

“Being a Positive PEST”

Ephesians 4:7-16

Series: GPS – Finding Your Purpose Week 4. APEST

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October 17, 2021

I've been called a lot of names over the years. When I first came to Woodside people called me Pastor HOGLE – which worried me because back then the church really loved the annual Pig Roast. But the best misnomers come from children – especially the kids in the preschool. During my monthly lesson with the kids I teach them songs and Bible lessons. Most of them call me Pastor Doug. One child called me “Pass the Duck.” My favorite was the child who felt sorry for me. He said, “Teacher, he’s such a nice man. Why are the kids calling him that bad name?” “What name?” his teacher asked. “Pester Dog.”

Maybe I am a pest. Someone from Woodside invited a neighbor to worship here. The friend declined saying, “Sorry, I hear your pastor is too pushy. He expects you to do something. I’m going to this other church where they don’t ask you to do anything.” I guess I’m a pest after all.

Not all pests are negative like roaches, rats and robotic telemarketers. Pests can be positive. Take for example the Formosan rock monkey. They pester coffee farmers in Taiwan by eating the reddest, ripest berries from coffee plants and spitting out the seeds. After years of frustration the farmers had a change of heart. They started collecting these half-chewed seeds and roasting them to produce a coffee connoisseurs consider a delicacy. It’s a double blessing. When the monkey partially chews the seed he both peels the fruit and adds a vanilla-like flavor. This rare blend sells for around \$56 a pound.¹

The Church of Jesus Christ is supposed to be A(positive)PEST. Positive pests nudge and prod people to be more than they ever imagined. The best pests come alongside you, equip you and help you find your purpose and be the best version of you. In our current series GPS we want to help everyone find their unique God-given purpose and calling. Perhaps some of you have felt a little pestered but I hope you know it is for a positive goal. Once you discover your unique mix of Gifts, Passion and Story you will understand how you are made and what you are made to do.

Through the messages, Growth Group discussions and the GPS assessment we’ve already looked at your Natural and Spiritual Gifts - the tools to fulfill your purpose. Next we identify your Passions – the place where you pursue your purpose. Last week Scott gave a great message on two of those Passions. There’s your People Passion – WHO you want to work with. It could be children, youth, seniors, refugees, homeless neighbors, those with an addiction, unbelievers and seekers. Then Scott spoke about your Cause Passion – WHAT you want to work on. Perhaps you feel a burning desire to build stronger marriages and families, clean up the environment, eliminate racism, remove barriers to those with disabilities, change the way we care for those with mental illness, reduce the revolving prison door, help people find their way back to God.

Now, along with WHO and WHAT, today we look at a third Passion. The authors of Find Your Place call it your Influence Passion. I call it your HOW Passion – how you pursue your

¹ Christine Lu (Reuters), "Monkey business yields gourmet Taiwan coffee" (11-15-07)

purpose. There are many ways to do a task. My Uncle Walter, who married my Dad's sister, used to tease our family by saying, "There are three ways to do something: the right way, the army way and the Hoglund way." What's the Hoglund way, we'd ask? "Step one – throw away the instructions." Well, to prove Uncle Walter wrong, I'd like to give you some instructions on how to find your HOW Passion. They come from God's Instruction Book – specifically Ephesians 4.

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Ephesians 4:11-13

This key verse contains five Influencing Passions or how to fulfill a calling: Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Shepherds and Teachers - APEST. If the Church is the body of Christ, as Paul says here, then these five form the DNA code. The DNA in every cell of your body is composed of four nucleotide building blocks called ATGC. Every congregation needs all five APEST callings. If you took the GPS assessment you probably received a primary and secondary influence. Perhaps it says you are an Apostle-Prophet, a Prophet-Shepherd, an Evangelist-Teacher, etc... Some are confused, surprised, even fearful of what they received. Someone said, "I got Prophet. I'm not sure what that is and I'm not sure I want to be it!"

Let's begin with some definitions. Apostles are sent to grow God's Kingdom. The word Apostle comes from the Greek word "to send." It makes sense when you think about the 12 Apostles who were sent to plant churches and spread the Gospel. The Latin term for the same word is *mission* which gives us "Missionary." Apostles are pioneers who explore new territories, entrepreneurs who start new ventures. They are restless, risk takers who like to launch things and lead movements. Paul was an Apostle who traveled around the Roman Empire planting churches and turning them over to others. He never stayed in any one place for too long...except when he was in jail. Apostles in the church today love to start new Growth Groups, new churches, new Microchurches, new missions.

Prophets call us back to God. When you hear the word "prophet" you usually think of someone who predicts the future. The literal meaning of the word is "to speak for" someone, usually for a higher authority. Prophets speak for God. In the Old Testament a prophet's primary role is to call God's people to come back to Him. Like us, Israel strays from its relationship with the Lord and falls in love with idols. Prophets speak the hard truth we need to hear and warn us if we do not turn back we will fall into turmoil, trauma and trouble. This is why the Prophet is rarely a popular person. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel all faced hardships for standing with God against popular opinion. Prophets today expose the dangers of injustice, unrighteousness, selfishness. We need them to call us back from the brink.

