

## Epiphany Reflective: Directive

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I would like to go on record and say that I liked my first Epiphany word better! In 2018, my word was “**quiet**” which fit beautifully with everything I was hoping to accomplish that year. This past year, my word was much, much harder. In 2019, my word was “**directive**.” Even Joel said, “Yeah, that’s a hard one,” and Rob said something like “Why did we include that word?” I had no idea what to make of this word and considered it for a few months, but eventually I buried it under a big stack of books in my room, hoping it would go away. And that worked for a while until Joel contacted me recently to share a reflection.

*\*so a word to the wise, if you get a tough word and try to hide it, Joel WILL find you!*

**Directive** left me with more questions than answers. Scanning the definition, I learned “directive” means an official or authoritative instruction. Synonyms include direction, mandate, and command. Still unsure of how this word specifically targeted ME for 2019, I mulled over a few possible explanations, initially focusing on the synonym **direction**, as in “way finding.”

I am terrible at directions. I have NO natural compass. After years of mishaps and recalculating, Siri and I have come to an understanding that she needs to tell me to turn “right” or “left” and not to “head east or west.” I like to follow a specific set of commands, step by step leading me to my destination so I know I’ve arrived. My husband, Tim, on the other hand, loves maps and wayfinding. When he is driving, he always wants me to pull up the overview. He says “I want to see where they are taking me.” He likes the big picture and finding new routes. Not me. It occurred to me that I use my calendar the same way I use Google maps when driving. Each daily block on the calendar contains step by step commands (or tasks, events) which lead directly to the end of the week or month. And there is a comfort in this pattern. But that changed for me in early September when our youngest child, Max, went off to college. No longer tied to multiple schedules, school events or sports games, for the first time in about 20 years, my usually crammed calendar was virtually blank--a stark, visual reminder that things had changed. “Now what do I do?” I thought. It dawned on me that perhaps Tim had it right all along. I needed to zoom out and look at the overview in order to find my new direction; to find out where I am headed next in this next phase of life.

I considered another possible connection I have to my Epiphany word. As an elementary school teacher, I spend my days giving directives—going over instructions, commands and orders. At times, my students receive these directives with push back. Why? Well, can I just do it this way? Simply handing out orders is not as clear cut as it may seem. Twenty+ years in the classroom has taught me that for instructions to be well received, they must be purposeful. Likewise, as a teacher, I receive plenty of directives as well, from both parents and administrators. I sometimes question these internally. <Why are they having us do this? That makes no sense.> This year there have been authoritative orders I have not agreed with, and this time I have spoken up out loud. I have learned some hard lessons, both personally and professionally, from doing so. Standing up for what you feel is right, against what has been prescribed or directed,

does not always win you favor. It can tear at the fabric of your friendships or leave you on the “outs” with your colleagues.

And then I thought about orders from the highest authority of them all—God. The Bible is full of examples of ordinary people receiving specific instructions from God, not all of them easy. Noah, Jonah, Abraham, and Mary (just to name a few) must have certainly questioned the purpose of what they were being asked to do. I thought, was I going to be receiving a directive from God? Did I miss a directive from God? Will I have to build an arc? What if I don’t agree with what I am asked to do? What then? Should I be on the lookout for very large fish? While these musings seem very unlikely in today’s world, God sometimes puts forth some very big asks.

First quiet, then Directive? Hmmmm....

A final idea struck me. Maybe the Epiphany words are meant to go together. Maybe the words work on us in combination, building a phrase or a message over time. Maybe they are clues to a riddle from God. And then, I got it!

What is quiet and gives an official, authoritative instruction?

*A star.* A star shining in the east, so brilliant that it commands all who see it to follow--without question, without Siri or a detailed map--just drop everything and follow. And where does it lead? To the embodiment of God’s love.

*It’s love.* **LOVE** is my directive from God. A command that is not always easy, but certainly one that I can agree with. One I can share with others. One in which the purpose is clear. One that I can drop everything and do. Above all else, just love. This is a decree that makes sense to me. I can *do* this.

With this new clarity, comes more questions. I am sure there is more to this missive. I await my next clue...

Amen.