

Recalculating...Recalculating
1st Corinthians 12: 4-11
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Who else loves their car's technology? Jump in the car; load your destination into the GPS and off you go! Awesome -- don't ever have to think about making sure you have directions or a map -- which to be honest I was NEVER good at reading.. Warren would LOVE when he was driving and I was the map navigator. An early in our marriage trip to Europe nearly did us in. Map reading in a foreign country when driving on the wrong side of the road that has no guard rails....

Remember when personal GPS first became available and you had one of those Garmins or TomToms set up in your car? If you made a wrong turn it would patiently state, "Recalculating; Recalculating." I would freeze, waiting for my GPS to recalculate and tell me what to do! It seemed to take FOREVER to recalculate -- so stressful -- until finally you got the new directions and could continue on your journey.

In our upcoming sermon series, we will be looking at how our own internal GPS -- our Gifts, our Passions and Story -- reveals our God-given purpose and calling. Anyone wonder what this really means? Or think that's great for some people, but feel like you don't really have unique gifts or talents -- at least ones that God would want to use. In 1st Corinthians 12:4-11, Paul tells us:

"There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us. A spiritual gift is given to each one of us so we can help each other." 1st Corinthians 12: 4-7.

It's just like on Oprah's Holiday Show -- "You get a gift and you get a gift and you..." Everyone gets a gift! Every single one of us has been uniquely gifted by God. And God works through us, using those gifts to help others. Think about that for a minute. The God of the Universe has uniquely gifted us and uses our unique gifts to accomplish his purpose here on earth. So how does this work?

When something is 3-D, has three dimensions, making it more full, round and real. God places three things within each of us: our Gifts, Passions and our Story. In the coming weeks we'll look at each of these individually. You can learn a lot about yourself by examining each one. But when you look at all three together, you get a 3 dimensional picture of who you are, how God made you. Your Gifts, Passion and Story reveal a portrait of you that is as unique as your thumbprint. No one else in the world, in history, has the same GPS as you.

Let's take it a step further. God has a place where He wants you to use your unique GPS -- it may be in the church, the community, your workplace/school --or somewhere in the world. You will find your purpose when you discover and do what you were designed to do. Don't worry if that sounds like a lot to take in. Just like your car GPS, we will lead you through it step by step, turn by turn in the sermon series GPS: Finding Your Purpose, starting next Sunday, September 26th.

To some of us, this sounds great -- Ah!; I will finally find out what my gifts are and how God wants me to use them. Others - like me, have been around a bit. You might be thinking, I've heard this before. *I know my gifts -- I like to teach, so I help out with Sunday school. No way could I be up there leading Worship, but I'm good at technology, so I serve on the Tech Team, running the soundboard. I barely sleep anyway - doing the 2nd shift at Code Blue is an easy way for me to serve!* Been there; know that; I'm good!

Or maybe you took one of those assessments or spiritual gifts tests and were really excited when you found out about your gifts, but like that great Bread Maker you HAD to have during the pandemic, you never really unpacked your gifts. Life got in the way or your initial excitement turned to trepidation -- what if God is calling me to somewhere I don't want to go?? So you let your gifts stay neatly packed, safe on the shelf.

Wait -- is that God I hear saying "Recalculating? Recalculating?" Don't you wish THAT voice was an option on your GPS system? Big booming God voice?

If ever there was a time to recalculate, reconsider what we are doing -- it's now! How many of us have seen our lives changed in the past year and a half. Going from taking the train and walking to work in the city to taking the stairs and working at your new office aka the kitchen table? Learning from home instead of with classmates? Using a screen to keep in touch instead of meeting for lunch? So many changes.

It's always important to take time to RECALCULATE as well as calculate our gifts, our path. One of the great recalculations in the bible involved the Hebrew prophet Jonah. Remember the story of Jonah? God said to Jonah, **2** "Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh. Announce my judgment against it because I have seen how wicked its people are." Despite being gifted as a prophet of God, Jonah didn't want to go. He knew God was merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love; eager to turn back from destroying people. Jonah 4:2-3. He didn't want compassion shown to those "wicked people." So Jonah said "NO", ran the opposite way and jumped on a ship heading to Tarshish, hoping to escape from God's command. God doesn't let us off the hook so easily -- literally in Jonah's case. God sent a big storm that threatened to destroy the boat and all those on it. The sailors were terrified. Jonah told them that this was because of him and to toss him over and the storm would stop. God immediately stopped the storm and the sailors were saved. God also showed compassion to Jonah by sending a big fish to swallow him up, giving him a chance to think and repent (what better place than the belly of a huge fish), and then commanding the fish to spit him out safely on dry land.

Recalculate -- Jonah got the message, changed his tune and his course, and took God's Message to the people of Nineveh who repented and received God's mercy.

Is God calling you to recalculate? Do you feel like you're heading the wrong way? Maybe running away from what God is nudging you towards? A key part of GPS is taking time to do an online Assessment -- to understand our Gifts, Passions, and Story. The first two signals are largely internal readings -- focusing on our abilities, talents, motivations, and passions. That part (Sections I and II) of the GPS assessment includes a series of multiple-choice questions that can be completed in less than 30 minutes. The last portion -- the Story portion -- is more reflective - you may want to wait until a few weeks into our series to do that section, so you have

some parameters for reflection. If you'd like to get a jump start on the assessment, you can find it on the Woodside website or take out your cell phone -- yes I am telling you in church to take OUT your phone, open your camera and point it at the QR code on the screen. It will open up your browser to a clickable link that takes you directly to the assessment.

