

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: #4: I Could Not, Would Not, Should Not Go

Scripture: Jonah 1:1-3 (Jonah flees God's mission)

Text: “For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.” -Ephesians 2:10 (NASB)

Theme: Seeing ourselves like Jonah, that we may run away from the doors that God opens up for us, but we need be bold, turn back, and go. We need to be self aware in order to better align our wills with God's will.

Blurb: Know what it's like to run away from something God is calling us to? Sure! We all do. We wrestle with fear and stubbornness. Or, in language like Dr. Seuss, we say, “I could not, would not, should not go! I will not do what I am told. I will not ever be that bold! I will simply stay right here, even though the door is near!” Come this Sunday to hear how self-awareness is key to claiming the boldness to go forward. Oh yeah, and prayer, too!

Gathering Song: *Words*

Welcome: David

Worship Song Set: *Diamonds*
Have Thine Own Way
Revelation Song

Worship Prayer
Kids invited to Kids' Church

Mission Moment - Summer Lunches, Andrew Buschena

Prayer - for Mothers. David

Offering Video: Mother's Day Video

Scripture Reading: Jonah 1:1-3 Ian Bautsch

PP1: Jonah 1:1-3

1 The Lord's word came to Jonah, Amittai's son: 2 “Get up and go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it, for their evil has come to my attention.”

3 So Jonah got up—to flee to Tarshish from the Lord! He went down to Joppa and found a ship headed for Tarshish. He paid the fare and went aboard to go with them to Tarshish, away from the Lord.

Video: Sermon Intro

PP#2: The Open Door

I Could Not, Would Not, Should Not Go

“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.” -Ephesians 2:10 (NASB)

The Open Door. I Could Not, Would Not, Should Not Go. Ephesians 2:10 “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”

PP#3: *Two books, side by side: John Ortberg’s book, All the Places to Go: How Will You Know? AND Dr. Seuss’ Oh the Places You’ll Go!*

Our spring message series on the Open Door is based on a book by John Ortberg. As you can see, there is an intentional connection with Dr. Seuss’ famous book. It’s spring time, and as Dr. Seuss’ book is such a favorite for graduates, we’re seeing it out on the shelves again. Dr. Seuss’ book is all about the potential of the future, with all its hopeful, exciting possibilities. And at the end of the book we, the reader, find ourselves in “The Waiting Place,” anticipating what is ahead for us.

It’s this waiting place that we are in when we stand in front of the doors God has opened for us. We are all like graduates. God gifts each of us a future with amazing possibilities and potential. Open doors are *opportunities provided by God to go through—to act—with God, for God*. Our question is how long will we stay in the waiting place?

PP#4: *Image of an open door symbolizing our choice.*

We’ve talked about how the fears we have of unknown futures can paralyze us. There is the fear and struggle of discerning the right door. The fear of missing out keeps us waiting for potentially better doors. And then there’s the fear that even if the door may be God’s leading, that we may not like what God is planning for us. It might not be what we choose or want.

This message series really isn’t about the doors that God has opened in front of each of us. I said all of that back in the first sermon. God opens doors in front of us. Take courage and go through! This we know. We’re *spending time* in this series, because we’re discovering more *about us*.

What have you been learning about yourself? Are you wrestling with the opportunity to open the door? Do you believe that God is on the other side of the door? Have you been able to muster the courage to boldly cross the threshold?

Last week, my daughter gave me some feedback on my sermon. You know, it’s getting pretty scary when your kids get old enough to start critiquing what you do! The problem with my daughter is that she listens to me, at least when I’m preaching, anyway. It’s nice when you folks come up to me and say, “Good sermon, pastor!” or “That sermon really touched me.” But then here comes Rebekah...

“You know, Daddy, during the first part of your sermon, I was really wondering where you were going with it. You were talking about how we can be fearful of the plans that God may be calling us to. But then you really didn’t give many points for how to address the issue. You described the struggle pretty well, but I was waiting to hear what we are to do about that. You talked a lot about our need for wisdom. But then, in the end of your sermon, I guess you did bring it together saying

that we needed to trust God no matter what our fear, because God is a good God, and we needed to be bold and go through the door anyway. In the end I think it was a pretty good sermon.”

