

TRITE, *not* TRUE

JARRETT STEPHENS

rightnow MEDIA

SESSION 1: “When God closes a door”

► SERIES RECAP

You and I are swimming in a culture full of opinions masquerading as wisdom. What’s worse, much of what passes as wisdom today has the ring of biblical truth. How do you tell the difference? How do you see through half-truths and self-help trends to access the deep wisdom of God’s Word and the full life found in Him alone?

Those are the questions Jarrett Stephens tackles in his series Trite, Not True – where he explores six of the most common pop philosophies that influence people’s lives today, including Christians.

As you dive in, you’ll discover how to decipher superficial insights from the real truth of God’s Word, as well as how to apply biblical wisdom to your everyday life. Because ultimately, the life of meaning and impact you long for doesn’t come from a philosophy, platitude, maxim, or mantra. . . but from one person, Jesus Christ.

► OPEN

(Simple intro to frame the objective of the group study, break the ice, and get people thinking)

Ask the group: Think about a time in your life when you had a door closed on you. How did you react? What did others say to you when it happened?

The adage we’re exploring today is one that’s hard to dismiss. . . especially when you hear it from the mouth of Fraulein Maria! At the beginning of *The Sound of Music*, Julie Andrews says,

“When the Lord closes a door, somewhere he opens a window.”

Has anyone ever shared this with you? Have you shared it with others? Aside from it coming from a beloved character in a classic movie, what makes this adage so appealing?

It seems believable, but is it true?

► WATCH THE VIDEO

► DISCUSS (ASK YOUR GROUP):

Is there anything wrong with this longing for a better opportunity?

From a biblical perspective, why do you think people would think, feel, and act as though a closed door – a missed or denied opportunity – will always be followed by another, usually better, possibility?

DIG DEEPER: Ecclesiastes 3:11 says that God “*has set eternity in the hearts of men. . .*” It means you were created with a longing for more than this world offers. You long for goodness, beauty, and truth that’s only found in the eternal God. The trouble is that sin distorts how we seek to meet that longing – leading us to try to control God’s will rather than rest in it.

What are some places other than God where we hang our hopes for a better reality or a brighter future?

► WHAT THE WORLD SAYS

At the heart of this saying is the idea that God wants what is best for us. And while this is certainly true, there’s another idea at the center of this maxim which is not: that our happiness and comfort are what are best for us. And if that’s the case, because God is good and loves us, that’s what he’ll give us.

What are some other ways our culture communicates the belief that a loving God’s primary concern with us is our happiness?

When have you been tempted to think that God should want you to be happy and comfortable? How does it make you think or feel when that expectation isn’t met?

Ask Yourself: Where’s your heart focused when you’re waiting on God to “open a window”? Is it at rest in his will? Or is your happiness dependent on your circumstances?

▶ WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

Throughout the Bible there are examples of God both opening and closing doors. There is no one-size-fits all answer either. God in his sovereignty works through all circumstances, always being faithful to those who follow him.

Yes, God opens doors.

In the video, Pastor Jarrett says that God does open **doors** for us sometimes. Let's explore some times in scripture when that was the case.

Have participants read the following examples aloud:

- Acts 14:27—God opened the door to minister to Gentiles
- 1 Cor. 16:8-9a—He opened wide a door to reach the Corinthians
- 2 Cor. 2:12-13—Doors were opened to preach in Troas (Note how Paul felt in this instance about walking through the open door. What were the unique circumstances?)
- Col. 4:3—Paul prayed for an open door

What is a common thread in these examples of God opening doors? Does there seem to be a purpose that's behind them?

Yes, God closes doors.

Jarrett also gave examples of when God closed doors. Let's look at the example from Acts and Revelation.

Ask participants to read the following passages:

- Acts 16:6-7—God closed the door to certain places on Paul's missionary journey.
- Revelation 3:7-8—God closes some doors and no one can open them.

What do these verses tell us about when and why God closes doors?

(Potential prompting questions for the group: Are all closed doors keeping you from something that's bad? What does the Acts passage say about God's timing and how closed doors are part of that? Who is ultimately in control of closing and opening doors and windows?)

God sometimes will open a window when a door was closed.

In fact, Pastor Jarrett says sometimes God flings windows wide open in miraculous ways – so there's no doubt who did it.

What are some of the examples of this Jarrett named in the video?

- Parting Red Sea. Closed door in pursuit of Pharaoh from Egypt. Open door of path to freedom and defeat of army.
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Closed door on their freedom and life. Open door through the salvation of Jesus preserving them in the fire.

God closes some doors of deliverance but opens other doors for provision that no one saw coming. Live by faith in the God who can open windows... even when no one else can.

Sometimes God also chooses *not* to open anything.

Ask a participant to read:

- Heb. 11:36-38—Persecution and martyrdom of God's people for their faithfulness
- 2 Chron. 24:20-21
- Acts 7:54-60
- Luke 22:42

God's goal for your life is not your 'happiness' or comfort but your purification. He wants you to look more like Jesus, and for your life to point others to him.

Ask someone in the group to read the following passages.

- Rom. 8:29—"predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son"
- Phil 1:6—"he who began a good work ... will bring it to completion..."

Nothing makes us more like Jesus than going through trials, troubles, heartache, and pain (closed doors) and not opening windows.

IDENTIFY THE TENSION: You know God is all-good. And you know he's all-powerful. So how do you deal with the tension that comes when our all-good, all-powerful God chooses to close a door in your life and not open a window?

▶ **APPLY THE BIBLICAL TRUTH IN YOUR LIFE**

How do we reconcile all of these truths and move toward a biblical understanding of closed doors and open doors?

We can start by focusing on Proverbs 3:5-6. (*ask a participant to read*)

Jarrett says there are three responsibilities this passage teaches we have toward God.

Trust: “LORD” used in Proverbs 3:5-6 is the covenant name of God – Yahweh.

What is significant about the use of Yahweh in this verse? (*It reminds us of WHO we are trusting*)

Lean: The command is in the negative... “don’t lean...” Trust and lean are very similar terms. When the door is shut and you’re tempted to lean on yourself or even your friends or resources, don’t. Lean on God (Again, because of *WHO* God is)

Do you feel qualified to determine which doors should remain open or shut in your life?

Know: The trust problem and leaning problem often stem from the knowing problem. You cannot trust and rely on the God you do not now know intimately.

You can walk through the open doors and trust God with the closed doors when you know the God who sovereignly controls all doors... know His heart, character, purposes, and love.

▶ **CLOSE**

It’s ultimately not about open doors, shut doors, or windows... it’s about trusting the One who holds you through every season. Knowing God. Walking with God. Growing in God.

Prayer: *Dear God, thank you for your Word. . . how it speaks to your sovereignty and your great love for us. Help us not to lean on our own understanding or look to worldly wisdom or half-truths when doors are closed in our life. Give us the strength to lean only on you and to trust that you are forming each of us into the child you want us to be, for our good and your glory. Amen.*

▶ **NOTES**

Lined area for taking notes, consisting of 20 horizontal lines.

