything that constitutes being a christian in reality. does that make sense? its a lot like the first question i asked you about your book, wondering if you were just saying it to get people to believe or if what you wrote really was true.**

**am i too obsessed with details?why is it so easy for some people to swallow all of this? the pastor at this church today was saying how when people want to believe in God, "he" makes it easy for them and they're welcomed with open arms. why doesnt it feel like that for me? i feel like theres a huge wall i cant get through.**

**im so frustrated. i really want to be a christian and feel good about it. why is it so difficult? (sorry, i dont expect you to answer these questions, im just kind of letting my mind wander.) ugh... its been a rough semester. take care-**

**april**

**brian- thanks for the good advice, and the good question! ive been thinking about it a lot since i received your e mail. in a way i think just thinking about it is pushing me farther into having faith. in fact i feel right now that i believe in jesus, and god in general. problem is, i cant tell if its just a phase... so its probably not "real" faith. thats my biggest issue, i think... the constant surging and receding. it often recedes into nothing. this is very frustrating for me. i think a lot of my issues are with pride,**

**like if i start to believe and depend on god then im not as self-sufficient. probably a lot of that stems from how god is always referred to as "he"- including by me. i know thats pretty shallow, but its still something i have to work against in my mind. i dont know. thanks again for taking the time to write to me. talk to you later-**

**april**

**brian- im really interested in what you have to say about the modern view of christianity vs. the postmodern view. could you give me some more thoughts on that? i could possibly come to talk with you in person, but I am going back home (philadelphia) in about a week and a half.**

**april**

**i like your "definitions" of modern vs. postmodern, i have a vague memory of talking with you about that at your book signing. when i look at it that way, theres no conflict in my mind. but do you see the different interpretations/views/ whatever as being relevant if most people still view christianity in a modern way? i guess really what it boils down to is if i choose to believe, i just have to stop letting my temper flare when I see people waving the "christian sword" around. i know a lot of my problem is gaining more acceptance. but like i said, its just so hard for me to believe that christianity really IS good. thanks for taking the time to write back.**

**april**

**brian- are you going to be giving a sermon  
this coming sunday? i thought i might like  
to stop by and hear it if you are.**

**april**

**hi brian, hey, im wondering if you could recommend a specific edition or translation of the bible for me. i want to read something that is as accurate to the original as possible- no standard english version or king james, if you know what i mean. any ideas? thanks.**

**april**

**I started reading a paraphrased version a week or two ago and have gotten through the first two books of the new testament. i didn't want to read the old testament because when i do it usually makes me angry.**

**how do you suggest dealing with the sexist/homophobic parts of the Bible? It hasn't been an issue yet, but it will be. i want to have read the whole thing by then end of the summer. so far so good, though. are you speaking on the nineteenth of june at church? i think i will be in maryland then.**

**april**

**Brian,**

**I was reading in Luke 12 and I got to the part where Jesus says he hasn't come in peace, but he came to pit brother against brother, and so on. Also, I'm confused as to why he told people that it was wrong for them to say goodbye to their families or bury their fathers before they followed him throughout the land. I don't mean to bombard you with questions, but if you get a moment, could you give me some insight into this?**

**It really confused me. i thought jesus was supposed to bring peace, and i thought families were an important issue in christianity (at least, i know they are to the christian coalition). it doesn't make sense to me. i must be interpreting it wrong, right? just if you get a moment... thanks.**

**april**

**Wow, I'm glad I e-mailed you about that because I had been thinking to myself "Why am I even trying to like this? What good can it do for anyone?" But after reading your interpretation of it, it makes a lot more sense. The Bible must be an extremely difficult document to read accurately. Is it worth it?**

**I mean, it seems like everything that is presented, even in the most obvious way, has to be "translated". Is it really so great, for all that effort? If every little thing has to be read in a completely different way than it is written, what's the point?**

**These are probably rhetorical questions, and I can accept that. Obviously you have found it worthwhile to dig through the Bible, and many other people have as well. I can see now how Bible studies are helpful to people (I had never understood that). But since I am not in one, I hope you don't mind if I drop you a question every now and then about my reading. Thanks for taking the time to respond.**

**Also, (on a completely different note) I remember when I was playing at your church, someone talked to me about some kind of service on Wednesday nights that they thought harp music would be really good for (continuous, contemplative music, I think she said ). I know it's far in advance, but I just wanted to offer to play for that whenever, once I get back to Maryland in September.**

