

THE DOORS

*{Note: the “open” and “close” inserts refer to a door in the sanctuary audibly opened and closed}

The musical group of the late 60's to 1971, “The Doors”, will Not be examined this morning; however, some,..... and I underline, “some”... ..some of their songs would fit in, such as: “Light my fire”, “Tell all the people”, “Break on through to the other side”, “Hello, I love you”,... and I suppose I could include the song, “People are strange.” but I won't.

The title really does refer to doors.

Doors..... we are very familiar with doors.

Doors are used to control access. When they are open they create a pathway. When they are closed, they become a wall / a barrier that separates what is in and what is out.

Sometimes it's desirable to be in, and sometimes it better to be on the outside. Inside, behind a secure door is beneficial during a blizzard, yet prisoner in jail would likely prefer to be on the outside.

A closed door blocks access, and that's troublesome and problematic if we want to go through..... or.....if we need to go through.

In addition, we tend to manage our lives / our choices as if we are a doorkeeper. All the time, we must decide whether to open the door or close the door.

There is a knock on the door [knock].

Bob gets up to answer the door.....,.... doors don't knock or talk, but that's besides the point.

Remember Bob? He had a unique spiritual encounter, back in June.

Anyways, Bob looks through the window and reluctantly opens the door [OPEN].

His neighbour, from down at the far end of the street, Larry, is there.

Larry asks if he can borrow Bob's lawnmower.

Bob shrugs, and says, “Sure, you know where it is,..... and the shed is unlocked. Help yourself, but be sure to clean it when you're done.”

Bob closes the door [CLOSE]

From the kitchen, Bob hears his wife tell him that he was a bit rude to Larry.

Bob retorts, “Larry's always borrowing my mower. It's not my fault, he's broke and doesn't own one of his own,.... and do I charge him for the gas? NO.”

Bob's wife points out that Larry has a family to support and that they are really struggling.

Trying to show some compassion, Bob replies, “I know..... I know,...it is sad how their kids are dressed, but they need to learn to ask for help,.... and you know that culture..... those people don't manage their money very well, in the first place.

Somewhat perturbed, Bob's wife reminds Bob that Larry doesn't have any extended family around to help him, and he's been through some tough times, and he's trying real hard.

Sheepishly, Bob concedes with a nod, and then quickly changes the subject, “Speaking of new people, we need to invite that new couple at church to dinner, sometime.”
“What new couple?”

Bob answers, “You know, that doctor and his wife. I sure hope they join the church... because the church’s finances could sure use a boost.”

Bob’s wife replied, “They do seem to be well off, and we are not meeting our budget.... yet you got it backwards. She’s the doctor, not him.”

Before Bob could respond, there was another knock on the door. [knock]

Bob doesn’t recognize who it is. The young man knocking is a stranger, but Bob opens the door anyways. [OPEN].

Bob’s wife can’t make out the brief conversation. She only heard the terse, “I’m not interested, Bye.”
[CLOSE]

As Bob approaches the kitchen, she asks, “Who was he and what did he want?”

“Oh, some weird guy wanting me to donate to some charity. I think it was a homeless shelter or something like that. I guess that is a worthy cause, but..... they should be more selective about who they send out soliciting door to door.

Bob’s wife looks perplexed.

Bob explains, “I don’t care if he had an I.D. badge,... .. he looked pretty sketchy..... He could have been a criminal or something. I don’t like “those” people around here.”

Before his wife could say anything, Bob blurts out, “I know, I know... I was prejudging him, but I could tell by the way he talked that he wasn’t a good person.” Trying to redirect the conversation, Bob asserts, “IF taxes were less, then I’d be more generous at church and... help worthy causes. It’s not my fault.”

Bob, then turns, heads to the living room to watch something on the TV.

> Watching Television is an open door. TV is a portal to all sorts of things. First and foremost, commercial TV is inviting greed, lust and envy into our homes and lives..... because of the advertisements.

In addition, many programs are laden with violence, hate, objectification and stereotyping,.....and those values can prance right into our consciousness if and when we open that door without prudence. And, at the very least, use a screen door: label / identify the negative messages in commercials and TV shows.

Evil, destructive and negative things should be blocked out; however, we can not, and dare not assume we know what is in a person’s heart and being.

As James 2:12 strongly declares: when dealing with people, mercy “trumps” judgment. Always choose mercy / grace over judgment.

Moreover, this passage in James echoes the clear social justice message of the great prophets—a message that Jesus taught and lived.

The James text begins with the cutting question: Do you with you acts of favouritism, really believe in Jesus Christ?

Favouritism / arrogance / granting privileges / perks / benefits to the affluent is a huge, boarded up door. A door that judges / locks out those deemed inferior because of nonconformity, culture, weakness or financial misfortune.

