

# A Word on Wednesday from Pastor Tonia

## "Pushmi-pullyu" 10/12/22

*I press on toward the goal for the prize  
of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Phil 3:14)*

Dr. Doolittle had an exotic animal, it was a Pushmi-pullyu, the rarest of all creatures. "They had no tail, but a head at each end, and sharp horns on each head. They were very shy and terribly hard to catch. People get most of their animals by sneaking up behind them while they are not looking. But you could not do this with the Pushmi-pullyu — because, no matter which way you came towards him, he was always facing you."

Sometimes it seems like you can't sneak up on life and make it go the way you want it to, either, because it's always facing you. We don't always know if something, or someone, is pushing us or pulling us. Is this the way I want to go? Is this the direction I mean to be going. Is this where I want to be? Was I pulled here or pushed here by someone else?

What pushes you? Who gave it the power to push you? What pulls you unwillingly into its orbit? Should it have so much power?

What do you love to do? What are you passionate about? Who or what has the power to make you act? What pushes your buttons? What pulls you into life? What pushes you off your rails? What pulls you forward?

We often feel ourselves pushed in a direction in which we don't want to go or pulled in a direction in which we'd rather not go. In scripture we are told to press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. This really is where we long to be. Living according to God's words, His instructions, following the path God has set for us. Resting in His loving embrace. Loving God and one another. We are comforted and encouraged knowing we are in God's will for our lives.

Life, responsibilities, loved ones, enemies, needs and wants, musts and wants, rules and desires, all affect us like the moon does the ocean. In and out, up and down, push me, pull me. It's an inner turmoil. We usually know right from wrong, but sometimes it doesn't stop us from doing what we want to — because we want to do it, even if it's not a good idea. We become a Pushmi-pullyu, one part of us pushes, the other pulls, we realize we can't go both directions at the same time, we have to cooperate within ourselves and focus on God, who is unchanging, sure - always, always loving and kind, compassionate and forgiving. God who leads us in the direction we should go.

There's an inner struggle when you try to convince yourself to go in a certain direction or not. What is your motivation? Is it a good place to be? The right action to take? The acceptable thing to do? To buy? The expected way to act? What does God's word say? What does our conscience scream at us? What would Jesus do?

We are told to weigh our words. To think before we act. We struggle with our plan, our desire. We are pulled in opposite directions. Should I? Shouldn't I? Can I face myself afterwards? Will I be happy in the long run? Can I explain my actions? Yes or No. We feel pushed and pulled at every turn.

I know, more questions than answers. Such is life. We all face the beast. When we go to make a purchase, decide to go to brunch or to church, to ask someone out — or to accept, to cheat on a test, to do what seems exciting instead of prudent. Pushmi-pullyu.

Who are we duty bound to impress? The leaders or the followers; the popular or the nerd in the corner; the dancing queen or the debate team captain? Choices. Which choice makes me look the best or which will make me a better person? Do I buy the new car because it's cool or is my old car still reliable? AHH. On and on it goes. We face this situation every day — or many times every day.

What does God advise? Do we pray about every decision? Maybe, besides finding wisdom in God's word – wink wink – taking the time to pray may be what our mind or heart needs to give us a clearer view. We read words of wisdom in Proverbs where we are told,

*“Hear and be attentive, so you may gain insight, for I give you good precepts; do not forsake my teachings. When I was a son - with my father, he taught me and said to me, ‘Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live. Get wisdom; get insight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth.’”* (Prov 4:1-27).

We are to walk the path set before us, follow given directions so we're not pushed off course.

Why should staying on God's path be important? The Psalmist tells us, “God makes His path known to us and here we are in God's presence and find fullness of joy.” (Ps 16:11)

Life does seem to be a Pushmi-pullyu beast; but we push on, pulled toward the goal, for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

## ***Please pray with me.***

God of good directions. You have set before us precepts, Your instructions. You guide us with Your words. Your way is lovingly set before us and on it we find great joy. Help us to listen to You when we feel pushed and pulled along the way. May we keep our eyes on the goal, pushing forward and not allowing ourselves to be pulled back.

**Amen.**