

## You Are Here Jim Stephens

- To get where you're going, you've got to know where you are.
- Seasons and events that cause us to think about where we are in life.
- Looking forward to Ken's vision message next weekend.
- Push the Pause Button – stop and reflect.
- "You Are Here" Toolkit – 1) questions for reflection & evaluation 2) Mini-retreat plan.

### Shopping Mall Story – "You are here."

I remember when we lived in Jamaica how challenging it was to return to the US at around Christmas time and be faced with shopping malls.

This was during the era when shopping malls were really in. Bigger was better. They had arms and avenues and were like a city in themselves.

We mostly came into the US and were based in Atlanta. Atlanta had the biggest shopping malls in the world!

You could actually get lost in a shopping mall in Atlanta. The one thing that gave hope was that at every junction of long corridors with stores that looked just like all the other stores was a map. Usually on a pedestal or a kiosk. Showed the layout of the entire mall – sometimes on two or more levels.

You could look at the alphabetical list or even the "type of store" list and find the map code for the store you wanted (A345) or (B117) and you'd look on the map and there in a pastel color like pink or light green or blue was "JC Penneys" or "Macy's" or "Walden Books."

That was all well and good, but what made it actually helpful is that right in front of you was a bright red sign with an arrow pointing to a spot on the map and the words, "You are here."

Once you knew where you were, you could work out how to get where you wanted to go. But you had to find the "You are here" point before it meant anything at all.

### New Year's Day

Let's think about that for a moment. How did we ever get to 2006? It's kind of like a guy who heard a clock strike thirteen. He said, "It's never been this late before!"

The turning of the year is for many of us a kind of a "Where am I?" and "How did I ever get to this place in my life?" and if we'll take time to stop and think a bit, a "You are here!" kind of time.

## GPS story

A couple of years ago, Gary and Jerri Burton introduced Jean and me to geocaching. Never heard of it? See it up on the screen? [Geocaching](#).

There's a website called [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com) that lists geocaches, thousands and thousands of geocaches, located all over the world – and all over Central Oregon.

Here's the story. The government put up a bunch of satellites called the Global Positioning Satellite System, mostly for military purposes, and this satellite network allows a device called a GPS unit to pinpoint any location, anywhere on the planet, within a few feet (or inches or millimeters) depending on how much you paid for the toy (I mean tool)! **Jim holds up a GPS unit.** Gary DeJarnatt has one for surveying that is accurate to millimeters. This one is accurate to about 4 feet. I won't go into the technology, but you can turn this thing on and it will give you a set of coordinates that you could give to someone else and they would be able to find your location exactly – precisely. Better than a map and compass.

Anyhow, once the government allowed the civilian use of the technology, lots of people went and bought GPS units and because everything has to be a competition, started the "sport" of geocaching.

Here's how it works. Someone goes out in the woods, or desert, there are even urban geocaches, and hides a container usually an ammo can or Tupperware container, containing stuff. Stuff plus a logbook. Using your GPS unit, you find the geocaches, take something out, put something in, and log your visit. Simple. Lots of good exercise, the challenge of the search, seeing places you wouldn't otherwise see.

When someone hides the geocache, they list it on the [geocaching.com](http://geocaching.com) web site. Then you log on and type in your zip code, and print out the coordinates which you then key into your GPS unit and you go find the geocaches. Simple. Not always easy, but simple!

There are hundreds of these in Oregon, dozens in Central Oregon. We've found them in London and in the UK countryside.

The point of this story is that the key to making it work is that you have to know where you are before you can figure out how to get to where you're going. Once your GPS knows where you are, it can lead you directly to where you want to go.

**You've got to know where you are!**

Someone who's never been to your house is driving in from Portland to stay with you. When they get to the edge of town, they call you on their cell phone and say, "How do I get to your house?" What's your very first question? "Where are you?"

## Where are you?

In the Genesis account of Adam and Eve's sin and estrangement from their intimate relationship with God, their first inclination was to try to hide from God.

*8 Toward evening they heard the Lord God walking about in the garden, so they hid themselves among the trees. 9 The Lord God called to Adam, "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:8-9 NLT)*

God's question to Adam and Eve – **"Where are you?"** God knew where they were. It was Adam and Eve that needed to know the answer to that question.

