

Series: The Open Door

Series Text: Revelation 3:7-8

“...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. ... See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut.”

Series Drawing Upon: John Ortberg's *All the Places to Go: How Will You Know?*

<https://www.rightnow.org/Content/Series/1297>

Sermon: #3: Crossing the Threshold

Scripture: Proverbs 8:1-11 (Lady Wisdom cries out)

Text: Philippians 1:9-10

9 This is my prayer: that your love might become even more and more rich with knowledge and all kinds of insight. 10 I pray this so that you will be able to decide what really matters and so you will be sincere and blameless on the day of Christ.

Theme: How to discern God's leading among so many door options. God doesn't just tell us which one to go through, but works in us to guide us along life's path in a way that all doors lead to God's shaping of us. We need to pray for wisdom, seek out discernment actively, and then go boldly through the door before us.

Blurb: Choices! Choices! Choices! How do we make decisions? There are so many options. What does God want us to do? Come this Sunday to learn how to seek wisdom from God that leads to discernment. Then we can go boldly through the doors open in front of us!

Sermon Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D953Lqc4MPI>

Gathering Song: “Diamonds”

Welcome: David

Worship Song Set: “Sunny Days”

“Fill My Cup”

“Down to the River to Pray”

Worship Prayer

Kids invited to Kids' Church

Mission Moment - Pray As One -Andrew Bu

Sermon Intro Video

PP#1: The Open Door

Crossing the Threshold

“This is my prayer: that your love might become even more and more rich with knowledge and all kinds of insight. I pray this so that you will be able to decide what really matters and so you will be sincere and blameless on the day of Christ.” - Philippians 1:9-10

The Open Door. Crossing the Threshold. Philippians 1:9-10 “This is my prayer: that your love might become even more and more rich with knowledge and all kinds of insight. I pray this so that you will be able to decide what really matters and so you will be sincere and blameless on the day of Christ.”

PP#2: Pix of John Ortberg's book, *All the Places to Go: How Will You Know?*

[Standing in front of the open door.] This is us. We have doors open in front of us. Our book's subtitle describes us at this moment, at this place, "*God Has Placed before You an Open Door. What Will You Do?*"

PP#3: *Images of open doors, subtitled: Open Door: An opportunity provided by God to act (go through) with God and for God.*

The past couple of Sundays we've been wrestling with our open doors. It's a spiritual truth that God opens doors in front of us. In Revelation 3:8, Jesus says, "See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut." Our question is, what will we do with that open door?

PP#4: *Image of a person in front of two/three doors struggling to choose the right one.*

We've talked about the fear that comes with an open door. There's the concern of knowing for certain which door to walk through. There are so many doors. Which one is God wanting me to go through? Which is the right one? I don't want to get it wrong, and go through the wrong door...what a disaster that could be! It's the fear of not knowing if this door is the best door. Last week we called that FOMO, the fear of missing out...there might be something else better, so perhaps we should just wait. These fears can paralyze us.

We've tried to debunk these fears, biblically, the last couple of Sundays. Rarely is there the perfect door, the right one and the wrong one. Now, there are doors that are certainly far better than others, and God wants us to pursue certain kinds of doors and to avoid others. But even still, we need not fear the door, because God is behind all doors. We will meet Him there. After all, He is more concerned with changing our character than He is in changing our circumstance. And God can do that with nearly any door! So, we can let go of trying to get the best door possible, because it's not about getting it right. It's about going with God. Our God is a good God who loves us, goes with us, takes care of us, and keeps us close to Him. So we can take courage and not be paralyzed by fear.

PP#5: *Somewhat showing our selfish will...perhaps a child throwing a tantrum wanting candy?*

But today I want to get honest again. It doesn't necessarily get any better when we have some sense of the right door, or a door we think we should go through. There's the fear of not knowing what's on the other side, what will come. What will it cost? What's God asking of me behind that door? What changes does it require of me. What if God doesn't want of me what I want. Am I ready to go anyway? I might not like that door. I'm not sure I want what God wants for my life. I often resist repenting, of confessing my mistakes, and embrace a different way of life.

