

**“Shift Change”**

*Ephesians 2:10*

*MORE: Finding Your Personal Calling and Living Life to the Fullest Measure*

*Week 6: My Unique Mission (Do)*

Linda Marr

Woodside Church

May 24, 2020

Hello Woodside family – wherever you are! It definitely is a little surreal today. I’m up here on our Vineyard Stage, looking out into an empty room instead of seeing your smiling faces, while you are in your homes, watching worship on a computer or if you’re really tech savvy, on your big screen TV. It might be Sunday morning or Tuesday night for you. Wherever and whenever we are, it is still a joy to share this time together.

Let me give a shout out to our Tech and Worship teams who just about overnight made this possible -- shifting our Worship from in person to online. The changes they’ve made have been nothing short of amazing and we are incredibly grateful.

We’ve all been called to make a lot of changes lately, haven’t we? Instead of waking each weekday and heading to your quiet professional work environment, you may now walk downstairs to the kitchen and a workplace that looks more like this. SO EASY to get work done isn’t it? Instead of zooming off in our cars to meet friends for dinner, we’re staying home and learning a new way to zoom! Often pretending we are ANYWHERE but in our homes.

And your teacher may have changed – or you may have been assigned a new teaching job you did not sign up for! How many of you are juggling work and home schooling? You have my utmost respect and sympathy. And teachers – seriously! Your level of appreciation is setting new records!!

Most of these changes we’ve had little control over, we don’t know when things will go back to “normal” – whatever that may be; half the time we don’t even know what we are doing!

Thank heaven, literally, that as Christians we can find comfort knowing we have a higher calling as Paul reminds us in Colossians, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. (Colossians 3:23-24). Our world may be swirling but our God, our true purpose is rock solid.

Over the past few weeks in our More Series: Find Your Personal Calling and Live Life to the Fullest Measure, we’ve been fleshing out our role in God’s purpose. We’ve discovered we have Two Callings: Our Primary or Common Calling - simply to be in a Relationship with God and our Secondary or Unique Calling: Our unique role to play in God’s Mission.

In our Primary or Core Calling we find that we are:

- A Child of God and a Follower of Jesus; this is our Core Identity; what we are to BE
- Who Makes Disciples of Jesus – our Core Mission or Purpose; what we are to DO
- Where we are right now; Our Core Position; where we are to GO

Our Primary Calling gives us the fullness of Jesus which overflows to that Secondary Calling – our Unique role to play in sharing God’s love with others. Last week Pastor Doug helped us consider the first part of that - our Unique **Identity**; the unique gifts and talents God has given us. Look at your life as a story; what clues of your unique identity can you uncover? Place close attention to those that repeat throughout your life. Have you always enjoyed taking care of others? Maybe your dolls as a child and your friends as you got older?

Did you use any of the resources from last week to help flesh out your Unique Identity? I took the quick APEST Test which helps illuminate our unique role in building the body of Christ. The majority of my answers fell under Shepherd, someone who nurtures and protects. This made sense to me as I’ve also done the Strengthfinders Profile and discovered that Empathy, Developer, Connectedness, Positivity and Adaptability are among my top strengths, traits that are found in the Shepherd role. If you want to know the traits I need to work on, ask my family. No one test can define us – God’s handiwork is way too amazing to be captured by a series of questions. But using tools like these can help us uncover our gifts and give us clues to discover how God made us to be.

This week’s topic - Our Unique Mission - flows out of this Unique Identity. We discover our Unique Mission then consider how we can use those unique gifts and talents to do good works and deeds to take the fullness of God’s love wherever we go.

Consider Paul’s words in Ephesians 2:10: “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Jesus Christ, to do good works which he prepared us in advance to do.” Just think about this for a second – before we were even born God crafted us in a certain unique way to do the work He already prepared for us. Mic drop. Pretty awe inspiring, right? Does any of this also stir up a little agita in you? Guilty as charged. “How am I supposed to know what God planned for me/what my mission is? What if I miss the ONE thing/mission God wants me to do? God, help me – show me what you want me to do!”

Maybe the kind of change we really need is a Shift Change – a shift in thinking. Many years ago we did a sermon series on the book *Experiencing God* by Henry Blackaby. Blackaby proposed this shift: While we’re busy thinking “I’m working down here and I need to get God to pay attention, show me what to do, get involved. Here I am God – look at me! Is this right?” Here’s what’s really happening – God is always working here on earth and **our job** is to find where He is working and join Him! Game changer. It’s not about ME; it’s all about GOD.