## Where are you?

There are times in our lives when we ask the question "Where am I?" Like a lot of people who woke up on this New Year's Day with a splitting headache and a taste in their mouth like a herd of camels had spent the night in there and they look around through bleary eyes and say, "Where am I?"

That's not the kind of "Where am I?" I mean. I'm talking about times when we think about where we are and where we want to be and we tend to make some decisions – proposals – resolutions about getting from where we are to where we think we'd ought to be.

## Things that can cause us to stop and consider:

- **Turn of the year** – that's today.
- **Significant birthday** – thirty, forty, fifty? I remember them vaguely!
- **High School reunion** – 10<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> ?
- **Death of a loved one** – attending a funeral. My uncle's funeral on December 10, 2005. A couple of weeks ago Jean and I traveled to northern California to participate in the funeral – a celebration of the life of a good and godly man – of my uncle. My Dad's brother. The last male of his generation in the Stephens family. A lot of us were thinking about **"Where are we?"** Is this where I should be at this point in my life?"
- Reading the journal my Mother kept in the days following my Dad's death.
- Illness – a health scare.

All these can be mileposts in life's journey. All sorts of events and situations can make us stop and consider. *Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.* (Psalm 90:12 NIV)

I want to challenge you today to intentionally stop and consider.

## **Push The Pause Button**

Sometimes we need to pause and think.. **Pause button, not Stop button.**

*This is what the Lord Almighty says: Consider how things are going for you!* (Haggai 1:5 NLT)

I'm not talking about a shutdown, or stopping and spending an hour navel-gazing or sitting cross-legged on a mat chanting "Ooom.."

### **Pause and think.**

Where are you? Where do you want to be? What would have to happen so that the next time a Considerable Moment occurs, you pass a milepost, you could say, "This is where I am and I'm pretty much ok with it!"

The week before Christmas, I met individually with three men – men I highly respect. These men wanted to talk with me about how they would use the rest of their lives. They were considering. They were pausing to think.

*"Consider how things are going for you."*

Next weekend Pastor Ken is going to bring us his annual Vision Talk, one of the most important talks given in this church each year. I strongly recommend that you are here to hear that talk.

He's going to talk about where we're going as a church in the coming year – hopes and dreams and plans.. Very important!

But to prepare a talk about "Where we're going" has required a lot of thought and discussion and honest observation about "Where we are." We've had meetings and done research and checked attendance numbers and worked on budgets. You can't chart a course to get where you're going unless you know where you are. Don't miss next weekend's service here at Westside.

Watch this video. **Insert a 20 second clip of car chase and explosions.** **Comment: This has nothing to do with my talk. I just wanted to throw in something for you guys who are thinking, "Hey, enough thinking. Let's get on with it!"**

## **Attitudes toward “Where Am I?” moments:**

**Ignore them – I’m too busy.** Intentional or incidental. When men are lost they drive faster. London traffic. Just keep the wheels turning. “Souls catch up...” story.

**Avoid them – I don’t want to think about it.** Entertain me. Where’s the remote? Why do we so resist thinking about things like this?

**Embrace them – I want to know where I am and where I’m going.** Embrace the consideration

So I am going to walk you through some simple steps to help you determine the “I am here” Factor in your life.

- This will be easier for some than for others.
- If you’re an introspective, contemplative person, this will be easy. Painful, but easy! Develop a humorous thought about introspective people.
- If you’re driven, this will seem a waste of time. You’re thinking that right now!
- If you’re afraid to face what you will find, you’re thinking of ten reasons not to do it.

## **“You Are Here” Toolkit:**

I am asking you to do three things – this is your homework. One of these things will take an hour and a half, one will take three hours, the third will take the rest of your life.

### **First: Use the “You Are Here” Toolkit**

- Take an hour and a half before you throw yourself back into the rush of things.
- Get your whole family into one room.
- Provide each with a pen or pencil and something to write on.
- Use the questions on the sheet.
- Each write a one-sentence answer to each question.
- Go around the room and each share your answer to each question.
- Discuss what you’re hearing.
- Pray for each person.

### **Second: Take a mini-retreat.**

A mini-retreat is a three-hour break in the activities of daily life in which we stop and take stock of what God has done for us, where we are, and where we believe God wants us to go.