**I don't want to push myself on the church, but more and more the idea of playing for and through God has sounded appealing, and I remember how nice that service sounded. So if that sounds like something you all might be interested in, I'd love to volunteer to do it. Take care- april**

**hi brian,**

**I just got up from a \_three and a half\_ hour nap (taken immediately after i returned home from church). i was thinking about emailing you before i fell asleep because i wanted to tell you how much i enjoyed your message today. you are such a wonderful speaker, but on top of that, **WHATYOU SAY** is just so incredible- and im not just talking about this sunday.**

**ill never forget the things you said at the first anam i attended. You were speaking about how everything in life has meaning. it was incredible. im sure you know this already, but you have such a wonderful gift.**

**i had a dream during my nap that i wanted to tell you about. Im not one to get really excited by dreams or anything like that, and i feel sort of weird telling you, but i just have to. im not really sure of all the circumstances surrounding the dream, like why exactly you and i were alone together talking about god and music, but we were. so for a long time, thats all the dream was.**

**my parents walked in and you met my parents, and my grandfather (who is dead, has been for awhile) walked through as well.**

**for some reason, out of the blue (though in the dream, it didn't feel like it was out of the blue) you poured FREEZING cold water on my head and said the baptism thing ("in the name of the father, the son," etc, etc). it was dripping all down my face, everywhere... so much water, and it felt so good, and i just started to cry and saying over again "thank you. thank you so much."**

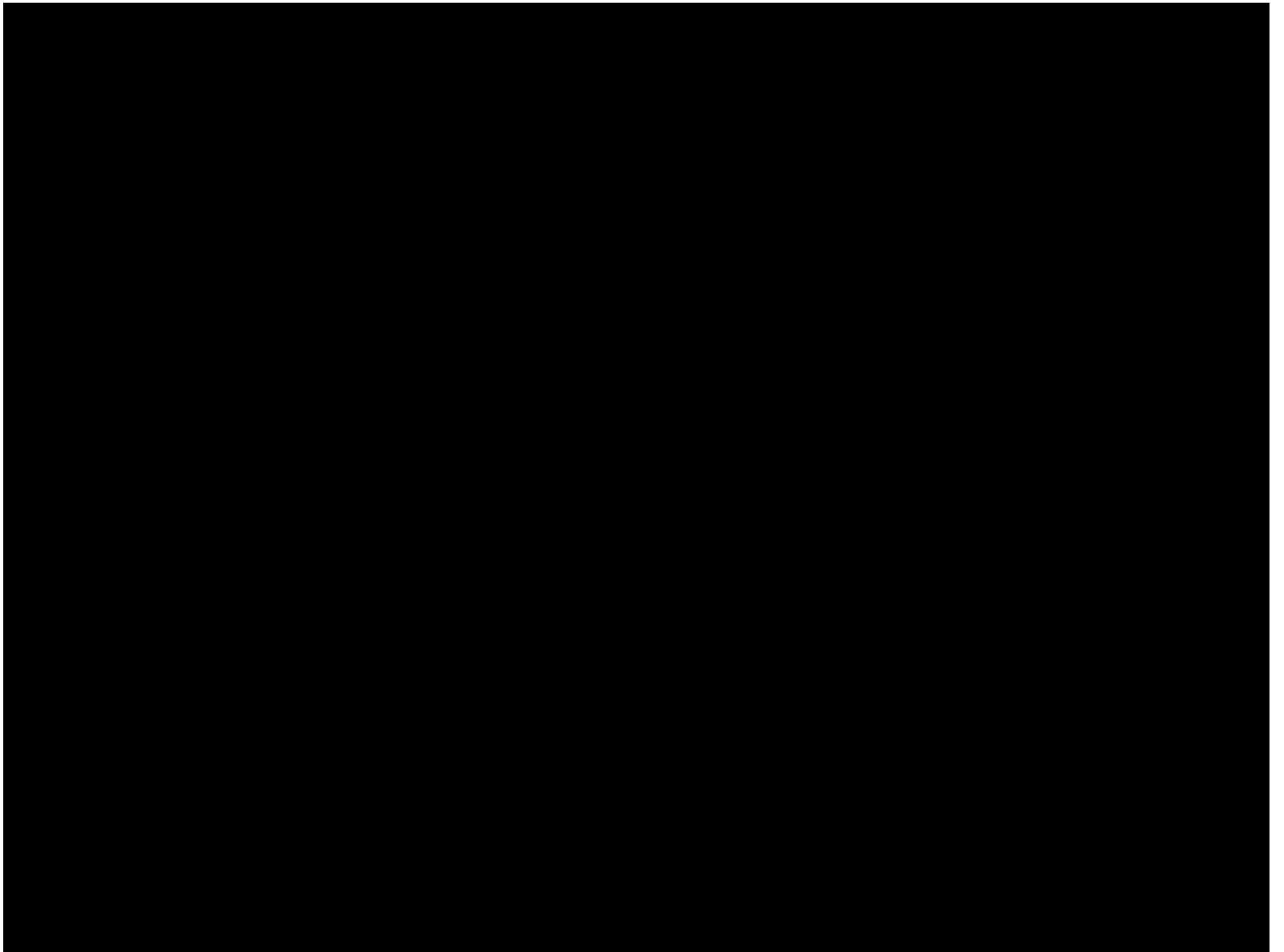
**i said to you "i have been thinking about this for awhile, but wasn't sure i was ready", and you said "youve been ready for a long time" and gave me a hug.**