Wow. I have a new prime critic! Maybe she needs to be on the Staff-Parish Relations Team!

But Rebekah did hone in on the real issue: do we...do I...trust God? If so, what do I do about that? What are we learning about ourselves? It's not really about God, is it? It's about us, learning to trust God, to walk with God, to let go of our fear, and to step boldly.

PP#5: I Could Not, Would Not, Should Not Go

But so often we tell God “no.” Maybe not in our direct words, but in our behaviors, in our indecision, our lack of action and boldness. We tell God, in Dr. Seuss' style, “I could not, would not, should not go!” What have you learned that holds you back? What keeps you in the waiting place?

PP#6: I Could Not, Would Not, Should Not Go

1. Self-awareness is essential

You know, an open door in front of us, and the inner struggle it causes us, requires us to do some self-reflection. Who are we? What drives us? Why do we do what we do, or not do? Self-awareness is essential for us to respond to God's challenge of the open door in front of us. We need to be aware of what is going on within us, as well as with-out of us!

Open doors drive us to learn more about ourselves, to become self aware of how God wired us, our God-given interests, our unique passions, our values, our aptitudes. We need to be honest about what we may be trying to not think about, or admit, or prefer to avoid.

PP#7: I Could Not, Would Not, Should Not Go

1. Self-awareness is essential

“For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.” -Ephesians 2:10 (NASB)

In Ephesians 2, Paul tells us something we need to know about ourselves. He says, verse 10, “For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.” God, who designed you, is the God who sets the doors before you. And often God gives you a skill along with your interests. Becoming self-aware of your interests can really help you understand about the open doors God sets before you. If you want to go forward with God, you must first ask for wisdom, and then you must look deep inside. Who has God made you to be? What are you drawn to? What can you not stop thinking about? What catches your eye? God made you, and prepared important good works for you to do, so that you would *walk in them*, not stay in the waiting place!

PP#8: Unhelpful responses to open doors:

Impulsives: Don't count the cost. Need discernment.

Resisters: Prefer to wait. Need courage.

In the book, Ortberg describes two unhelpful, but typical ways people respond to open doors. Impulsive people eagerly jump in without first counting the cost. They like the idea of what could be, but haven't amassed the commitment to see it through. When we're like this, we need

discernment. We need to lean into the wisdom and wise counsel from those around us.

The other unhelpful way to respond is to be a resister. When we're like this, we prefer to stay in the waiting room. Then we need to be courageous. We need to amass our trust in a good God and be willing to go forward.

PP#9: What Is My Door Response Style?

Impulsives	Resisters
Activist	Contemplative
Tend to underthink	Tend to overthink
Move too fast	Move too slowly
Favorite saying: "He who hesitates is lost"	Favorite saying: "Look before you leap."
Favorite Bible verse: "Whatever you do, do it quickly!"	Favorite Bible verse: "The Lord grants sleep to those He loves."
Favorite sins: Sins of commission	Favorite sins: Sins of omission
Strong will	Strong intellect
Distrust of weakness	Distrust of power

Take a look at the screen. Where are your tendencies? Look at this chart. Who do you tend to be: an impulsive, or a resister? Remember, impulsives need discernment. Resisters need courage.

God is not looking for perfect responses. He's looking for people willing to go wholeheartedly, to cross with courage, and wisdom! Trusting in the one who is perfect and wise.

PP#10: Jonah 1:1-3

1 The Lord's word came to Jonah, Amittai's son: 2 "Get up and go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it, for their evil has come to my attention."

3 So Jonah got up—to flee to Tarshish from the Lord! He went down to Joppa and found a ship headed for Tarshish. He paid the fare and went aboard to go with them to Tarshish, away from the Lord.

Ian read the first verses of Jonah. Jonah was the perfect example of a resister, wasn't he? Here he was a prophet. His job is to go and tell God's word to different people and places. So, one day, God opened a door for him to do his prophetic work to a foreign city, telling them God's anger with them for their sin. Jonah's response? "Lord, I could not, should not, would not go!" And off he heads in the opposite direction.

God asked him,

Could you, would you, go to preach?

Could you, would you, go to reach?

The people of Assyria?