You know this! I mean, you do if you're human. We want our own way! We have agendas for how we want to be successful. We want God to do what we want, not the other way around. There is a battle of wills in front of every open door.

I want God to bless my way. I want God to remove the consequences. I want the responsibility to be someone else's. Anyone else here familiar with the battle with original sin? I want God to submit to my way, rather than me being willing to submit to God's way.

PP#6: Philippians 1:9-10

This is my prayer: that your love might become even more and more rich with knowledge and all kinds of insight. I pray this so that you will be able to decide what really matters and so you will be sincere and blameless on the day of Christ.

[Standing and facing the open door.] So, how do we cross the threshold? How do we wrestle with this battle of wills. How do we see things differently, get rose colored glasses? How do we trust in God enough to do it His way?

Paul tells the Christians in the city of Philippi that he is praying for them. Take a closer look at his prayer for them. Philippians 1:9-10. “This is my prayer: that your love might become even more and more rich with knowledge and all kinds of insight. I pray this so that you will be able to decide what really matters and so you will be sincere and blameless on the day of Christ.”

Paul prays that they might have knowledge and all kinds of insight, so that they will be able to decide *what really matters*—that’s an eternal perspective, that’s a view like God’s, so that they will be able to make the choices they need to follow God’s leading. It’s taking a different view. Paul prays for them to see, and want, and choose, what God wants! Wisdom is making good choices, choices that align with God’s plan, not ours.

PP#7: Crossing the Threshold

1. Ask for wisdom

Wisdom is a key biblical theme. God tells His people to seek wisdom. And by wisdom, God means knowing what is best to do from God’s perspective, discernment. So, when we face an open door, we shouldn’t start by asking, “What does God want me to do?” “Or what is God’s will for my life?” We begin by asking for wisdom. Biblically, we don’t ask God for answers. We ask God for wisdom, knowledge and depth of discernment, so that we may discern what is best. God wants us to be skilled in making wise decisions and able to cross thresholds He places before us. The biblical word for people who choose doors well, is wise. They are wise people. Yes, we’ve all made foolish decisions, decisions we’ve regretted. But we’ve also made decisions we’re proud of. Wisdom takes intentionality, not just making a decision. It’s a way of life. We grow in it through practice.

PP#8: Proverbs 8:1-11

1. Doesn’t Wisdom cry out
and Understanding shout?
- 2 Atop the heights along the path,
at the crossroads she takes her stand.
- 3 By the gate before the city,
at the entrances she shouts:
- 4 I cry out to you, people;
my voice goes out to all of humanity.

In the Bible, wisdom is treated like a person, a woman. Lady Wisdom. Isn’t that interesting! I wonder what that says about who is better at being wise! Wisdom is someone you must pursue, court, make the object of your desire. Turn to the book of Proverbs in the Bible. Its right next to Psalms near the very center of the Bible. It’s easy to find on your smart phone if you prefer. We go to chapter 8, starting with the first verse:

Doesn’t Wisdom cry out	and Understanding shout?
Atop the heights along the path,	at the crossroads she takes her stand.
By the gate before the city,	at the entrances she shouts:
I cry out to you, people;	my voice goes out to all of humanity.

So, wisdom is calling out to us, from all along the paths of our lives. Right at the entrance, she calls to us, right at the open door.

PP#9: Proverbs 8:1-11

5 Understand skill, you who are naive.
 Take this to heart, you fools.
 6 Listen, for I speak things that are correct;
 from my lips comes what is right.
 7 My mouth utters the truth;
 my lips despise wickedness.

Verse 5:

Understand skill, you who are naive.	Take this to heart, you fools.
Listen, for I speak things that are correct;	from my lips comes what is right.
My mouth utters the truth;	my lips despise wickedness.
All the words of my mouth are righteous;	nothing in them is twisted or crooked.