## **Who needs a mini-retreat?**

- Families - Parents with children who are old enough to be faced with decisions about life and future.
- Married couples - Jean and I work together as a ministry team so mini-retreats are doubly important for us.
- Church or ministry staff or team.
- Individuals.

## **When do we need a mini-retreat?**

- When we are chronically busy.
- When we are in danger of losing perspective.
- During seasons of change and transition.
- When we are finding that God's Grace is lifting off us in the present situation.
- When we are frustrated.
- When we begin to sense that the time is coming for change to take place.
- When there are open doors of opportunity.
- When we begin to feel a stirring in a new direction.
- When we are experiencing any of the symptoms of burnout. (See GN 20 - Burnout)
- When there are decisions to be made concerning direction.
- Regularly once or twice a year as a "tune-up" to keep things moving smoothly.

## **Third: Practice a Daily Quiet Time**

Set a time for Daily Quiet time or Daily Devotions or Daily Bible Reading. What I'm talking about is more than quiet time, more than devotions, more than Bible reading. It can include all three, but is more than any one of these disciplines.

Set a time – I recommend early morning. I recommend an alarm clock and coffee. I recommend that you go to bed at a reasonable time. Bible, Bible Reading plan, journal or notebook. Push the pause button. Read, pray, think, write. Or at least three of the four.

Devotions – don't just check the box and get on to the next task. The whole point is not just a discipline but a relationship – communion, not a fix.

## **Conclusion:**

This message is not about offering a quick fix, and I hope it doesn't come across that way.

I'm not talking about New Year's resolutions – a big list of self-imposed rules that you will keep for a week and then find excuses for not doing the rest of the year.

We are **Human Beings** but we are also **Human Becomings**.

What you are is what you've been becoming. What you will be is what you are becoming now – thought by thought, word by word, attitude by attitude, action by action.

If you don't like what you are becoming, you can change that.

"The unexamined life is not worth living." – Socrates

Pick something and start re-becoming. One action, performed each day. One word or attitude changed this week, this month, will significantly affect who you will be one year from today.

### **My intent is:**

- To help you think about where you are and decide if it's where you ought to be (ought to be, more than want to be)
- To help you consider where God wants you to be, to consider where you want to be, and to take steps to bring those into alignment.
- To give you some practical tools to take the steps you decide to take. Little or big, few or many, for a day or a week or a year. Use the tools, take some steps.

### **If you choose to embrace the contemplation:**

- Use my two homework assignments.
- Establish a daily quiet time – push the pause button for a few minutes every day.
- Find someone to talk to. Someone whose life is a pattern you could respect. Get into a small group of others who are on the same pathway you're on.

**Close:** Let's put our things aside. Please bow your head for a moment.

### **Appeal**

Today, January 1, 2006, first day of a new year. The health and fitness clubs will be booming for the next couple of weeks. Decisions are being made about exercise and diet, spending habits. This is one of those, times/events that tend to make us stop and consider our lives.

**Make a decision right now.**

- Ask, "God, what should I do? What area of my life should I make a decision, form a plan, make a change?"

- Do you know what you need to do? Then right now, quietly, say “Yes, Lord. Yes, I will.”
- Do you need to find a quiet space and use the “You Are Here” toolkit?
- Do you need to get your family together and say, “Let’s think about things and talk and pray together.”

Maybe you find yourself separated from God. Your relationship with him is not active, you’ve drifted away. Maybe you have never crossed the bridge from living your way to committing to live his way.

Cross the Bridge today – Jesus is the bridge from where you are to where you need to be.

### **Response**

Step out – one step, a step of faith. Make a decision.

### **Prayer**

Let’s pray this prayer together:

Dear God, I purpose to find out just where I am, where you want me to be, and begin taking the steps to bring those two together. I confess that I’ve fallen way short of your best for my life. I confess that I can’t do it on my own. I ask you to forgive my failures, to clean up my heart and mind, and to give me a fresh start right now. I cross the bridge from living in my own strength to living by your spirit. I accept your forgiveness and I accept life on your terms. Through faith in Jesus, I’m your child and you’re my Father, and I accept your authority in my life. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Heads bowed, if you made that decision for the first time just now or recommitted to that decision, would you raise your hand – look up at me for a moment, raise your hand.

### **Celebrate!**