For you fit my criteria?
 Jonah said,
 I would not go there in a boat.
 I would not go there in a float.
 I would not go there in a gale,
 I would not go there in a whale.
 I do not like the people there.
 If they all died, I would not care.
 I will not go to that great town.
 I'd rather choke. I'd rather drown.
 I will not go by land or sea.
 So stop this talk and let me be!
 Jonah is resistant, defiant, strong willed, set in his ways. I wonder if he's a teenager?

PP#11: I Could Not, Would Not, Should Not Go

1. Self-awareness is essential
2. Our doors are often opened for blessing others

The doors God opens in front of us, we've learned, are not necessarily what we would choose. They're not always safe, or easy. And they're not necessarily opened for our benefit. God often opens doors in front of us for the blessing of others. Remember? "Opportunities to act with God and *for God*."

Jonah was told to go to strange, foreign people. They were the enemy! Go there and preach to them how the God of Israel was angry at them, so they would change? Wow, that's a dangerous assignment. We can relate, perhaps in a small way. What God asks us to do can be difficult. Self-sacrificing. Scary. And then there's the fear of failure! Or, in Jonah's case, the fear of success!

All too often we turn and run, like Jonah!

A couple of years ago I shared with you a sermon series of my Jonahs. God called me to become a pastor, and I ran the other way. I wanted to be a banker, work with investments. Then I ran away from having kids, only to learn later that God was working with a closing door! Then I ran away from tithing when my monies were tight. In my marriage, I tend to run away from owning my part of the problem, I run to selfishness and anger. I've been Jonah way too often.

Have you ever gotten on a ship heading the opposite way from where God was calling you? Yes, we love God, seek to serve Him..but we're not ready, not now, not there, because ... (excuses). Our fear is not overcome by changes in our situational circumstances. "If only I had more income, then I could afford to tithe." It is always a leap of faith, of going *before* we can see clearly how.

PP#12: I Could Not, Would Not, Should Not Go

1. Self-awareness is essential
2. Our doors are often opened for blessing others

"I've commanded you to be strong and brave. Don't ever be afraid or discouraged! I am the Lord your God, and I will be there to help you wherever you go." -Joshua 1:9

We are all created to be brave. We are all created to be strong. We are all created to do good works, which God has prepared in advance for us to do.

God makes us able to go. He goes with us. He's on the other side of the door. We need not

fear. Bud Huntosh told me that his favorite Bible phrase is “fear not.” He said that it appears all over the Old Testament and New Testament. It appears in the Bible 365 times. Think about that! That’s enough for one every day! Each day we can have the confidence to fear not. The Bible says, “Be strong, be brave, for the Lord your God goes with you!” (Joshua 1:9).

PP13: *Image of Jonah on the ship in the storm.*

The only truly safe place is in the will of God, even when it’s not easy!

Jonah is fleeing from God, but gets caught in a storm. The sailors are superstitious and call upon everyone to pray to their gods. They cast lots to see who is to blame, and, of course, the lot falls on Jonah. Sometime take a closer look at the first chapter of Jonah. We don’t have time to do that any more this morning. But when you look at it, notice how even when Jonah goes through a wrong door, God meets him there, and God uses Him to bring others to know God better. In their interaction, the sailors all end up praying to Jonah’s God, praising Him and declaring Him as the true God! If you’re worried about going through a wrong door, and you’re worried that God might not go with you, or use you there, read all of Jonah chapter 1. God used Jonah, even while he was headed the wrong way! Isn’t our God amazing? I tell you, I want to follow a God like this.

Well, by the end of chapter one, the sailors are praying to God, but Jonah still isn’t. Even still, God comes to Jonah’s rescue. Out in the middle of no where, with the waves swelling over his head, God sends a giant fish to save Jonah.

And finally, when he realizes that he should be dead, and he’s in utter defeat, with stench filling his nose, he finally prays to God.

Chapter 1: I see a Jonah so much like I am. He went through the doors he wanted, preferred, easiest. Yet they all turned into a disaster! Chapter 2: Jonah, in resignation, finally prays to God.