She gives understanding, skill. She speaks truth, righteousness. Heed her! Heed wisdom!

PP#10: Proverbs 8:1-11

8 All the words of my mouth are righteous;
 nothing in them is twisted or crooked.
 9 All of them are straightforward to those who understand,
 and upright for the knowledgeable.
 10 Take my instruction rather than silver,
 knowledge rather than choice gold.
 11 Wisdom is better than pearls;
 nothing is more delightful than she.

Verse 8:

All the words of my mouth are righteous;	nothing in them is twisted or crooked.
All of them are straightforward to those who understand,	and upright for the knowledgeable.
Take my instruction rather than silver,	knowledge rather than choice gold.
Wisdom is better than pearls;	nothing is more delightful than she.

Wisdom is worth more silver, more than gold, more than pearls. Nothing more delightful.

PP#11: *Image of Solomon as wise*

Solomon was coronated as king over Israel, 980 B.C. And God came to him and said, in deference to his father, good King David, God would grant Solomon anything he asked. Anything he wanted God would give him. Hmmm. What would you pick? Well, Solomon asked for wisdom to do his job well. Every hear the phrase, wisdom of Solomon? It was Solomon who wrote this book of Proverbs.

Wisdom, says Solomon, is precious, nothing can compare to it. Wisdom calls to us, we can hear her voice when we face decisions. We can hear her calling when it is time to discern. And the Bible says that God didn't just give wisdom to Solomon. It says that God will grant wisdom generously to anyone who asks.

We need wisdom to cross the threshold, to make decisions, to act, with God, for God. And God grants wisdom generously to all who ask. So, when you face a problem, don't tell God you have

a problem, tell you problem you have a God! Yes, we have big problems, but we have an even bigger God!

Our God doesn't call us to stay put and play it safe. Our God calls us to face into our problems, to cross the thresholds and face the issue. There's a word describing people who don't have any problems. It's "dead"! Growth in our character doesn't allow avoiding our problems. We are called to continually cross the thresholds before us in order to grow in character and faith.

PP#12: Crossing the Threshold

1. Ask for wisdom
2. Lean into the problems you see

And our problems can point to exactly where God is calling us. Remember Moses? There was a problem of his people in slavery. Moses had a heart for the people. It took some convincing, but Moses finally leaned into the problem. The boy David, couldn't stand the problem of Goliath taunting the Israelites. He chose to face him. Nehemiah wept when he heard the walls of Jerusalem were in ruins. He went back and started rebuilding them. Esther, in the palace, chose to act to save the Jews. Jesus saw a problem, the problem of human sin, and walked through a door.

What is breaking your heart? What concerns do you notice? What problems seem to constantly bother you? What drives you and gives you passion? Wisdom helps you determine that this is God placing before you an open door to do something about it. He wants you to act. What should you do? Well, what problem do you see that you can do something about? Sounds like an open door!

PP#13: Crossing the Threshold

1. Ask for wisdom
2. Lean into the problems you see
3. See out wise counsel

But God doesn't just speak to our own hearts. God speaks to us in other ways, too. Read the Bible. God's Spirit often reveals insights and revelations when we read the Bible. Many times I'm reading about this or that, and all of a sudden, an epiphany hits me about something in my life I've been struggling with. And it comes to me in such a way, I almost ask myself sometimes, "Where did that connection come from?" I know it's God.

And very often, God speaks wisdom into us through the wise counsel of others around us. So, when we stand on the threshold of an open door, seek wise counsel from people who love you, who love God, who you know are wise in life, and sit with them. Others can see what we cannot. We all have our weaknesses and blind spots. We see only Door #1, or Door #2. Others can show us Door #8, or #9! We've all experienced this. We've all made poor decisions that could have been avoided had we just sought out wisdom from another perspective.

