

“God’s Positioning Spirit”

Acts 16:1-10

MORE – Find Your Calling and Live Life to the Fullest Measure

Week 6 My Unique Position

The Rev. Dr. Douglas C. Hoglund

The Woodside Church

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I bought my first GPS a dozen years ago. It was a Garmin. We called it Carmen. When Lisa and I planned a trip to North Carolina to visit my parents, I thought to myself, “What a perfect opportunity to use my new G.P.S.” First I had to pick up Lisa in Philadelphia. I programmed it to her exact location. With soothing tones, Carmen said, “Drive 0.2 miles then turn right.” “Thank you Carmen,” I said. She laid out door to door directions. “Arriving at destination on right,” she cooed. There, miraculously, was an open parking space in center city. As I pulled up, Lisa immediately walked out of the building. “That’s amazing Carmen! Thank you,” I said. “Don’t mention it,” she blushed. I think she even winked at me.

With Lisa in the car we now typed in my parents’ address three states away. Instantly, Carmen computed all the directions. “In 0.3 miles turn left,” she lovingly whispered. “Thank you dear,” I said. But I don’t think Lisa appreciated all the attention I was giving this other woman. “She’s taking you onto 95. Let’s go the Schuylkill Expressway to the Turnpike.” “Yes dear,” I said. When Carmen discovered I was not following her directions she gently said, “Recalculating. Drive 0.2 miles then turn right.” I started to turn right and Lisa said, “Wait, she’s still trying to get us to go on 95. Go straight.” This time I detected a little irritation in Carmen’s voice. She sighed and said, “Recalculating. Drive 5 miles then turn RIGHT.” “She’s fixated on 95,” Lisa complained. “Don’t turn. Keep going to the turnpike!” Now Carmen was ticked off. “RECALCULATING. Drive 7 miles then TURN RIGHT!”

I was in a moral dilemma. Which woman do I obey? Carmen kept getting louder: “Recalculating. Recalculating. RECALCULATING.” And suddenly she just stopped. She was giving me the silent treatment. It took about two months of counseling before she would speak to me again.

The coronavirus is causing a lot of recalculating. School is at the kitchen table, Work in the playroom. The grocery store and mall are online. Vacation will be in the backyard. You are constantly recalculating. What will camps be like this summer? What will school be like next fall? When will I go back to the office? Will I ever go back to the office? Will there even be an office to go back to?

The Good News is: you have something better than Carmen the Garmin to guide you. On this Pentecost Sunday we celebrate how God gives us a personal navigator: the Holy Spirit. The original G.P.S.: God’s Positioning Spirit will guide you through the chaos of the coronavirus. If you listen to what the Spirit says to your spirit, you will find the position where He calls you to be.

Since Easter we've been discovering how God calls us to be More - to find your personal calling and live life to the fullest measure. We have two callings: a Primary Calling common to all followers of Jesus. You are created to be a child of God and a disciple of Jesus who makes disciples of Jesus where you are. Then there is our Secondary Calling which is unique to each person. Your unique identity can be summed up in a few key words or phrases. Last week Linda Marr did a great job helping us uncover our unique mission. It stands at the intersection of our talents and abilities, passions, burdens or convictions, and community needs. It may take some time to refine your unique identity and mission. Yet even if you only have a rough draft you can move on to the final missing piece in your calling: Your Unique Position – where God wants you to GO and fulfill your mission. What position does the Spirit have for you?

God's Positioning Spirit will put you in a place where you can **Be Encouraged and Encouraging**. We started 2020 with a series on Encouragement and man, do we need it now. It followed the life of the Apostle Barnabas – the Son of Encouragement. If you recall, Barnabas is the Apostle who courageously helped Paul, the former persecutor of the Church, to be accepted by the Church. Barnabas encouraged the Jews and Gentiles in Antioch to follow Jesus. Barnabas got Paul back into the ministry and eventually let Paul take the lead. Barnabas is an excellent coach and listener. He comes alongside someone, brings out the best in them, and then steps back to let them shine.

These days it's not a good thing to say something's gone viral, but encouragement is contagious. Paul was so encouraged by Barnabas, he passed the encouragement on to others, especially a gifted young man named Timothy. Paul invited this half Jewish, half Greek disciple to become his apprentice. In time, Paul became his spiritual father. Timothy is mentioned as a coauthor of six of Paul's letters and two more were written to him. When Paul went to prison and later to be with the Lord, Timothy carried on the work Paul planted. He was encouraged by Paul and kept on encouraging.

Each Christian needs at least two other believers in her or his life: a Barnabas and a Timothy.

- You need a Barnabas – someone who has a deeper relationship with Jesus than you, someone who will be your spiritual mentor, who will listen to you, coach you, hold you accountable and help you take the next step in your walk with God.
- You need a Timothy – a believer you can coach and encourage. The Holy Spirit wants to use you to mentor, guide and grow disciples, to help them find their calling and to live life to the fullest measure.

Take a minute and think about who is the Barnabas and the Timothy or Timothys in your life? The Holy Spirit will use your Barnabas to help you find the place to fulfill your calling. The Spirit will use you to help your Timothy find her or his calling. Let's be generous with our encouragement. We all need it during this crisis. I received some wonderful handmade hearts from Ava and Hannah Roffina. They said, "Thank you for all

you do!! I love going to church!! I pray to God every night.” I keep those hearts on my desk in my office to give me a dose of encouragement whenever I need it.

God’s Positioning Spirit will also **Use Detours to Lead You to Your Calling**. As Paul, Silas and Timothy set out from Lystra they soon ran into roadblocks.

