



February 4, 2026

MESSENGER

Quote of the Week

"Location, location, location !"

Pastor George in this week's message

INFO

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Contact Information:

Due to the fires, our mail has been forwarded. Please send mail to PO Box 91055, Pasadena, CA 91109. You may still call the church phone at 626-797-8970;

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SPIRITUAL OPPORTUNITIES I MAY HAVE MISSED

There are two well-known museums in Pasadena, and I've never been in either one.

The **Norton Simon Museum** is one of the must-see attractions visitors to Pasadena have on their check list. It houses collections from European and American artists, representing styles both classical and modern. Millions of people know about it from their first New Year's morning view of the annual Rose Parade, because the primary site for TV cameras is atop the grandstands across Colorado Blvd. I've driven by the Norton Simon hundreds of times since I've lived here, but I have never been inside.

The **Pacific Asia Museum**¹ is the location of more than 15,000 works of art, religion, lifestyle and language, representing nations and people groups from all over Asia and the Pacific Islands. This unique collection attempts to capture the genius of a part of the world where many civilizations flourished and added their cultural DNA that has helped shape the modern world. Beginning in 1958, I studied at Fuller Seminary and walked by the Museum just about every day. But I have never visited its displays.

What's my problem? Well, both museums are open to the public, but they're NOT FREE. The Norton Simon is \$20 for and adult; the Pacific Asia is \$15. Besides, they're not open every day, and the hours are limited. In short, there are some barriers that have stopped me from crossing the thresholds of these top-grade museums that have been right under my nose. Not big barriers, but enough to keep me from making the effort over many years.²

That seems like a metaphor for a lot of choices I've made in my life. I decide whether or not to do something based on two criteria: **COST** and **MOTIVATION**. In my museum history, my motivation is, admittedly, not high. I have no background in art appreciation and not much interest in changing that. Now, if I had the opportunity to attend a *major sports event or a live*

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(Continued from other side)

concert featuring my favorite group, or the chance to meet a famous person --- something that really motivated me, I might be willing to pay twice the amount of the Norton Simon ticket cost.³ Actually, since there's no entrance fee to sit in my easy chair at home and watch an entertaining TV show, that's more often been my choice.

In life, I'm constantly confronted with decisions that involve COST vs. MOTIVATION:

How high is the fence (financial cost, physical effort, time and energy)?

How high am I willing to jump (my values in life, what motivates me)?

The challenge of the Christian life is all about changing the formula:

Whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. (Philippians 3:7-11)

I wonder if, in retrospect, I will be able to look back over my life and see that some amazing spiritual experiences were available to me that I never explored because I didn't make enough of an effort. I wasn't MOTIVATED enough to pay the minimal COST.

Pastor George Van Alstine

¹ Since 2013, the **USC Pacific Asia Museum**.

² Other nearby significant sites I've neglected include Huntington Library, Descanso Gardens, the L.A. County Arboretum, Cal Tech, various Southern California niche museums.

³ This is probably not true. I'm still infected with the Child-of-the-Depression Disease that makes me basically a cheapskate.