PP#14: I Could Not, Would Not, Should Not Go

1. Self-awareness is essential
2. Our doors are often opened for blessing others
3. Start praying *before* going through an open door

“Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish: ‘I called out to the Lord in my distress, and He answered me.’” -Jonah 2:1-2

It is in prayer that God can change our hearts. We struggle with our own wants and desires. Yet when we pray, we access the Holy Spirit given into us to shape us, mold us, change us, redirect our wills. It is in prayer that our “I would not, could not, should not go” gets changed into “Not my will, but yours be done!”

Prayer is where God can change our hearts. And as we look at Jonah, we can see that he finally does pray, but from a miserable circumstance. How better it is to *start* in prayer, and avoid some of the painful learning! It goes so much better when we let God be in control! When we look at Jonah, we can learn, and avoid us having to hit rock bottom before we go where God points.

The turning point of this story comes when Jonah becomes self-aware. Here he is sitting in the belly of a fish. He sees his running. He admits his resistance. He identifies his shortcomings. And he prays!

You know what? Our God’s not proud. He takes us where we are at. He’s happy when we finally turn to Him, even after we have no one else to go to. He takes a prophet that smells like fish guts and sends him to Ninevah. He’s happy to take you, even where you are right now!

When the soggy, smelly, disheveled Jonah speaks to the Ninevites, they respond. Perhaps it was because of the spectacle he must have been, perhaps it was because he looked like he meant what he said that God was serious. It doesn't say why, but it does say that the people repented and changed their ways.

PP#15: *Image of an open door, w/the book cover [Oh the Places You Will Go!] as the door!*

What doors is God opening in front of you for the benefit of others? How many doors do we have opened in front of us each day to bless others? Someone is waiting to hear, for you to tell them about a great hope, about a God who opens doors.

Resistance or impulsiveness messes us up. An abundance of fear and selfishness, a lack of love, keep us from going through the open doors.

Yet God is waiting. What are you going to do?

God says, "Go!"	[Pointing to the open door]
Jonah says, "No!"	[Crossing arms stubbornly]
God says, "Blow!"	[Arms making wind signs]
Jonah says, "So?"	[Shrugging nonchalantly]
The captain says, "Bro!"	[Pointing at Jonah]
Jonah says, "Throw."	[Resigned, thumbing overboard]
The sailors say, "Whoa!"	[Signs of praise and prayer to heaven]
So they tossed Jonah in, and he sank very low.	

But God had more places, for Jonah to go.

And for you, too. But it all starts right here, with reflective self-awareness, with a desire to bless others, and in prayer.

Oh the places you will go!

If you don't say, "No!"

Amen!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR MAY 8, 2016

Spring Series: “The Open Door”

Sermon: “I Could Not, Would Not, Should Not Go”

Scripture: Jonah 1:1-3 (Jonah flees God’s mission)

Opening prayer

Introductions: Share about a time you ran away from God’s calling on you, and how it turned out.

Background: Skim the book of Jonah. What do you notice?

Read: Jonah 1:1-3

1. Verse 1-2. What do you know about Jonah? About Nineveh? (Map time!)
2. What do you think was the message Jonah was to deliver to the Ninevites.
3. Why was God so concerned about the Ninevites? What does this say about God’s care for people that you don’t care for? Who might you label as your “Ninevites” today?
4. Verse 3. Give at least two different reasons why you think Jonah may have chosen to flee. Then, look up Jonah 4:2 for a clue to another reason.
5. What are some of the reasons why you choose to disobey God’s calling on your life?
6. One commentator writes, “Tarshish stood more than 2,500 miles from Israel in the opposite direction of Nineveh. It was the most remote destination available to Jonah.” Look at the very end of verse 3. Why do you think Jonah may have chosen Tarshish as his destination?
7. If you have time, read the rest of chapter 1. Trace the spiritual development of the sailors. Compare and contrast them to Jonah (for example, compare who does the praying).
8. How does God use Jonah, even while He flees from God? Contrast the sailors faith from when the storm begins, to when it is over. How would you describe them?
9. What might this say about how God can use you even when you don’t do what He may want?
10. Read the first few verses of chapter two. Describe the change in Jonah from the beginning of chapter 1 to the beginning of chapter 2.
11. Application: What will you take away from this passage? How will you live it out?