

Week 2 – Sunday, April 10th 2022



INTRODUCTION

Most of you can probably remember what it was like to drive before we had GPS devices or Google Maps. More specifically, you can probably remember what it was like to drive or to take a trip to somewhere *unfamiliar* without GPS. You had to plan the route you were going to take in advance. And because there was no GPS, you also had to live with something we don't really live with anymore: the fear of getting lost. Remember the fear of thinking, "What if we can't find our way there? What if we take a wrong turn? What if we get lost?"

Now none of us without a phone has to live with the fear of getting lost, which, in general, is a very good thing. But I do think we've lost something in this transition to relying on devices for guidance: **We've lost the belief that we're going to find our way back to the right road, even if we get lost.**

See, as awful as being lost can feel, there was something good about knowing the potential to get lost was always there. Because even though there was always this fear of not knowing where we were or of being in an unfamiliar part of town, there was also a skill set of courage and resilience that was built up in us because of that. We knew we could figure it out, because we had developed the skills to do so. We used to know what to do when we found ourselves driving in unfamiliar territory.

TENSION

Now all of us, in a post-pandemic world, are driving in unfamiliar territory. We're all going somewhere we've never been before. And honestly, I think a lot of us feel pretty lost. We're somewhere completely new and somewhere that looks completely different from life as we knew it. But even outside of pandemic-related circumstances, we can find ourselves in situations that feel completely new, different, and uncertain.

Some of us are trying to figure out this new normal with a new job or with no job, with a new child or as an empty nester, with a new relationship or maybe losing a loved one. In all of this, we just feel lost. **And feeling lost in new territory is not a feeling we're used to.**

So the question is this: *Do we think we have the skills and the resources to help us find our way again?*

Because while being lost is something that happens to all of us, we just can't live there. It's not a healthy place to stay. It's not healthy for our minds. Living with fear, anxiety, or sleeplessness for prolonged periods isn't healthy. It isn't healthy mentally. It isn't healthy physically. Living with the stress of the unknown takes its toll on the health of bodies.

It's also not healthy for our relationships. The feeling of being lost puts a relational strain on the people around us. Its why arguments happen so easily when you get lost in the car—you want to take the situation out on the person next to you in the car. For some of us, this season has put so much strain on our relationships.

So, trying to find our way to new territory is disorienting. It's scary. But it's also dangerous if we don't have the skill set to help us find our way back to the right road. So how can we build the skill set into our lives to help us when we find ourselves lost because we're in a brand-new place? Is there a way to handle these transitional seasons that can set us up to better navigate new territory now and later?

TRUTH

Today, we're going to look again at a passage written by the apostle Paul. Paul was a key figure in the spread of Christianity in the first century. He helped start churches all over the world. And he did most of this in a completely new, completely unfamiliar, and completely hostile environment.

Paul was taking groups of people who had either been Jews or Gentiles their entire lives and helping them form a completely new worldview by following Jesus. This was an entirely new faith, a new belief system, a new way of being in the world, marked by love, grace, kindness. This was new territory for anyone during that time in history. On top of all the newness, Paul was trying to lead this group of early believers in an environment that was hostile to people following Jesus. Talk about feeling lost and disoriented. But despite the odds and obstacles, they found their way through the fear and confusion and changed the world. And we can learn from Paul's example on how to navigate seasons of uncomfortable change.

Here's what he wrote to one of the new churches:

Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth (Colossians 3:1-2 NLT).

Now, right before Paul said this, he was writing about the new things we experience in Jesus Christ. He laid out a whole new worldview, a whole new set of principles to live by. And Paul knew it was disorienting. So he gave his readers this truth of continually setting their minds on things above. Paul knew that our thoughts, our mindset, the things we think about, are so important in navigating periods of change and transition.

But I find it fascinating what Paul *didn't* say. He didn't say, "change your behavior." He didn't say, "Just stop being scared and anxious." He knew those types of behaviors don't just stop—they take time to change. But the change has to start by taking place in our minds, with how we think. Paul was actually echoing a teaching of Jesus here. When Jesus showed up, His message to all of us was, "Repent." That word *repent* actually comes from the Greek word "metanoia," which doesn't mean "change the way you behave," but instead to "change the way you *think*."

Isn't that crazy? When Jesus talked about how we could make life better and more full—how we could be more alive—He didn't start with changing our behavior. No, He started with addressing the way we think.