**then i guess there was sort of a dream segue type thing, and i was sitting with my friend kate, who at the last minute cancelled out of going to my recital. i was sitting with her giving her the cold shoulder because she had missed it and it hurt my feelings.**

**then i remembered: wait a second, theres no turning back now, jesus wouldnt have done this, and you have no right to. and i just apologized to kate and siad "its okay... it went well and i understand why you couldnt make it, and of course our friendship is just as strong as always."**

**then i woke up. i dont know... it just really affected me, ive felt like ive been on the verge of tears (happy tears) since i woke up. thank you for helping me bring about such a change in my life.**

**april**



**Acts 1:1-8**





## **1. the relational factor**

**Count conversations, not  
just conversions.**

**See our mission as dance,  
not win/lose conquest.**



## **2. the narrative factor**

**It's about their story, your story, and God's story.**



### **3. the process factor**

**Think *disciple-making*, a holistic process, not an isolated conversion event.**



#### **4. the communal factor**

**The greatest hermeneutic  
(explanation) of the gospel is  
a community that lives by it.**

**Belonging often precedes  
believing and becoming.**

**A. Do a visitor's "experience audit."**

**B. Do a language & liturgy audit**

**C. Do a space audit**

**Public space**

**Social space**

**Personal space**

**Intimate space**



## **5. the learning factor**

**Disciple-making is part of  
*your* discipleship, as well  
as your friend's.**

**Remember Peter.**



## **6. the Holy Spirit factor**

**Believe that God is already  
“out there” and at work  
with everyone, not just “in  
here” in the church**



## **7. the service (neighbor) factor**

**The words of the gospel  
must be accompanied by  
the deeds of the gospel:  
i.e. loving neighbors.**



## **8. the missional factor**

**We're recruiting people for  
God's mission on earth,  
not just souls for heaven.**

**a poem by sam  
shoemaker**

**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.**

**They creep along 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  
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 that 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.**