If you are not in a growth group, this is a GREAT time to join one! Check out a full listing of Woodside groups on the table at the Welcome Center or on the Woodside website. Or make your own group -- invite a friend or two to join you and help each other find your calling. The materials are all provided for you -- weekly video teachings, discussion questions -- we even have books available for anyone leading a group or would like to dive deeper into the study. You can meet online or in-person -- our Discipleship Director Meg Smith can help you get started.

I love this quote from the Find Your Place book: "Thoughts disentangle themselves through your lips and fingertips." Find Your Place, pg. 34. In other words the more we reflect and talk things over, the more impact this study will have on our lives. So find your tribe or start your own!

As I was working on this Message, I thought back on my own story. I've done MANY assessments -- I know my SHAPE, my Strengths, my Enneagram (any 2's out there), my Myers/Briggs type, even my Love Language. But I hadn't really looked back on my Story -- to see God's hand in my life. I learned a lot... Take a little trip back with me and see God's hand in my story.

I grew up in the church. I went to Sunday School, loved VBS, Youth Group and even Church camp. As a teen I was even asked to "give the message" one Sunday by sharing my camp experience. I went OVER the normal time by torturing that entire congregation with way too many stories of my funny camping experiences. Still makes me cringe and a VERY good reason why one should be given parameters!

Warren and I came to Woodside seeking a church that had "contemporary worship" and an active kids program. I loved my former church but felt God telling me it was time to move on. Key sign was when I went to a Worship meeting and the minister gave out a handout entitled "Why Contemporary Worship is Dead." Good thing Dawn Wills didn't get that article.

At my former church, I did a lot with children's ministry -- I had young kids, was generally pleasant, and grew up singing in church. AKA -- perfect Children's Choir leader. When I came to Woodside I discovered my reputation proceeded me. Unbeknownst to me, Cliff and Debbie Hutchens had also come over from our former church and "mentioned" this new girl Linda Marr would make a great children's choir leader. So when Pastor Doug asked, I naturally said "Yes." But things had changed a bit -- I now had 3 kids who were not at all comfortable in this new church, my job had become more stressful and there were a bit more kids in the choir than I was used to. Thankfully they also recruited another mom who reluctantly agreed to be my Assistant -- no way did she want to be the lead. We muddled through, but honestly, it was a rough year for me -- my youngest would not leave my side, I would rush home from work and yell "Get in the car, it's time to go to church and have FUN at Adventure Club." No one was having fun and the way I had served for years was no longer working. I was NOT a quitter, but really felt God

telling me it was time, so I broke it to my assistant I was stepping down and she reluctantly stepped up. That reluctant leader was Jen Uhlman. Many of you may remember her. Jen went on to not only be a great choir leader, but also an integral part of Woodside's Worship Team. When God called Woodside to start a new campus, Jen stepped up again and left to build a powerful Band and Worship Team. That new campus church eventually combined with the historic but struggling Parkland Church and now beautifully serves the Parkland community. God had me step aside not just for me, but so Jen could be free to find her purpose. God's plans are SO much more than anything we could think or imagine.

God wasn't done with me - just time to recalculate. Someone else saw potential in me -- my first GG leader Dawn Wills. I had been in the group less than a year when Dawn announced that the group had grown so much, it was time to start a new group. Dawn asked this woman I barely knew, Karen Houser, and me to lead the group. I was stunned and annoyed. I didn't want to go. I didn't know how to lead a group. Just like the Israelites, I was comfortable where I was! I begrudgingly went and not only gained a great friend in Karen, but had the privilege of leading many groups and meeting many amazing new people. And now I remember that when I switched churches, I prayed for good Christian friends, people I could share my faith with.

Through the years I served in many ways - Habitat, Code Blue, Dinner Ministry, Mission Trips, Discipleship Director - some fit better than others.

Still in my work life, I have to admit I ignored a BIG nudge from God. I was working for a company that had become increasingly slimy. I knew it, but I ignored little nudges from God about it. It was a good job; had GREAT flexibility for my family. I was considered management and got stock and options every year! Helping support my family in a way that had minimal impact for them -- wasn't that worth it I justified with God? And then overnight my company unexpectedly went bankrupt, taking all of my stock and options with it. The money we were counting on for college, gone. Hard lesson and I knew it was preventable. If I had left when God prompted me...

More recently God nudged me to step way out of my Comfort Zone -- to become part of the sermon team. Absolutely the hardest thing I've ever done, but I feel God with me every step of the way. Just wish he would sometimes give me his Words a little EARLIER when I'm writing the Message. Although I have a feeling I'm the problem there...

As I hope you can see, God has prompted lots of recalculating on my path. And has used my gifts, passions and story in ways I never would have dreamed of.

I'm feeling it's time again for recalculation -- my kids are grown. I supposedly should have more time on my hands (although not quite seeing that yet.)

When we sing the Worship song "Set a Fire," these lines resonate in my head over and over: "Set a fire down in my soul. That I can't contain and I can't control. I want more of you God; I want more of you." I hear them in my sleep, I sing them without even knowing I am singing. God is moving in me. Not sure where he is leading yet.

So I'm taking the GPS assessment, discussing it with my growth group, and talking things over with God to see just how I can use this recalculation of my gifts, passion, and story to love God and help others.

Will you join me?