To reinforce the message, James states that showing partiality / favouritism—Judgment is wrong / counter to how God wants us to live.

Presidential candidate, Mitt Romney’s assertion that lowering taxes will increase charitable giving is not only favouritism, but it is also wrong.

A report in “The Chronicle of Philanthropy”, says the opposite is true.

Higher taxes actual encourage charitable giving because of the deduction incentive.

Research reveals that the well off tend to keep the extra money from gained from lowering taxes.

Moreover, the article pointed out that the affluent donate very selectively. In reality, they are not giving, but investing.

They usually donate to causes that “they use”, such as certain hospitals or private schools.

This past week, it was announced that Cameco is donating one million dollars for the new art gallery that will be built. That’s fine, and I like art museums, but if taxes are lowered, then social programs will be cut. Parks, roads, public schools, food safety and the poor will lose out.

Taxes, if used fairly, can be an open pathway to equality and justice.

Sharing, giving, balancing power is how God wants us to live.

God’s mandate is very clear in Isaiah 35, starting at verse 3:

– Strengthen the weak, and help those who are struggling.

– Encourage and uplift those who are fearful and beaten down,... and give people hope.

Jesus embraced and referred to this passage.

Jesus opened doors. He went to and welcomed the outcasts and those labelled as sinners. Jesus empowered and lifted up the weak.

He did Not shut them out.

This past week, Michelle Obama presented the same message when she said, “When you’ve worked hard, and done well, and walked through that doorway of opportunity... you do not slam it shut behind you...you reach back and you give other folks the same chances that helped you succeed.”

A closed door blocks hope, **and** an open door allows two way access.

Like it or not, the Bible presents God's will for our lives as people with open doors and open bank vaults. We are to invite in and to reach out.

We are called to level the playing field, without prejudice / without demanding merit..... or conformity.

And, James makes it clear that we must not insult those who have less than we do,.....and we must NOT make them beggars.

We must go and help / give to those in need, and not demand that they first ask / that they have to come knocking on their *superior's* door.

Christians who ignore God's social justice merely have a "head" faith, and are not demonstrating a "Saving faith."

*Those who chose to follow Christ experience a moral life change, and it is visible in how a person lives.

Subsequently, closing doors to social justice and to accepting all people without prejudice,.....is a destructive barriers to Not only others, but to ourselves.

And, isolation can be very lonely behind a closed door.

Bob sits down and turns on the TV, moments later his teenage son saunters in and plops down on the chair next to Bob.

He's got ear buds on, listening to music, and with the two pencils he's holding, he starts playing the drums on the chair's arm.

This is a teenager's way of saying, "Hello", I'm here and I'd like to connect. It is an attempt to open the door. [OPEN]

Bob's son wants his dad to come through the door. He wants to tell him what he's been making.

After a few seconds, the drum beating distraction ignites Bob, and Bob belts out, "Turn that stupid music off. I can hear it from here, and go clean that mess you made out back."

Bob has just closed the door. [CLOSE]

From the kitchen, Bob's wife witnessed the interaction, and attempts to pry the door back open. She yells out, "Hey, let's go to the coffee house their having at the church tonight at seven. I think it would be great fun for everyone."

The door pops back open [OPEN]

Bob's son waits in the hallway for an answer, and it comes:

“The football game starts at seven,..... and I’m not very happy about having that kind of music in our church. There should only be good Christian music played in the church.”

The door is closed. [CLOSE]

Bob spends the evening watching TV alone.

That night, Bob dutifully says his bedtime prayers.

He prays for his poor neighbour, and for those who are homeless.

He prays for his church, and his family, too.

When he was finished, Bob thought to himself, “Why do I not sense God’s presence? Why do I feel disconnected from God?”

He felt like he had only been talking to himself / like there was a closed door between him and God.

I wonder,.... who closed the door,.... time and time again?

Revelation 3:20 states:

“Listen, I am standing at the door knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I’ll come in and commune with you.”

Could it be that God’s voice sounds like a poor neighbour,.... or...a stranger,..... or a teenager?

And, maybe **we need** open access to the powerless, the outcasts and the weak?

Maybe OUR spiritual well-being depends on it?

James 2:5 reveals that the affluent / the comfortable are lacking in faith.

Perhaps, we need the poor to show us the way.....to Open “the” door the door to our hearts?

[OPEN]

Strangers, the financially strapped and people “unlike” ourselves Knock on our door.

Injustice, imbalance of power, poverty knocks on our door.

It’s a lot safer to close the door / to keep the door shut. [CLOSE]

Who knows what kind of person will come through that Door.

They may want something from us?

They may make us uncomfortable?

They could even demand things from us,.... or worse, they couldchange us???

It’s a lot safer to keep the door closed.

And,..... it is a lot more lonely, too.

The pathway to God is through an open door.

The pathway for God,..... is through an open door.