

Session 4: The Doors We Open for Others

Opening:

Once everyone has gathered, set a timer for 1 minute of silence.

After 1 minute, read this verse out loud, slowly and clearly.

“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever. Amen!” (Ephesians 3:20-21)

Enjoy one more minute of silence.

Ask the group to listen to the verse again, and choose one word or phrase that resonates with them, no explanation necessary.

Read the verse again:

“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever. Amen!” (Ephesians 3:20-21)

Invite the group members to say their word or verse (can go around in a circle).

Read this prayer:

You are almighty, all-powerful, majestic, the overflowing source of all good—and yet you choose to work through us. As your power works within us, may we bring you glory and build your church, now and forever. Through Jesus we pray. Amen.

Read aloud (maybe have a different person read each paragraph):

Too often we think about open doors or “knowing God’s will” as having to do solely with us as individuals. We think about the questions of discernment as “what’s in this for me?” But the truth is, following God has much more to do with “what’s in this for others?”

As John Ortberg says: “Biblically speaking, open doors are divine invitations to make our lives count, with God’s help, *for the sake of others.*” (p. 63, italics mine) Think about our older brothers and sisters in the faith. Abram/Abraham was “blessed to be a blessing” (Genesis 15). He wasn’t “blessed to have an easy life” or “blessed to have no sorrow, no pain, no trouble.” Abram was called to be the father of a great nation, but it took him a long time to have a son. And when he finally had a legitimate heir, God asked him to take the boy to the top of a mountain and prepare to sacrifice him. Why did old Abraham have to go through all of that? So that eventually the son of God himself would descend from his line and, like the ram in the thicket, be sacrificed on that same mountain for the sake of us all. He was blessed to be a blessing.

Mary was chosen to bear the Son of God. But that blessing cost her. Her fiancée almost broke up with her, she gave birth in a sheep pen, she had to flee to Egypt—and that was all before the kid was 2 years old! Then he stayed behind in the temple at 12, gathered a ragtag bunch of followers at 30, and traveled the country saying crazy things for a few years. Then Mary watched her son die. She saw him resurrected. She witnessed the descent of the Holy Spirit. How many times in her life did she wonder if she had really seen an angel? If God was really doing something through her or her child? As Simeon prophesied, “A sword pierced her soul.” (Luke 3). Her election to be the bearer of Jesus was not about her. She was blessed to be a blessing for the rest of us.

In scripture, election is about other people. Someone is chosen so that other people will be blessed. The same goes for discerning God's will or walking through open doors. The open door is usually not about you! You have been blessed,—called, chosen, equipped—to be a blessing for others.

“To journey for the sake of saving our own lives is little by little to cease to live in any sense that really matters, even to ourselves, because it is only by journeying for the world's sake—even when the world bores and sickens and scares you half to death—that little by little we start to come alive.”

--Frederick Buechner, from *The Sacred Journey*, quoted in Ortberg on p. 63.

Who do you know (bible characters or others) whose life may not have turned out the way they wanted, but were used by God to bless others? List some:

-
-
-
-
-
-

So here's the big question: Who is in your life because God is intending to bless them through you?

“The secret of the open door is that it appears most often when we stop obsessing over self-advancement and look instead for opportunities to love.” (p. 63)

“I know we live in a society that will tell you, “Be reasonable. Be prudent. Build a successful career. Be secure. Use all your time and energy and resources.” You can do that if you want to—great resume, great benefits—or you can bet everything on love.” (p. 67)

Doors open when [we] actually notice and care about people [we] might otherwise overlook. (p.70)

In the verse we read at the beginning, we were reminded that God's power is at work within us and he is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine—and we know that it's not about us. Who is in your life that God is ready to bless through you?

Take some time as a group and list possibilities:

-
-
-
-
-
-

“Biblically speaking, open doors are divine invitations to make our lives count, with God's help, *for the sake of others.*” (p. 63, italics mine)

Because of this lesson, what will change in your life with God and others this week?