Evangelists share God's Good News with seekers. The usual image of an evangelist is someone who shouts from a street corner you are going to hell or knocks on your door and disturbs your Saturday. Both are far from the original meaning. Evangelist literally means "telling Good News." Think of examples of Good News: "The baby is here!" "We won the game!" "You're cured!" Evangelists share the Good News that we are freely forgiven and set free by Jesus. They are naturally warm and infectious people who draw others into Jesus' movement. Philip was an evangelist who shared the Good News when a passing official from Ethiopia asked him a question.

Evangelists today love to build relationships with those outside the church, listen to their questions, and lovingly help them to find their way back to God.

Shepherds care for and grow God's flock. They are compassionate, nurturing, loving leaders. It's the Shepherd's job to protect and provide for the flock. They defend God's lambs, keep sheep from wandering away, and lead the flock to new and greener pastures even when they resist and want to stay put. David was a Shepherd who used his childhood training among his father's flocks to lead the people of God during Israel's golden age. Shepherds today are counselors, coaches, caregivers.

Teachers provide wisdom and help us understand God's Word. Teachers make confusing truths clear and show us how to apply them in our lives. Some are effective trainers. Others inspire a thirst for knowledge. Solomon was a great teacher who took the deep truths of God and put them into simple, easy to practice proverbs. There are many teachers in our world today – from the classroom, to the seminar, to Youtube.

The only Person who possesses all five APEST callings is Jesus. He is the first Apostle – sent by the Father to save the world. He is the premiere Prophet who speaks God's Word because He is The Word of God. He calls us back to the Father. He is the original Evangelist who makes the Good News a reality through His death and resurrection. He calls Himself the Good Shepherd. He is the greatest Teacher of all time. Since Jesus incarnates all five APEST callings it should not be surprising for the Church, the Body of Christ, to express all five as well.

Yet here is where we run into two misunderstandings which have caused frustration and failure for the Church. The first false belief is the APEST roles are only for the clergy. They quote,

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip his people for works of service. Ephesians 4:11-12

Then say the five roles are only for ordained clergy who've gone to seminary. It's their job to equip the rest of the people. This creates passive church members who wait for the clergy to train them. In fact, Paul dispels this myth when he says a little earlier in Ephesians 4:7: "But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it." Each part of the Body of Christ receives one or more of these APEST roles. Some are leaders and other team players but nowhere does it say you must be an ordained clergy to fulfill your role. This is another reason why we are moving away from passive members in a club to active disciples in the Body of Christ.

The second myth which must be busted is Jesus used all five roles to get the Church started but now He only wants Shepherds and Teachers. This belief says Apostles, Prophets and Evangelists were needed at the beginning but now only Shepherds and Teachers are necessary. Even theologians as great as John Calvin, the father of Presbyterianism, taught this. First of all, nowhere in the Bible does it say these roles are supposed to disappear. There are three children in my family. Imagine if my parents said, "Well it was nice having you three to get our family started but we don't really need you anymore. Where can we drop you off?" What if your doctor said, "Your heart, brain, lungs, liver and kidneys were essential when you were first born but I think you'll be fine with just your heart and liver." If Ephesians 4 says Christ gives all five, we need all five to extend the family of God and build up the Body of Christ.

This lack of Apostle, Prophets and Evangelists is the principle reason why the Church is on the decline. Shepherds and Teachers tend to primarily serve the disciples we already have. To reach new followers of Jesus you need Apostles, Prophets and Evangelists.

If your assessments says you are an Apostle we need you to start growth groups, ministries, mission projects, microchurches, plant churches, invite others to join you.

If you are a Prophet we need you to shine the Light on places of darkness, fight injustice, feed the needy, bring hope and healing to those who are struggling, invite others to join you.

If you are an Evangelist we need you to make friends with unbelieving neighbors and coworkers, listen to their questions and concerns, lovingly share the hope you have in Jesus, help them find their way back to God, invite others to join you.

If you are a Shepherd we need you to provide care and compassion, a listening ear and a warm heart. We need you to spiritually nurture believers and invite others to join you.

If you are a Teacher we need you to explain God's Word, train disciples to put it into practice, lead Growth Groups and Microchurches started by the Apostles, invite others to join you.

This has been an exceedingly difficult season for many of us. These last twenty months have been a very trying time for the Church of Jesus. Some say the Church in America is about to collapse. Some say the Church is dismissed and even despised by young people. Some say the Church is out of date, out of fashion, out of touch with the world.

What they say is true in part. But that's because we have not been the Church. We have not been the Body of Jesus Christ. We have not loved as God loves. We have not served as God serves. We do not give as God gives. We cannot love, serve or give as completely as God gives. Yet when we seek to love, serve and give more as God does, Jesus does wonders through us. Jesus transforms lives, feeds stomach, restores bodies, saves souls. And the world not only sits up and takes notice – it hungers for what Jesus offers through us.

This week I ask you to do two things: 1) Find out your APEST and pray about how you will use it. 2) Find out what God wants you to give to His work in the coming year through Woodside.

The most admired person of the twentieth century was a follower of Jesus who inspired others to be the Body of Christ.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AsdqjARLbhU>

Be A(positive)PEST and give like God.