

MESSIAH'S MISSION FOCUS PART 4
Philippians 3:12-14

October—Mission Introduction Month
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One technology that has made an amazing impact on our lives today is GPS. Farming has now become “precision farming” as far as planting, fertilizer application, and even as far as maneuvering the tractor, combine, planter and other equipment. Truly amazing!

GPS has also been transforming our trips and journeys by car and SUV. We can now be directed by a computer voice to whatever destination we want to go to. If we make a wrong turn it warns us and tells us to go back. If we know a different way it says, “recalculate;” it sets a new course.

The amazing thing is that the day may be coming when none of us will need to drive at all on a journey. GPS may drive for us; may automatically prevent us from getting into accidents; may allow us to sit back and totally enjoy the journey.

“Seek – Connect – Impact...A Spiritual Journey Through a Jesus Filled Life.” Messiah’s vision/mission focus reminds each one of us that we are individually, and collectively together, on a spiritual journey through life.

And the good news is that our God through Jesus Christ is our GPS, our global spiritual positioning system, as we journey through life. Jesus shows us and lays out for us the right path through his words of truth found in the Bible.

He warns us when we take a wrong turn and get into unhelpful territory; he encourages us to recalculate through confession and forgiveness. He calls us to allow him to become our co-pilot; to help us navigate the path; to take the time to enjoy the view and the journey.

On this spiritual journey each one of us is at a different place. We may be seeking, questioning, just setting foot to our path of faith. On the other hand we may feel we have gone a step further in our understanding and belief in Jesus; we have connected some with other believers in the church.

And some of us may have been traveling for some time in our faith in Jesus, and as a result feel that Jesus and the church are impacting who we are and what we do; while in turn our faith is impacting our relationships, our work, our life.

The important thing to remember is that God loves you wherever you are at in this spiritual journey. He is there with you when you seek, ask questions, have doubts, make some wrong turns, want to give up. He is there with you as you seek for faith, for meaning, for purpose, for love. God loves you.

God also loves you if you are hoping to connect with others and connect in Christ’s church. He is there with you as you are seeking to learn more about him; as you are teaching Sunday School;

as you are helping with a youth project; as you are attending a Bible study; as you are connecting and having fellowship with a group of believers.

And God also loves you if you are seeking to grow deeper in your love and faith in Jesus; if you are looking to make a stronger impact in every area of your existence. God loves you and invites us to be part of what he is already doing; to encourage your growth; to empower your impacting; to open up through his Holy Spirit opportunities to witness, pray for, and support others.

Now a very important truth about God's love for us, wherever we are at in this spiritual journey—God loves each of us just as we are; yet the truth is that he also loves us way too much to want us to simply stay where we are at.

Messiah's vision, "Seek – Connect – Impact...A Spiritual Journey Through a Jesus Filled Life," points our congregation to the mission that being part of our church, we want to help you grow and transition from one who seeks, to someone who connects, to someone who impacts your world for Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul said in Philippians 3:12-14, *"Not that I have already obtained this or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining forward to what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Jesus Christ."*

One problem is that churches have often failed to give people a map, a direction; a path for where their worship, their activities, their teaching and learning is focused on empowering people toward. In fact, people attending often have no clue whatsoever exactly why they are attending this church—except the church keeps asking for money.

A troubling result for churches without a clear vision and without any clear faith steps forward for its people is that churches have then easily become places where the people mainly expect the church to do all kinds of things for them. It is easy, of course, to simply be sitting in the bleachers of life rather than one of the players on the field. God doesn't want your seats in the pews—he wants your feet on his path.

People often complain that the church is not doing enough for them so they are running to a different church; the pastor isn't visiting them enough or giving enough attention to their complaints; the worship doesn't sing the hymns they like; the new people and younger people are seen as a threat because they are changing too many things—I like it the way I like it.

Yet with Messiah's new vision focus this old way of thinking is over. The focus is not on me simply staying where I am at and expecting people to mostly minister to my needs and to somehow make me happy. No this important shift is from the church as simply an organization with a congregational audience to a church where each person has a part to play—the congregation becomes the church.

The focus is on each one of us growing, transforming, transitioning in our relationship with Jesus and as his church. The focus is not on what the church can do for me, but how I be the church

through learning, through helping connect with others, through opening up new connection opportunities; through impacting and supporting our ministry as a church and our outreach.

Yet what about those who need special ministry and care? The interesting thing is that a church where people are growing in faith; where their focus is not on themselves; where they openly love worshipping and praising God—these are also always the most loving, prayerful and caring communities. It doesn't rest on just the pastor or a few—all people are in ministry together.

“Seek – Connect – Impact...A Spiritual Journey Through a Jesus Filled Life.” The final truth in this mission focus is that this spiritual journey, this growth in faith and impact, is the most joyful, prayerful, meaningful, loving and hopeful life on the planet today.

I appreciated when Rick Warren in his debate a few years ago with noted atheist Sam Harris, how he in essence said that even if those who claim that God is not real are right he (Warren) would still choose to follow the words and promises of Jesus.

Rick Warren asked why he would choose anything different? In Christ and his church he has experienced amazing love; he has found a purpose and meaning beyond himself; he has experienced countless numbers of people surrounding his family in trials and tragedies like the suicide of his son who struggled for many years with mental illness.

Rick Warren says that even if the atheists are right he would still choose to follow and live for Jesus. The reason being that the Christian life, and being part of a kingdom building church, is the most wonderful, joyful and fulfilling life there could ever be.

Rick Warren also then said to this atheist: But what if those who deny God are wrong and Christians have been right all along? If Christians are wrong they still have the most amazing life on earth. If we are right and Jesus is our Savior, we not only have an amazing life now but also eternal life in heaven when we die. An atheist misses out on both levels.

My friends, when we commit our lives to Jesus' mission we are becoming part of an existence that is amazing and wonderful. We are forgiven; we are loved; we have a purpose for each day; we are filled with joy and peace; we have comfort in our sadness; we are blessed to be a blessing.

And when we are open to God's Holy Spirit guiding our path from seeker, to connector, to impactor, we then become people and a church that impacts our community, our relationships, our church with Christ's amazing and grace filled love.

A grace-centered and loving church like that, according to Andy Stanley, is a church that people want to be part of; they invite their friends and family to. This shatters the impression many have today that the church is judgmental, condemning, self-righteous. Our call is to be a church that loves God above all things, and loves our neighbors as ourselves. Our call is to help people come to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

Messiah's mission is, “Seek – Connect – Impact...A Spiritual Journey Through a Jesus Filled Life.” May the Holy Spirit lead us forward as we carry out his call to mission in this world.