So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers. Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas (Acts 16:5-8).

At first, the people responded to Paul’s preaching and everyday new Gentiles became followers of Jesus. But when their little group decided to head west to the coast of Turkey and preach in all the big cities, the Holy Spirit stopped them. So they changed plans and headed north to Bithynia and the Black Sea. Yet the Holy Spirit blocked them again. The Bible doesn’t say how the Spirit gave these directions. Was it an internal feeling? Did it come through group prayer? Did a prophet deliver the Spirit’s message? Did a landslide or a storm close the roads? Was it a combination of all of these? Probably.

The coronavirus is throwing up a lot of roadblocks and detours. None of us ever expected to face a complete shutdown. None of us knows what the new normal will be like. Often, I’ve felt stuck in a giant game of Whack-a-Mole. Every time we come up with a new idea it gets blocked and knocked down by the virus. It’s easy to let these detours drive us to discouragement. Yet if we follow the Spirit, obstacles become opportunities. Paul must have felt frustrated when he couldn’t preach the Gospel in the west or north. The Spirit, however, had a new horizon, a greater goal. Faithfully following the Spirit, they traveled diagonally across Turkey until they literally ran out of land in a town called Troas. That night, Paul received their next direction:

During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. Acts 16:9-10

So they crossed the water and began to preach the Gospel for the first time on the continent of Europe. And if he didn’t, you and I probably wouldn’t be Christians today.

The handout I added to this message will help you work through some of the obstacles and opportunities you’ve hit on your road of life. If you take the time to work through these questions, the Spirit will help you uncover the new horizon He has in store for you. Let me walk you through four sets of questions.

My Personal Values – a value is something worth more to you than other things. To unlock your personal values ask yourself: For what am I willing to sacrifice my time, money, energy? Now one obstacle you may hit is your values do not align with the

organization where you work or volunteer. If not, is there a way to change this? Is there a way to follow your values through a group alongside your organization?

My Personal Rhythms of Life – It’s not realistic to drop everything and pursue our dream calling since we already have many commitments. This may feel like another roadblock. First make a list of the commitments you’ve already made: Financial requirements, Time commitments, Work commitments, Family needs, Personal health. Is there a way you could incorporate these commitments into your calling? Can you cut back on some of them or make some sacrifices to make room for your calling?

My Personal Style – You may feel frustration because you are serving in a role that does not match your personal style. Where do you fall on the lines below? I Prefer:

To work behind the scenes -----out in front
To work with facts -----feelings
To plan way ahead -----to go with the flow
To glimpse the big picture -----to focus on the details

The Spirit may be leading you to find a role which more closely matches your style.

My Personal Interest - I would love to work: In this physical location, with this group of people, to address this cause, to help alleviate this condition.

As you answer these questions, God’s Positioning Spirit will lead you to the people, place and thing He wants you to do. Your position will come as a call to help someone. Who is the person or cause calling to you and saying, “Come help me?” Who is the person you know who does not believe in God or has no church home, the person who has doubts or who is struggling to find direction and purpose? The best thing you can do, in God’s eyes, is to go help that person meet Jesus. I want to issue a challenge to everyone that by the end of the summer you will help three people become followers of Jesus Christ. Invite them to watch the worship service online, attend your Growth Group online. Maybe you can start a Microchurch in your backyard for people who don’t even want to come to the building.

One thing is sure, I believe the place where the Spirit wants you to serve right now is in your neighborhood. Here is an easy way to help your neighbors love their neighbors. The closure of businesses and the rise in unemployment are causing many people to seek food from one of our local pantries. Food cupboards need our help. A simple method is to ask your neighbors to put some canned or dry goods in a bag out by their mailbox for you to collect and deliver to the pantry. On the website below this sermon is The Neighborhood Canned Good Drive. When you download it you will find slips to which you can add your name and address. Cut them up and hang one on the flag of your neighbors’ mailboxes. I recommend giving them about a week to participate. As you place the slip on the mailbox flag, pray for the people in the house. You may want to put an additional slip on the mailbox the day before you collect the food to remind them.

When you collect the food, put one of the Thank You slips on their mailbox flag. The last pages contain a list of pantries. Call the pantry before you deliver to make sure

they are there. There is also an exciting project called Bucks County Knocks Out Hunger on Saturday, June 20 9am-12 pm. Please take a picture of the food before you deliver it and send it to Sue Harris-Miller at susan@woodside-church.org I challenge you Woodside to collect 500 bags of food. If many of us participate we'll see a great harvest for our neighbors and Jesus!

Tom Fowler, our Director of Hospitality, has been doing a lot of recalculating since the coronavirus shut down his restaurant Checkers in Trenton. Yet during this pandemic, the Holy Spirit called him to a new unique position. Just before Easter he just happened to say, "I can feed 250 people by myself." That comment led me to pair him up with Sue Harris-Miller our Director of Mission and Evangelism. Together they founded Feeding Hungry Heroes. During the eight weeks since Easter they've gathered a team to make meals for workers on the frontline of this crisis. They also collected Thank You cards made by our Adventure Club kids, CoVid Cookie Warrior to bake cookies for the lunches, and delivery people to get the meals to their destination. To date, they've made 2,600 meals for over 40 organizations such as multiple hospitals, nursing homes, police stations, pharmacies, road crews, grocery stores, and even Amazon delivery workers. Tom found his sweet spot to help others.

Are you doing a lot of recalculating?

Let God's Positioning Spirit guide you to where He wants you to go.