But how do I find the time to serve God? I’ve got a job, kids, obligations. I’ll have to get to that later. Let’s think for a minute about our Vocation and Occupation, not as the way the terms are used in the workplace, but in God’s work. Our Vocation is our Calling from God. See the root of the word Vocal in vocation? Our Occupation is what

occupies much of our time. It may be our job, our school work, our families. For much of our life, our Occupation can overpower our Vocation. We might occasionally let our Vocation and Occupation overlap, maybe sharing our love of Jesus with a co-worker.

And we think to ourselves – I've got to get my priorities straight. God first, then my family, work, church, community and if I ever get to it – me. But Jesus tell us to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (Matthew 22:37-40)

Loving God is not ONE part in a list of priorities, Loving God is IN everything – it's the cornerstone of how we are to live and move and breathe. So we need another Shift Change: Instead of How do we put God first ABOVE everything; How do we put God first IN everything. Serving God in ALL the places; Thinking of our entire life as service to God. And boy our World needs all the God it can get right now, doesn't it? People are hurting, anxious; lonely, overwhelmed, scared – so many emotions going on. Can we bring the peace of God wherever we are/wherever we go?

Our identity/our vocation as a follower of Jesus does not need to be kept separate. We don't need to feel guilty that we don't have enough time to “to set aside” to serve God. Our entire lives can be Service/An Act of Worship to God and a way to spread his love to others.

- When you head into a workplace full of anxiety and stress, stop and pray for God to use you for peace and calm.
- When you're feeling trapped in your house, spend time reading your Bible and ask God to put on your heart people in your community He wants you to call, send a card, check in on.
- Before you start your Zoom call, ask God to inspire you and give you eyes to really see others as you lead your group during this trying time.
- When your son asks for help on his math homework for the umpteenth time, ask God for patience and wisdom before you dive in. Maybe ask for an extra dose of patience right now!

In our Wednesday Sermon Series Bible Study – 7:00 pm on Zoom; open to ANYONE -- Pastor Doug shared the example of someone who described herself as a “servant of Jesus Christ cleverly disguised as a hair stylist!” *And I know we all can't wait to see our hair dresser again, right!* So who are you – “a servant of Jesus cleverly disguised as a teacher or FBI agent, mom or essential worker?” Our mask wearing only adds to the disguise element doesn't it? Think of all the good you can do in our world with your alter ego! Get it - ALTAR ego. The newest superhero!

If God's mission is to bring fullness of life to everyone on the planet (John 10:10) and to reconcile the world to himself through Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17-21), what is my part in His Mission? What are ways that are unique to me because of the way God made me?

Take some time to figure out what your Unique Role. The following questions can help clarify your thoughts.

- What are my natural talents and abilities? – your Unique Identity that we looked at last week. Consider using the tools discussed earlier. You can find a helpful handout with last week’s Sermon notes on our website.
- Ask yourself “What am I most passionate about?” What are things that you love to do that give you energy and excite you; things you would do if money/time were not an issue.
- What am I most burdened by? My Convictions? Things that weigh on my heart, keep me up at night. About 11 years ago people in our community and right here at Woodside were burdened by the thought of some of our neighbors not having a safe warm place to sleep. They couldn’t sleep when they knew others did not have a warm place to rest.
- That led them to answer the next question What are the Community Needs – Conditions/issues that I want to address. Those same people took that burden and started AHTN Advocates for the Homeless and Those in Need. And now Woodside and other area churches provide a warm meal and safe shelter on frigid nights, staffed by volunteers who acted upon this conviction.

Your Unique Mission maybe a single focused cause throughout your life – like Billy Graham or Mother Teresa. Or more likely, a series of good deeds united by an overarching theme.

As you think about these questions, look for core themes and patterns. This is not a once and done thing – take your time. It’s like that huge puzzle that sits on your kitchen table – you’re assembling the picture one piece at a time. Clarity will come as more pieces are assembled. You can find a helpful handout on finding your Unique Role in God’ Mission with this week’s Sermon Notes on our website. And while you’re working on your Unique Mission – keep serving!

Remember above all, “Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” Colossians 3:17. Not worrying so much about what we are doing; but WHO we are doing it for. Our Calling starts with Jesus, is About Jesus, is for Jesus and is to lead people to the loving arms of Jesus.

Will you do your part?