

Open Windows I - Desire (Temptations Series – Part II)

7/26/2009

The notes that follow each question below come from discussions that occurred after the sermon or further consideration of some of the issues raised. They should not be considered the “correct” answers by any means. It is hoped that they will provide a starting point for developing your own discussion of Pastor Steve’s sermons.

1. When you think about the windows in your home, what are some good aspects of windows, and what are some bad ones?

Good aspects might include: let in light during the day, let one see the beauty outside, let one tell what the weather is like outside, allow one to see when a family member or friend has arrived, let in fresh air when open.

Bad aspects might include: Let in polluted air when open, remind you of the rotten view you have out that window, remind you of how much work you need to be doing outside, let bad people see into your home, serve as an easy point of entry for a burglar.

2. Pastor Steve starts out with a question that we all wrestle with from time to time. Why do we say one thing and do something else? We say we love God, but we act as if we love other things more. Why?

The powers that attempt to control us are greater than we think. The sinful nature of man causes us to have desires to do things we know we shouldn’t do. (Mark 7:14-15)

3. If by nature we are full of sin, then we might as well give up and quit trying to be good, right?

We have a choice as to whether or not we will give in to our sinful desires. As humans acting alone, we can not control these desires, but with God’s help in the form of the Holy Spirit within us, we have the power to choose to ignore our sinful desires.

4. Even if we are mindful of the sin crouching outside the door of our lives (last week’s sermon), there are ways in which we might be tempted that, in and of themselves, are not sinful, but they can lead to sin. Pastor Steve likens these to the windows of our lives. This week’s “window” is entitled Desire. How would you define desire?

A zeal, a craving, a felt need for something, an impulse to get something or do something.

5. Motivational speakers urge us to have great desire, so that we can accomplish our goals. So is desire a wolf in sheep’s clothing or is it an important attribute to have?

Having desire can be a healthy thing. If we desire to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind, that's a good thing. If we have a zeal for doing the things that God has placed us on this earth to do, that is also a good thing.

However, if our desires are for personal pleasure (especially at the expense of others), then we have gotten off track. If our only motivation is financial success or climbing the corporate ladder faster than the next person, then desire will lead us into places we should not be going and actions we should not be taking.

6. Read James 1:13-15 and watch the progression that can occur if we let personal desires control us.

The verses point out a progression that starts with temptation (desire), which leads to lust (stronger desire), which leads to sin and ends with death. Thus, desire gives birth to sin.

7. Read James 4:1-3 and see if you can identify the problem being described.

Our desires tend to be focused on personal pleasures. That doesn't mean that we should avoid pleasurable activities, but that we should do it within the context of doing God's will. Having fun with our families is pleasurable, but it also builds stronger bonds, which allows us to love each other better and that is within God's will.

8. Read James 4:4-5 and identify the underlying source of our problem.

We need to give our full attention to God and the Holy Spirit who dwells within us. To pay closer attention to worldly things is to commit adultery once we have committed our lives to God.

9. The solution is then described in James 4:6-8. How would you summarize the instructions?

Put God first in your lives.

10. So our problems are all solved, right? Read James 4:9-10 and try to figure out what happened.

It seems to be about attitude. We must approach God with humility and seriousness.

11. At the end Pastor Steve described three ways to guard our window called Desire. What are they and how do we implement them?

a) Resist the relentless lures set out by Satan: Everyone is tempted. Our problem is compounded because our reasoning ability is affected by our desires. Rather

than trying to control or wipe out our desires, we should convert them into something that causes us to do good.

b) Reprioritize our desires: If our #1 desire is to be close to God, so that we can love God for God's sake, then all our other desires will tend to fall into a proper place and direction.

c) Cleanse your hands and heart: If we have practices, attitudes, or desires that are unbecoming or deadening our spirit, then we ought to rid ourselves of them. We need to learn to walk down another street if that will keep us from being tempted.