**There's 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 a door ought  
to be.**

**Go in, great saints, go all the way in -**

**Go way down into the cavernous cellars,**

**And way up into the spacious attics -**

**It is a vast, roomy house, this house where God is.**

**Go into the deepest of hidden  
casements,**

**Of withdrawal, of silence, of sainthood.**

**Some must inhabit those inner rooms,**

**And know the depths and heights of  
God.**

**And call outside to the rest of us how  
wonderful it is.**

**Sometimes I take a deeper  
look in,**

**Sometimes venture in a little  
farther;**

**But my place seems closer  
to the opening...**

**So I stand by the door.**

**There is another reason why I stand there.**

**Some people get part way in and become afraid**

**Lest God and the zeal of His house devour them.**

**For God is so very great, and asks all of us.**

**And these people feel a cosmic claustrophobia**

**And want to get out. “Let me out!”  
they cry.**

**And the people way inside terrify them  
more.**

**Somebody must be by the door to tell  
them that they are spoiled**

**For the old life, they have seen too  
much:**

**Once taste God, and nothing but God  
will do any more.**

**Somebody must be watching for the  
frightened**

**Who seek to sneak out just where they  
came in,**

**To tell them how much better it is  
inside.**

**The people too far in do not see how  
near these are**

**To leaving - preoccupied with the  
wonder of it all.**

**Somebody must watch for those who  
have entered the door, But would like to  
run away. So for them, too,**

**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.**

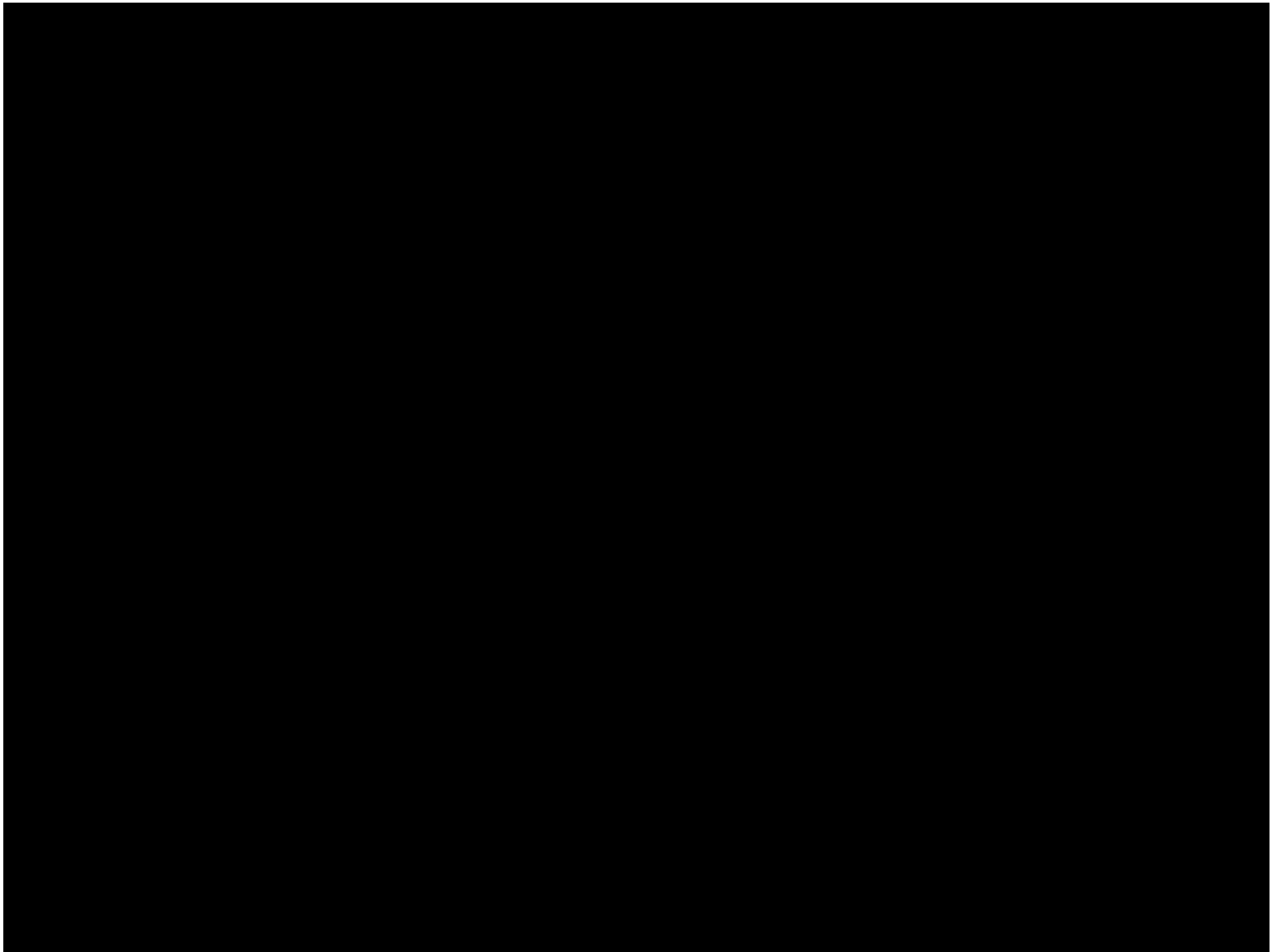