Paul knew what Jesus knew, that our lives will never change until our thinking changes. That's why Paul wrote, "Set your mind on things above" to these believers, because he was far more interested in their ability to think right than their ability to act right. **Because right thinking leads to a changed life.**

How did Paul know this? For one, he grew up hearing the story of Moses and Joshua. Some quick background: long before the arrival of Jesus, a man named Moses helped lead God's people, the Israelites, out of captivity in ancient Egypt. After Moses died, a young guy named Joshua was chosen to guide the nation into a new territory promised to them by God. Still, in this moment, Israel was feeling lost because their leader had died. Joshua was probably wondering: *How in the world am I going to do this? I'm not equipped. I've never done this before!*

But as Joshua was preparing to move into this new territory, God told him this:

"Be strong and courageous, for you are the one who will lead these people to possess all the land I swore to their ancestors I would give them. Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the instructions Moses gave you. Do not deviate from them, turning either to the right or to the left. Then you will be successful in everything you do. Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do. This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:6-9 NLT).

God was saying: "In this new season where you feel lost, as you head into a new territory, I want you to keep My words in front of you. I want you to study it. To mediate on it. Day and night."

What God was reminding Joshua is what we all need to hear today: change takes time. It's why God was telling Joshua to study His words day and night. God was telling Joshua that fear and anxiety weren't going to go away instantaneously—which is unfortunate because that's what we all want, instant change. But we know it doesn't work that way! We've all wanted to see some kind of change in our lives. Yet mere desire for change doesn't translate to actual change.

It's like cramming for a test. When you stay up all night with 14 cups of coffee and a sack full of Krystals, studying for that exam, you may know the material, but you don't really *know it*. You know it for the test, but then the information is gone. It doesn't benefit you beyond that small window. It's why one-time decisions don't work. It's not just right thinking that leads to change and transformation, it's right thinking over time. Mediating day and night on God's words.

APPLICATION

When you find yourself in a season of transition, when you find yourself disoriented, when you feel lost, what do you do? The answer isn't to change your behavior. It's to discover the truth and set your mind on it—the truth found in God's Word.

When you enter new territory, set your mind to stay on course.

When you feel stuck in patterns of anxiety, set your mind on this:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Philippians 4:6 NIV).

When you feel fearful, set your mind on this:

God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline (2 Timothy 1:7 NLT).

When you're struggling with an addiction or temptation, set your mind on this:

The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure (1 Corinthians 10:13 NLT).

When you're dealing with self-centeredness, set your mind on this:

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves (Philippians 2:3 NIV).

There's nothing more life-changing and lasting than setting our mind on the truth. It's the beginning of true change. When you enter new territory, set your mind to stay the course.

In other words, keep your mind focused on the truth. Remind yourself day and night of what's true and right and good and noble, because if you do, it will change how you approach a new season. You can move from fear in the uncertainty to strength and courage.

So, find time each day, or several days a week, to meditate on God's truth. Find passages of Scripture that speak to you and let them sink into your heart and mind. Meditate on Scripture. Memorize it. Find some worship music that speaks to you and communicates the truths you need to hear. However you connect best with God and however you learn best, set your mind on the truths of God so you can have the tools to find your way back to the road when you find yourself lost.

LANDING

Feeling lost is inevitable. Staying lost is dangerous. I want you to have the tools and the skill set not to let seasons of uncertainty take you out. Like Joshua, seasons of newness can build your faith and your strength and your confidence. So, find time every day to set your mind on the truth and let that truth, over time, change your life.

Small Group Discussion



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Think back to before cell phones. How did you get to where you were going when it was some place you'd never driven to? Did you use a map? If so, what kind?
2. Do you ever have a fear of getting lost when you go somewhere new? Are you the type of person who asks for directions?
3. Describe a situation in your life where you felt lost. What were the circumstances?
4. Have you ever felt lost spiritually? If so, what did that look like for you?
5. What does it mean to you to know that God always sees you, knows where you are, and cares about the details of your life?
6. What does it look like to renew your mind? What are some areas that are specific to you where you feel the most tension to consistently renew your mind?
7. This week, think about how you can allow seasons of transition to renew and build your faith. Journal or jot down some notes on how you hope to see God strengthen your faith in times of change.