

## Open Doors Sermon #2

### 5/28/2017

How many of you suffer from “*decidophobia*”? Princeton University Professor, **Walter Kaufmann** first coined this phrase back in 1973. And it means the fear of making decisions. We think we’re blessed to have hundreds of TV stations at the click of a remote and yet how many of you have clicked through all of those stations and yet can’t find anything to watch? How many of you go out to eat a restaurant like Cheese Cake Factory or TGI Fridays and find yourself exhausted from just reading through their menu, which could double as a small novel? I could certainly raise my hand on that one. After a long day of lots of decisions I often will just rely on the waitress person’s expertise to choose for me. Last Thursday at our men’s group at Perkins I must have been experiencing decidophobia, because I let Walt choose his breakfast first and then I copied his as also did Dallas and Tom and Randy has simplified his life by narrowing his choice down to either the Granny’s or the Farmer’s omlet. Sometimes it isn’t decidophobia we suffer from but decidofatigue (tired of making decisions).

Columbia university researcher, **Sheena Iyengar**, found that the average person makes about **70 conscious decisions every day**. That’s **25,550 decisions a year**. Over 70 years that’s **1,788,500** decisions you’ll make.

French philosopher, **Albert Camus** once said, “*Life is the sum of all your choices.*”

We’re in a series that I began last week talking about the many choices we make in life in the context of Open Doors that are constantly presented to us every day. Our foundational verse last week is found in the very last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation. And more specifically it’s found in the letter to the church at Philadelphia where God says to them and to us: *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.* **(Revelation 3:7-8 (NIV))**

As I noted last week, this apparently is not a big powerful church but rather a church that is weak in strength, yet God doesn’t overlook them because what’s most important to God is that they have remained faithful to God and his word and have not denied His name. This was in a culture where, because of persecution, many Christians and churches were not remaining faithful to God. But recognizes and honors their faithfulness and is presenting to them this “open door”. A door full of opportunity and promise and most of all, God is behind that open door. And while we may not know exactly what lies behind every open door in life – we can know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that God is waiting for us always, behind every open door and He promises to walk with us through whatever lies beyond that door.

And yet, many of us aren’t really open door type of people. We like the safety and comfort and protection that closed doors offer us. I remember as a kid growing up, we often got scared of sounds in the house and would go hide in our bathroom behind a locked door and a pulled out drawer all standing in the bathtub with whatever weapons we could find to protect ourselves. In times of uncertainty and fear we were definitely closed door kinds of kids. And some of you are still “closed door” kind of people. An open door represents risk or at best inconvenience. And yet if you constantly live behind closed doors, you’ll likely grow very little but become complacent and safe. But we serve an “open door” kind of God who is constantly challenging and inviting us to walk through the open doors presented to us and welcome the opportunity to be stretched and grow in Christlikeness in character and actions.

Jesus talked about open doors in a teaching opportunity in Luke 10:25-37. Listen as I read that to you this morning.

### Read **Luke 10:25-37**

Did you catch how this expert in the law had a closed door policy in regards to who his neighbor was? He could easily love his neighbor as long as he could define his neighbor as everyone who believed the same things he did, and avoided the same types of people he avoided and behaved the same way he behaved – all of those people are my neighbors and I love them all!!! But Jesus didn't close the door – Jesus threw the door to the neighbor wide open with an illustration of how 3 different individuals responded to an unexpected open door. Put yourself into this scenario and ask yourself which individual you'd most likely be.

- Would you be the **priest** who probably didn't want to become unclean by touching someone or something dirty?
- Would you be the **Levite**, who perhaps had similar concerns as the priest but let's say was too busy or important to walk through this open door and help the man lying on the side of the road dying?
- Or would you be the **Samaritan** who saw the man and his heart went out to him. He had pity" (or a better word would be "compassion"). He felt the man's pain and went over to help him, full well knowing that walking through this open door could mean risking his own life. The robbers who did this to this man could be waiting for him to do the same thing. Or it could all be a trick to lure him in. But that wasn't the overriding concern for this man. As a Samaritan he was used to being the outcast, he was use to being looked down upon. While walking through this open door involved risk, because of what he felt in his heart he couldn't turn his back on this man in need and walk right by, as the other two did.

Let me bring this home by making it personal. On Friday, Cindy sent an email out expressing a need for people to go over to Lynn and Rose Harvey's house to help plant a bunch of flowers in her garden that she'd bought a week ago but because of some recent physical challenges didn't have the strength to plant them. And the email stated that even if you weren't into gardening, you could still bring a lawn chair and sit and visit with Rose, which would be a great encouragement to her. This was an wide open door presented to most of you. And I was excited that we had a great turnout of 12 individuals who came. Some planted, others sat and visited with Rose and Lynn and Mike Neururer had a blast running an electric roto tiller (an for the record he didn't cut the cord in all of his excitement). Lynn and Rose both expressed how grateful they were that 12 people showed up to help them.

So, let me ask you – for those that didn't show up – what went through your mind and heart? And I don't ask this in any form of judgment, but rather to challenge all of us to think through how we respond to open doors.

