

Week of October 22

DAY
1

Times of Transition and Change 1 Chronicles 12:18, 32, 38; Acts 15:28

Life is a journey. Everything is in process. As we travel, we hope that the process is always for progress, growing into the fullness of the will and love of God for his people. At times, the journey is uneventful, just continuing on with faith, hope, and love (1 Corinthians 13:13). Other times we face major changes. We face them as individuals and as a community. The Bible tells stories of transition and change. These transitional seasons are often defining moments when important decisions must be made.

In 1 Chronicles 12, the people of God are in a time of civil war. The house of King Saul has been judged and found lacking. The house of David is on the rise and David has been anointed to be the next king of Israel. King Saul fights for his rule to the end. What are the people of God to do? While this devotional highlights a few verses, the entire chapter talks about many people who gave their loyalty to David.

In particular, the leadership team of the 30, under Chief Amasai, knew God was with David (v. 18). There were also 200 leaders from the tribe of Issachar who “understood the times” and “knew what Israel was to do” (v. 32). They had discerned the work and will of God. With this discernment, all the people came to Hebron with full determination to make David king.

In Acts 15, the church is meeting to decide the future plan for Gentiles who are being saved. Verse 28 tells us how they came to their conclusion: “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us” (v. 28).

In times of transition, the people of God must pray, take counsel together, dialogue, understand what is involved, listen carefully to one another, and listen to the Spirit of God. We seek wisdom and discernment about God’s plan. Then, with that discernment, we are positioned to make the decisions that will continue the journey. Please join with us in all these spiritual practices as we seek to hear and follow God’s leading for the future of Living Word.

DAY
2

Standing at the Crossroads Jeremiah 6:16

*This is what the Lord says:
“Stand at the crossroads and look;
ask for the ancient paths,
ask where the good way is, and walk in it,
and you will find rest for your souls.
But you said, ‘We will not walk in it.’”*

A crossroads is a defining moment. You stand at a place of decision making. There is a pattern of discernment and decision making in this one verse.

STAND. Don’t act precipitously. Don’t rush into hasty and desperate decisions. The leadership team has been standing at our leadership transition crossroads for 2 years. Wait patiently for the Lord (Psalm 40:1).

LOOK. Take the needed time to understand what is going on and what God is saying to us. Explore possibilities.

ASK for the ancient paths. Be sure to know your history, your primary values, your essential beliefs, your core identity. Discern the best of the past that will guide us at this crossroads.

ASK where the good way is. Now, grounded in your past, consider the future. What is next? What will be the best way to move into the future? (Tomorrow will focus on this.) The good way may be quite new. It may be very challenging, but it is good.

WALK in it. Activate your discernment. Make the choice of the good way. Commit with all your heart (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

FIND REST. Rest does not mean inactivity. It is the equivalent of shalom and flourishing. By the way, the way God has for his people is either full repentance and commitment to his ways or Babylonian exile (Jeremiah 29:4-13).

I am Doing a New Thing

Isaiah 42:9, 43:18-19, 44:3

God is doing a new thing among his people. It takes faith, hope, discernment, and great trust to see and grab hold of the new thing. Churches love the past—and we should. We are grateful for what God has done. We cherish our history of redemption. We value the lessons and take the best of them into our future. But God is doing a NEW thing and sometimes his people don't want the new thing God is doing. So, Isaiah gives some best practices to help us.

God is always doing new things. God's character does not change, his will does not change, the good news does not change, but we see in the Bible the plans of God change often and always for the purpose of God's ultimate plan.

God tells us the new things he will do BEFORE they happen. We must believe and trust God will do what he says. We appreciate the past, but we do not remain stuck in the past.

God's new thing is springing up and we are invited to perceive what God is doing—even if it is as unexpected as a way in the wilderness or streams in wastelands. Both of these phrases talk about the new thing NOT being what we would have figured out on our own.

God's new thing is for the blessing and flourishing of his people. God wants to bless us, and he will bless us. We must join in with that new blessing.

Through more than 40 years, God has been with Living Word. When Living Word began it was a new thing God was doing in York County. Through the years, God has led us into so many new things. We have continuity with our history and yet wonderful new directions that we did not see ahead of time. God did see them. God was orchestrating them. He invites us to pray, see, trust, embrace the new, and be blessed.

Leadership Transition

2 Timothy 3:10-4:5

Jesus is KING Jesus. Jesus is Lord. Jesus is the HEAD of his church. Jesus is the SERVANT-LEADER who has all authority and power, all love and grace, and all truth and wisdom to lead his people.

Jesus raises up new servant-leaders to care for his community (pastors), teach the scriptures (teachers), start new missional endeavors (apostles), discern the will of God and make wise decisions (elders), serve the basic needs of the community (deacons), speak boldly where there is failure (prophets), and constantly reach the world with the good news (evangelists).

To do this, God raises up leaders (plural). One person can't do it all. They do not have all the gifts and certainly not enough time. The larger the community, the more the need for a TEAM of leaders. Living Word has always had a great team of leaders (staff, board, and senior ministry partners).

Leadership transitions are always taking place. Life changes. Ministry changes. God moves his leaders to different roles and locations. The Board of Living Word is in constant flux (by design). Staff come and go. God raises up new leaders. Still, leadership transition can be difficult because new leadership certainly means change. God raises up new leaders with a new vision (his new things) and with new skill sets to advance his Kingdom purposes.

When God raises up new SENIOR leaders, it is important to use discernment and decision making about those leaders. The more responsibility and authority these leaders have, the more crucial it is that they have outstanding character, significant skills, a deep spiritual life with Jesus, a good reputation with outsiders, and a wide love for the church and community.

What speaks to you about the leadership transition Paul describes in 2 Timothy?

Please join us in constant prayer, discernment, worship, and decision making as we trust God for the senior leadership transition we are in.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & LIFEGROUP DISCUSSION

You can always pick any idea from the sermon or the daily readings and biblical passages and talk about those ideas. A good format is to have each LifeGroup member share one idea that was most powerful for them.

Start by reading Ephesians 3:14-21.

How does Paul's prayer for the Ephesian church speak to our time of transition?

There is often some anxiety about times of change and transition. This is normal. It is important to know the spiritual responses to times of change and potential anxiousness. What are some of the best practices that guide you (and all of us) when we are anxious about times of change?

The texts you read this week looked at the tension between honoring the past and moving into the future. Sometimes we hold on to the past too tightly—we become rigid and fossilized. Other times we let go of too much and lose our way. What are the ways we can honor and value the past but not be stuck there?

Is it even surprising that God does new things and God's people do not easily recognize the new thing God is doing? Why is it so hard to see and embrace new things that God does? How do faith, hope, love, and trust shape us into people who can embrace the new ways God has?

Scripture is clear about the many characteristics and qualities needed on the part of those who would lead God's people. The more responsibility a leader has, the more vital it is that a leader has those qualities. For you, what are the most important characteristics you believe a senior pastor should have? See Titus 1:5-9 for some ideas.

This is part two of the previous question. Everyone has their own biases and preferences. Go back to the scriptures. Don't confuse a particular role, or function, or style of leading with the essential core. Those things are important but there is great diversity of Christian leadership. What is the essential CORE, the most important qualities needed for senior leadership?

Are you living with faith, hope, love, and trust about the future of Living Word? We are excited for the new thing God is doing. The best is yet to come.