



10 Things to Do When You Are Standing At the Crossroads

Thus says the Lord: Stand by the crossroads, and look and ask for the ancient paths, Where the good way lies; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls. Jeremiah 6:16, NRSV

The prophet Jeremiah wrote to a people who were collectively at a crossroads. Today it is a good metaphor for any of us who find ourselves at a fork in the road or decision time. Standing at the crossroads is about searching for and choosing what Jeremiah calls the good way. It is doing our best to listen to those deep places within us, for God's voice, and for the signals and clues that help us discern our call. May these *10 Things* be an encouragement to you as you seek to find the way that is good for you and for the world.

- Doug Wysocky-Johnson

1. Adjust Your Attitude

To be at a crossroads is challenging. Most often our decisions are not between a good thing and a bad thing, but between two good options (or two bad ones). This is what makes decisions and discernment stressful. This is especially true if a crossroads has been forced upon you such as a health crisis or job layoff. Because these times can be painful, it is tempting to want to get out of them as quickly as possible; but they can be times when we are most open to spiritual growth.

Reflection

When have I been in a decision time before? Did anything good come of it? Do I trust that growth is happening in this crossroads space?

2. Trust Your Timing

The world operates on chronos time, which has to do with watches, calendars, PDA's and other modes of time keeping. Pressure to make a decision often comes from us and others. God's timing is called kairos time (translates as "Lord's time"), and it doesn't much care about calendars or schedules. Decisions are made when the time is full—when it is right and good to do so. Spiritual living requires paying attention to both chronos time AND kairos time.

Reflection

Write on a piece of paper all the chronos time factors (e.g. calendar issues, financial, etc.) Name them as a way to acknowledge that they are important. Then sit with a kairos question: Is God calling me to act or wait?

3. Form a Question (And the Question Below the Question)

Sometimes it is obvious what the crossroads question is: Should I say yes to this job or wait for something better? Should we spend the money on that new ____ (fill in the blank) or save it? But often there is more to a question than meets the eye. Sometimes the question that is posed is just a trail marker for a deeper exploration.

Reflection

What is your crossroads question(s)? Is there a question beneath the question?

4. Connect the Question to the Rest of Your Life

No crossroads question exists in a vacuum. Part of the work of discernment is to connect your question with the whole of your life. Seek to hold your crossroads question up as you go about your daily life. Once you raise your awareness of your question, you often find that something heard on the radio, or something somebody says to you, or a song you hear, will speak to your question. A connection is made that helps you see the question in a new way. One of the roles of the Holy Spirit is that of connector.

Reflection

Remind yourself of your crossroads question as you go about your day. Think about where and who you want to be in three years. How does your question connect to that vision?

5. Connect the Question to Your Inner Life

Praying about your crossroads question can help you enter into a different kind of space from that which we normally inhabit as we go about our day. Praying in different ways may bring new insights. Bring your crossroads question to the place where you are at your spiritual best.

Reflection

Try praying in silent meditation, on your knees, write a letter to God, use a simple mantra such as "your will be done." Or you might want to try a more active, Psalm-like prayer such as "Where are you God? Answer my prayer!"

6. Share the Question with Others

Crossroads questions are not meant to be borne alone. We know from history that many bad decisions have been made by people who only talked to God about something. These would be examples of a path that felt right to the person, but was not for the common good. The good way that Jeremiah speaks of is right for both.

Reflection

Who are the right people to stand with you at the crossroads? Can you gather them to support you in a way that fits your life today?

7. Pay Attention to Your Ideas

Ideas flow most naturally and abundantly in the areas of your call. It is almost as if there is a spring of creativity that is constantly renewing itself. We don't even have to try—the ideas just come. Often the abundance or scarcity of ideas is a trail marker for you at the crossroads.

Reflection

As you stand at the crossroads, which path has the ideas flowing? Which has a scarcity of ideas?

8. Think Big

Impending crossroads are often intimations of change, scratching at the door about ways you're being invited to grow, and realizations of places that have become too small for you. In Hebrew the word for "salvation" translates as "broad space." Other translations include "running room," or a "wide open field." Numerous Psalms speak of God inviting us into this more spacious place.

Reflection

As you reflect on options, which one leads toward broad space or running room? Look for the direction that calls you to come out of hiding and pushes you outside various boxes.

9. Think Small

The problem with thinking big is that it often paralyzes us. The poet David Whyte couldn't imagine just becoming a poet one day. So he decided to do one small thing everyday toward becoming a poet. Sometimes it was just memorizing a line or two of poetry, other times he would do a reading, or write a poem. At the end of the year, he had taken 365 small steps toward becoming a poet.

Reflection

What one or two small things could you do this week related to your crossroads question?

10. Walk into the Question

The reality is that we are often invited to act before we have full clarity on what is right. Literally we step out in faith; sometimes it is the only way to know. Other times we simply have no choice. We go on knowing that God always goes before us. Soon enough we will come to another crossroads.

Exercise

Act!