- Perhaps you already had other plans at such short notice.
- Perhaps you thought, "I'm just not into gardening, so I'll let others take care of this."
- Perhaps it involved a commitment of time you weren't wanting and willing to commit to.
- Maybe you thought – *"I'll pass this time and let others take care of it. This open door is for someone else, not me. I'll wait and respond to another open door in the future which better suits my skill."* And yet, everyone could have come and sat and encouraged Rose,

You see the thing I've discovered is that most often God's open doors aren't necessarily convenient or comfortable or don't fit into my already planned out schedule. Because God doesn't like to be fit into our schedule. He doesn't work that way. He wants us to follow His schedule for our lives. That's the model Jesus left us.

When the open doors are convenient and planned by us and feel good and fit in well with our skill sets and passions, we don't grow much during those times. They don't stretch us much. When God presents us with "open doors" He wants to use those opportunities to stretch us, to challenge us in areas that perhaps we're a little too comfortable. Throughout Scripture he called people who didn't feel very comfortable with God's calling, with His open door.

- God called **Moses** to rescue his people out of Egypt and Moses resisted
- God called **Gideon** to deliver his people from the Philistines and Gideon resisted.
- God called **Paul**, the Christian persecutor to be his chief missionary.

Closed door thinking appears safe – but it leaves God on the other side of the door and excluded from your life.

Closed door people focus on the obstacles or inconveniences rather than on God and how He could possibly use them on the other side of the door.

Notice Paul's instructions in his letter to the church at Philippi.

**Philippians 1:9-11 (NIV)** *And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.*

What's the key to each of us discerning what is best and living pure and blameless lives before Christ? It's an ever deepening love inside of us. That's one of the real keys to discovering and responding appropriately to the open doors God presents us with.

And when the love of Christ is continuing to grow deeper and stronger inside of us we begin to realize that God doesn't just present us with open doors for us to be blessed but rather for us to be a blessing to others.

I really like this quote of **John Ortberg**: "*Open doors are divine invitations to make our lives count, with God's help, for the sake of others.*"

Someone asked me this week: "*Can Satan present us with open doors that look a lot like God's.*" Yes, he certainly can. A key in discerning the source of the open door is as I walk through this open door can I praise and glorify God in this circumstance or open door? Am I being used by God to encourage and be a blessing to others. Because most often the doors Satan presents us with tend to cause us to focus on ourselves and evaluate these opportunities by the level of blessing we'll receive from it or it will cause us to be critical of others. Satan is all about sowing seeds of discord and division and self-centeredness rather than God exalting and unity and mutual encouragement.

For those of you on social media, (Facebook, Twitter), do your posts exalt God or encourage others or do they mostly complain about your life or exalt you and your accomplishments? Often what people post is a reflection of where the priorities of their heart is. Jesus said, "*Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks*" if he were going to post that in today's culture he might say, "*Out of the overflow of the heart a person tweets or posts.*"

**Victor Frankl** was a brilliant doctor whom the Nazis imprisoned in a concentration camp. They took away his livelihood, confiscated his possessions, mocked his dignity, and killed his family. They locked him in a cell with no windows and no way out. Many fellow prisoners shriveled up and died from broken hearts and discouragement. But Victor Frankl found a door that his guards did not know about. He said, "Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way." Frankl discovered that his guards were actually far more imprisoned by their cruelty and ignorance than he was by concrete walls and barbed wire.

What keeps you imprisoned behind locked doors? Is it bitterness or self-centeredness or fear of what might lie beyond the open doors God is presenting you with, or fear of failure? Sometimes we're immobilized from fear of the unknown or failure?

Pray for courage, a deeper trust in God to believe that when He opens a door for you, He will provide you with the strength to accomplish what He's inviting you to. He won't invite you into something and leave you high and dry. He has great plans for your life if you'll trust in Him and walk through the doors and to God who waits on the other side to stretch you and bless you so that you can be a blessing to others.

## Responding to God's Open Doors

**Albert Camus:** "Life is the \_\_\_\_\_ of all your choices."

Behind God's open doors lie \_\_\_\_\_, promise and \_\_\_\_\_

Living behind closed doors breeds \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_

### Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)

**Which character are you most like and why?**

- Priest
- Levite
- Samaritan

When an open door is easy & comfortable we don't tend to \_\_\_\_\_ much.

Closed door thinking appears \_\_\_\_\_ - but it leaves God on the \_\_\_\_\_ side of the door.

Closed door people focus on the obstacles or \_\_\_\_\_ rather than on \_\_\_\_\_ and how He can use them.

The key to discerning what is best and living pure and blameless lives is an every deepening \_\_\_\_\_ inside of us.

God doesn't just present us with open doors for \_\_\_\_\_ to be blessed but rather for us to be a \_\_\_\_\_ to others.

Invitations are divine \_\_\_\_\_ to make our lives count, with God's help, for the sake of \_\_\_\_\_.

Ask yourself: am I praising and glorifying God and am I being used by God to \_\_\_\_\_ and be a \_\_\_\_\_ to others?

What keeps you \_\_\_\_\_ behind locked doors?

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