



OPEN DOORS

Stepping Through the Door

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Discussion Notes

The Crossing Church

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OPENING

This week we are beginning a new study series called **Open Doors**. The curriculum is based upon a book entitled, All the Places to Go, by John Ortberg, who helps us to think about our lives and recognize that we are not products of our circumstances, but of the doors that were opened and closed to us. Our weekend services will introduce the various aspects of the study while small group studies will take us a step deeper as we recognize the open and closed doors in our lives. Those doors will take us in directions that become divine opportunities because we will have laid the foundation for recognizing them.

SCRIPTURE¹

Revelation 3:7-8 To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. 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.

Colossians 3:4 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Romans 12:1-2 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God -- this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is -- his good, pleasing and perfect will.

OBSERVATION

An average person makes 25,550 conscious decisions every year. Our lives are the sum of all of our choices and, therefore, make us who we are. The problem is finding God's plan for us sometimes seems more mystery than certainty. When we read the Bible, it appears that there God would speak to people more directly than He speaks to us. For example, Abraham made God his life and we know this because, despite his mistakes, he became more and more like his promised Messiah. Moses saw a burning bush, Noah got a rainbow, there was handwriting on a wall, and there was even a donkey for heaven's sake! There is one particular man in the Bible who was not stressed about earthly things because his whole perspective on life was dramatically changed by the healing hands of Jesus -- his direction became clear -- his name was Lazarus.

Question: When you place yourself in Lazarus' shoes, what do you think would be most important to you after Jesus had raised you from the dead? How does this help you to re-prioritize your life?

APPLICATION

Jesus tells us that He has placed before us an open door which is a symbol of opportunity, adventure and possibilities. The Bible actually tells us what God's will is for our us: Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances², submit to authorities³, avoid sexual immorality⁴, be saved⁵, and be filled with

¹ All scripture is NIV unless otherwise indicated

² 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

³ 1 Peter 2:13-15

⁴ 1 Thessalonians 4:3

⁵ 1 Timothy 2:4



the Holy Spirit⁶. This is the Lord's will for us. But there is something about this list that is emotionally unsatisfying. It seems that God is answering our specific questions with general answers and moral truths, and we conclude that God isn't interested in the details of our lives. The great news is that He is supremely interested in those details, it's just that sometimes we don't really want to know God's will for our lives. We just want to be spared making a difficult decision and we don't want to make the wrong one.

Question: When have you asked God for a specific answer and didn't receive one? What did you do? How did you feel? Did you realize that you had relegated Him to just a component of your life?

This week we will realize the foundation for recognizing open doors. St. Paul writes a short letter from prison to the Colossians in order to confront false teachings about Jesus and he gives us something that sets the foundation for this topic: open doors are not devoid of hardships and struggles. Therefore, we need to "set our hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God." Paul is saying, since we have been given this brand new life and raised with Christ we are not who we used to be. We, like Lazarus, have been raised anew and are new creations, so we need to go on a relentless pursuit of the things of Christ.

Question: How do you, in practical terms, set your heart on the things of God? What is your focus today? How can you renew your mind?

When we surrendered our lives to Jesus, we died and our lives were hidden with Him. We don't have to manage our images or what others think of us. Paul then gives us six powerful words, "When Christ, who is your life..." which can transform our thinking as we begin to recognize God's perfect will for us. God is telling us that He is our lives. The reason that there is so much confusion, that this seems so hard, that God seems silent is because we think of Him as being a component, not the complete essence, of our lives. Our focus should not be the future – it should be the person of Jesus. When our focus is on Him He leads us to the future He has for us. Then we can understand that God's will is more about the people we become than the doors we choose. It is about who we are becoming not the circumstances we choose.

Question: As you study Scripture, name some people who became more like Jesus as they stepped through open doors. How did they change?

Question: In what ways are you allowing God to be your life? What changes are you experiencing as a result?

An open door isn't a phrase to describe any opportunity. It is an opportunity provided by God and an invitation to go on a journey with Him. God's primary concern is that we become like Jesus and no circumstance can prevent that from happening. This means that God can use a wrong door to shape a right heart. So now we shift our focus from controlling the future to becoming like our Savior. God is saying, "Just hand me your life -- all of it – and then you will be able to recognize the open doors."

Question: When have you made a wrong decision and found that God had turned it around for good?

Question: So we ask, "God, what is your will for my life and please be very clear?" Tell us about a time when you asked God this question. What response did you receive?

Question: What is the open door that Jesus wants you to go through today?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, You know which directions are best for us in all circumstances, yet You allow us to make choices. Help us to be so aware of You, so immersed in Your presence, that Your will automatically becomes our choices. Help us to become more like our Savior. In Jesus' name. Amen.

⁶ Ephesians 5:17-18