



Vermont sunrise

Greetings!

Please read [Proverbs 1: 1-7](#)

When you have a strong reaction to something it is a sign that something needs to be explored. Recently, I had a strong reaction to a horrible smell in our workshop. I began to explore, and my exploration yielded the source of that odor – a dead mouse.



Milky Way: Stowe, VT - March 2021

Each November, Patti and I visit the west coast of Florida. We often go with our friends to the beach to watch the sun set. Every evening on the beach is different and exciting. I would say that it is a deep spiritual experience filled with awe. In a couple of weeks, we will be in Vermont and the sunrise over Mt. Moosilauke in western New Hampshire is a profound experience at 6 am. Awe is a good word but seems inadequate. I want to explore it further.

Another thing we love to do is lie on the ground at night and look at the stars; the Milky Way is clearly visible to the naked eye. It's even better with our field glasses and off the charts with the telescope! I want to explore it further.

And then there's the taste of my favorite dish in my mouth --- lobster! I never tire of it! Like the gift of taste, there is the gift of touch. Touch is so important. One of the reasons Patti and I hold

hands so often and take selfies arm in arm is that touch connects and completes us as a couple. I want to explore that touch even further; it is a bond that cannot be broken. And music! I remember the first time I heard strings in person as opposed to hearing them on a recording. Hearing them in the concert hall, I wanted to explore it more.

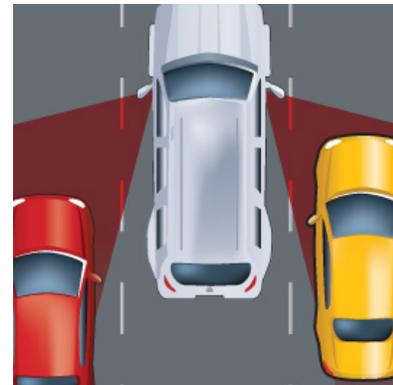


These experiences cover our senses - smell, sight, taste, touch and hearing. But what about other reactions? What about those moments of visceral reaction? Most of us want to have an inquiry of the senses, but what about other things like fear, anger, sadness, joy, and many others? As we enjoy with the senses, how can we have an honest inquiry of these? Sometimes we have reactions to

things that we cannot quite place, but we know something is happening. You and I have a choice, we can explore or ignore that reaction. What do you do when you are in those moments?

The writer of Proverbs 1 is speaking of such an inquiry. In fact, this psalm is a body of teaching that promotes an understanding of personal inquiry and passing that gift down from generation to generation. If you continue to read Proverbs you can see that the book is about engaging life (Prov 1:3). It is suggested that to do so is wisdom (Prov 1:2). But what do you do about the things you don't know about or cannot see?

Leaders talk a great deal about blind spots. If you google *blind spots* you will find a large body of material directed at driving. The suggestions for eliminating blinds spots while driving includes the use of mirrors, driving defensively and looking around to increase your field of view beyond the hood of your car.¹ Not bad instruction for dealing with the interpersonal blind spots we experience as human beings!



Consider this. A personal blind spot is that place of ***not knowing what you don't know***. It is about personal awareness. And it is a place where we can all grow.

Inc. Magazine offers us the Top 10 list of blind spots and some insights of their impact on our personal and corporate lives:

1. Going it alone (being afraid to ask for help).
2. Being insensitive of your behavior on others (being unaware of how you show up).
3. Having an "I know" attitude (valuing being right above everything else).
4. Avoiding the difficult conversations (conflict avoidance).

5. Blaming others or circumstances (playing the victim; refusing responsibility).
6. Treating commitments casually (not honoring the other person's time, energy, resources).
7. Conspiring against others (driven by a personal agenda).
8. Withholding emotional commitment (emotional blackmail).
9. Not taking a stand (lack of commitment to a position).
10. Tolerating "good enough" (low standards for performance).²

Every one of us has places of unknowing. Because you and I live in this state, the importance of community and trusted companions joining us in our life journey is especially helpful, if not crucial.

The article continues by offering 5 major ways to deal with our blind spots:

1. Solicit feedback in the right way.
2. Surround yourself with diverse thinkers with the intention of learning from them.
3. Examine your past to identify patterns.
4. Identify triggers.
5. Seek out a blind-spot buddy.²

With mutual invitation our spiritual partners can help uncover our blind spots. The point is to create a safe space for personal inquiry that will lead to better personal awareness. Personal awareness is a leadership skill that can be used in our individual and corporate lives. Awareness is crucial to our personal growth.

This past weekend I attended a retreat through the *Landmark Forum*,³ an experience of mutual invitation to make personal inquiry and discovery. The experience was amazing and very helpful. During the retreat, I found myself often contemplating the Book of Proverbs and the gift that comes from the generosity of engaging in the courage of personal inquiry. I didn't know if I was up to the task. I learned through excellent coaching that I was, and found myself in a moment of personal growth.

This growth is addressed in Proverbs. A survey of the whole book is about engaging in wisdom. Wisdom cannot be bought or sold, but one grows into it by experience, awareness, and growth. Some of this comes from personal challenge, but most comes through the generosity of the writer sharing the lives of others who become examples of how we can live fully.

I invite you to consider the wisdom of Proverbs as a resource for your personal inquiries in life. Let me begin by offering a closing conversation.

- When was a time you found yourself having a reaction to something in life?
- Did you consider an inquiry?
 - o What happened?
 - o How did you feel?
 - o What made you feel this way?
- o Is your response of sign of something that needs your attention?
 - Do you have a trusted friend or share group that can help you with exploring "What you don't know that you don't know?"
 - If you don't have such a friend or small group, what would it take for you to

find one?

¹ <https://www.drivesafeonline.org/traffic-school/how-to-eliminate-blind-spots/>

² <https://www.inc.com/marissa-levin/the-top-10-leadership-blind-spots-and-5-ways-to-tu.html>

³ <https://www.landmarkworldwide.com/>

Peace,



Rev. Dr. Todd D. Anderson, West Ohio Superintendent
Ohio River Valley District, United Methodist Church