**“I had rather be a door-keeper...”**

**So I stand by the door.**

**(Samuel Moor Shoemaker, 1893 -  
1963)**

**So I stand by the door.**

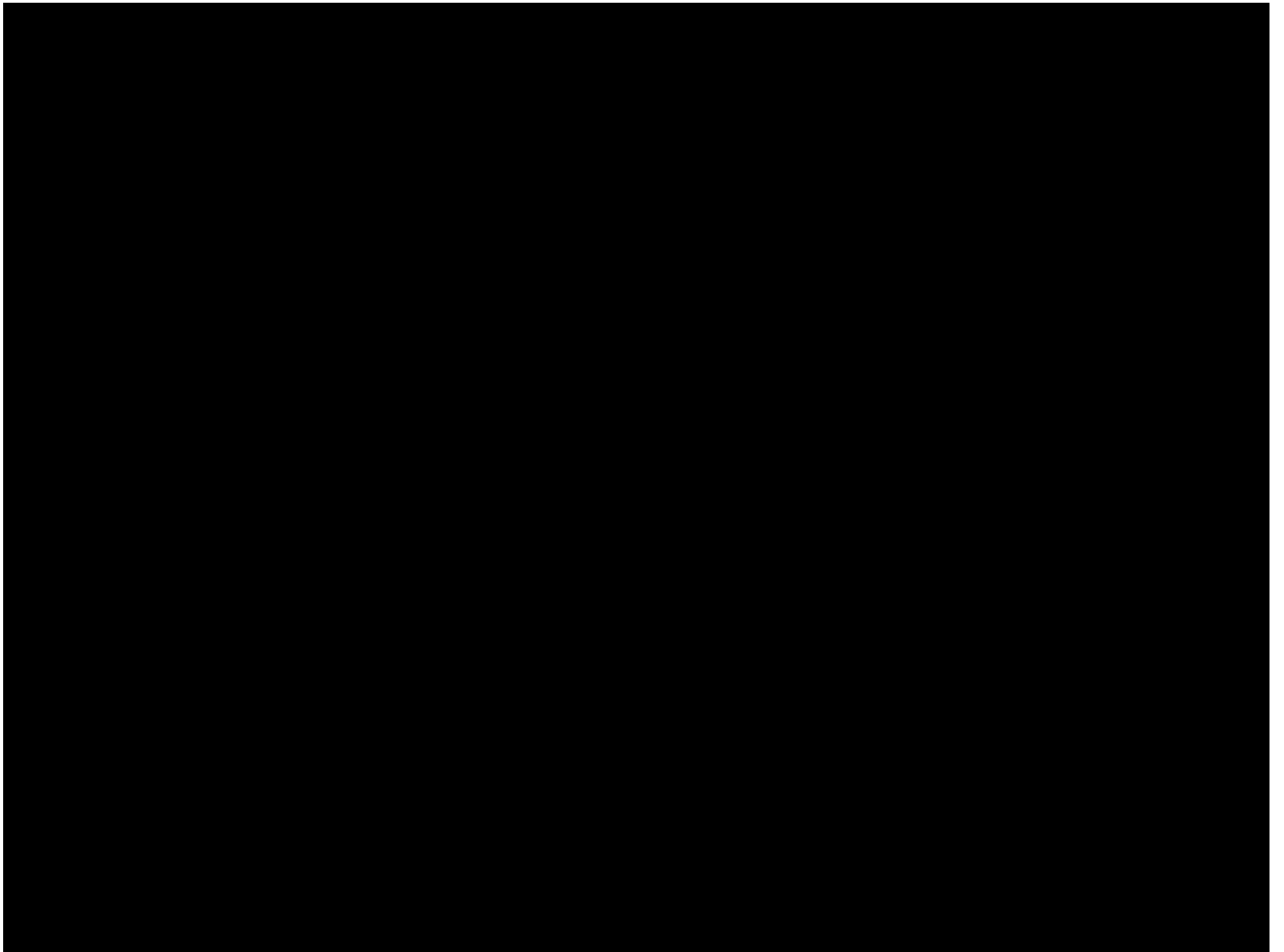
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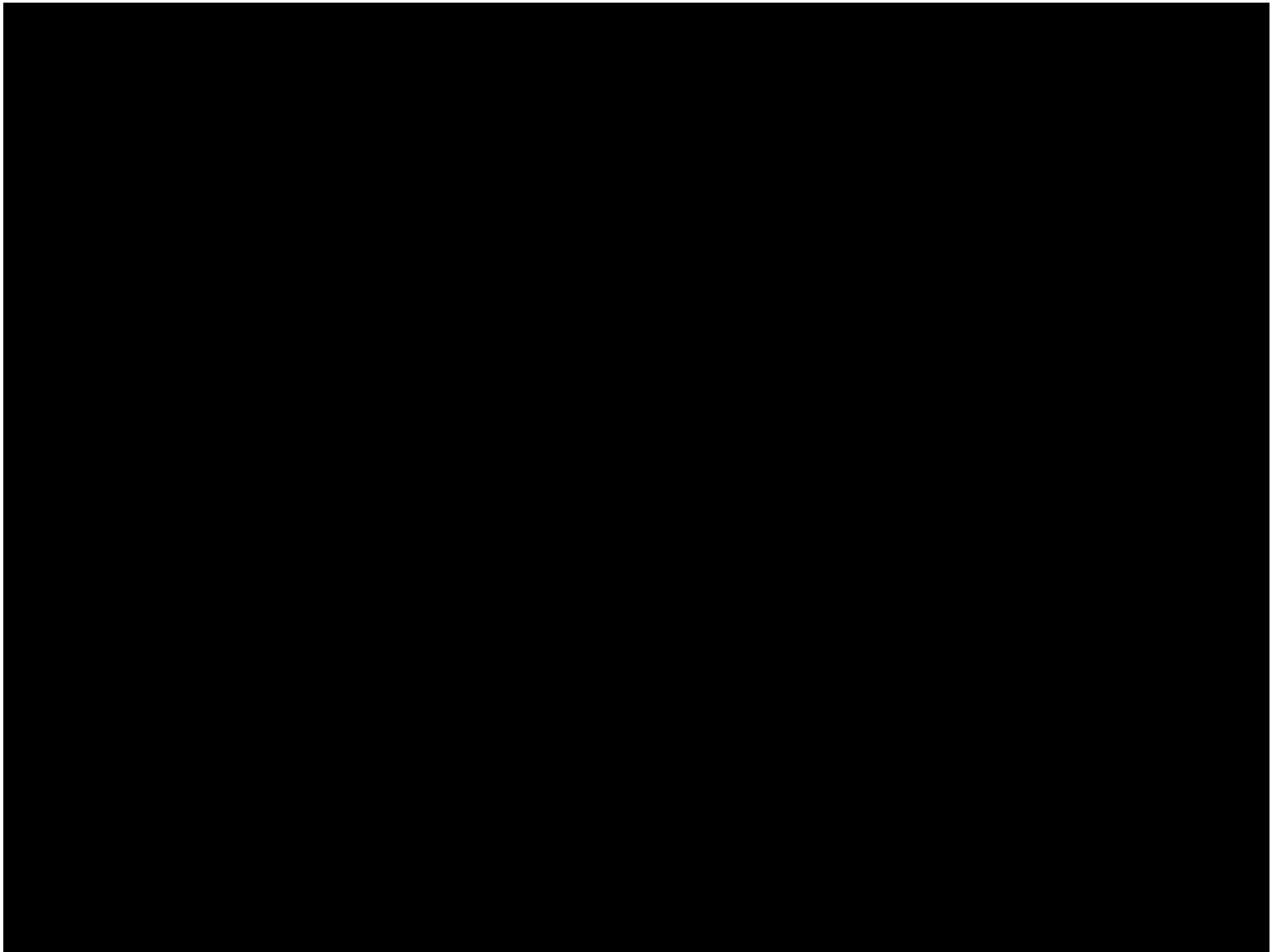


**So I stand by the door.**

**(Samuel Moor Shoemaker, 1893 -  
1963)**







How do nonChristians feel  
about evangelism?

How do Christians feel  
about evangelism?

Evangelism - follow-up

Evangelism - discipleship

or

Disciple-making as a holistic  
process

You'll "get it" when you feel ...

This isn't a program.

I can do this.

I'm already doing this.

We all/our church can do this.

# 8 Factors

1. Relational      2. Narrative

3. Communal      4. Process

5. Holy Spirit      6. Learning

7. Missional      8. Service