PP#14: Crossing the Threshold

1. Ask for wisdom
2. Lean into the problems you see
3. See out wise counsel
4. Go boldly

But be careful you don't let yourself get caught into analysis paralysis. Well, let's just pray some more on this. Let's ask a couple of more people. No, you must choose and go. We can't force a door open or closed. It is Jesus who has the keys. But we can change how we go, our attitude when we go. Don't just limp across, reluctantly. Go boldly, with high effort and responsibility and commitment. Give it your all. Wholeheartedly. Courageously! God isn't looking for faint-hearted people!

Sometimes we expect that when we decide the good choice, we will have an incredible sense of peace and contentment. Then we'll know it's the right choice. The stress and anxiety we had trying to make the decision, should go away. But this isn't biblical! When Jesus finally agreed to go through the open door in front of Him, things got a lot more stressful for Him!

PP#15: *Image of Elijah on Mt. Carmel*

One of my favorite stories in the Bible is when Elijah singlehandedly faces the king and queen and 900 false prophets on Mt. Carmel. He is bold and steadfast. But before the dust settles, he freaks out and runs for cover. He didn't have peace and contentment. He was worried!

God's people, over and over again, have worry, moments of fear, second thoughts, consider going back. It doesn't get easier when we follow God. Often, it gets worse!

Even so, that's precisely where and how God grew them. That's how problems were solved, when they learned to rely on Him, and their character was shaped.

PP#16: *Image for crossing the threshold*

As we stand on the threshold before the open door, we struggle with many fears. Sometimes it's not that we don't know the right door, it's because we fear that it is God's door, but we're not sure *we* want it. Crossing the threshold may mean loss. It may mean self sacrifice. It may mean confession of our sin. It may mean humility and facing some things we want left alone. It may be embracing a different way of life. Sometimes standing in front of the threshold means a battle of the wills, ours and God's.

God's open door, whatever it may be, is an invitation to get to know Him better. It's trusting that God's way is indeed better. It's knowing what really matters in life. It's true and full living.

That takes wisdom, wisdom which God freely gives. We have to pursue it, however. We need to ask God for it. It means leaning into the problems we can't help but see, that bother us. It means seeking wise guidance and counsel. And finally, it means going boldly.

It may not be comfortable on the other side of the open door. But God is there, and He's inviting us to come through and get to know Him better. Isn't that what we really want, after all? We will find a better sense of our passions, our self worth, we will get to deal with the stuff that haunts, and we will get to know God more intimately. And that makes it worth anything we may fear.

Are you willing to cross? Not reluctantly, but wholeheartedly?

Jesus says to you, "I have placed before you an open door." [Walk through the open door.] Amen.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D953Lqc4MPI>

Communion Prayer: Amelia

Holy Communion: Pastor David

Closing Song: "Deep Cries Out"

Benediction: Pastor David

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR MAY 1, 2016

Spring Series: “The Open Door”

Sermon: “Crossing the Threshold”

Scripture: Proverbs 8:1-11, Philippians 1:9-10

Opening prayer

Introductions: Share about a time you didn’t follow God’s leading in your life. What happened?

Background: Skim Proverbs 7. What is going on in this chapter?

Read: Proverbs 8:1-11

1. Describe what wisdom is. Perhaps contrast it with knowledge, understanding, learning, etc.
2. What advise on seeking wisdom could you give to a young adult who asked for your thoughts?
3. Verses 1-4. Wisdom is personified as a person. In these verses, she is portrayed as calling out to people along life’s path and junctures. Describe a time when you heard wisdom calling.
4. Do you think wisdom is calling out along most of life? If yes, then how so?
5. Verse 5. To whom does wisdom call out? Does that mean she is calling to each of us?
7. Verses 6-9. Describe the kind of advise wisdom gives. How is it described here?
8. How does one “listen” to wisdom?
9. Verses 10-11. How does Solomon describe wisdom’s value? What images does he use?
10. Do you agree? Why or why not?

Read Philippians 1:9-10.

11. What is the purpose of what Paul is praying for the people at Philippi?
12. 11. Application: What will you take away from this passage? How will you live it out?