

Where Do We Go From Here? (Part 2)

Sunday, January 7, 2018

10:30 AM

INTRODUCTION

Last week we talked about standing at the beginning of a new year and Looking to God for the direction of where we go from here, trusting that He will show us the way if we keep our eyes on Him.

Considering two passages from the Old Testament we learned several basic principles to put into practice as we contemplate the question of “Where do we go from here?”

From Joshua Chapter 3 we read...

Joshua 3:1-4 (NIV)

Crossing the Jordan

3 Early in the morning Joshua and all the Israelites set out from Shittim and went to the Jordan, where they camped before crossing over. **2** After three days the officers went throughout the camp, **3** giving orders to the people: “When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the Levitical priests carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. **4** Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before...

Here we noted the following

1. They camped.... A time of reflection, a time of preparation. A time of consecration and commitment to God
2. When you see.... Keeping our eyes on God, believing He has a plan for us
3. Move out.... We are going to go into the new year no matter what, but in many ways, we must chose to move forward.
4. Follow.... Obedience to the direction of God

From Jeremiah Chapter 6 we read

Jeremiah 6:16-17 (NIV)

16 This is what the Lord says: “Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. But you said, ‘We will not walk in it.’ **17** I appointed watchmen over you and said, ‘Listen to the sound of the trumpet!’ But you said, ‘We will not listen.’

Again we took note of the following..

1. Stand... stop for a minute and consider what you are going to do
2. Look... we can see if we will just open our eyes to the truths that God wants to show us

3. Ask for the ancient paths.... Proven principles, tried and true ways that God has given us that bring blessing into our lives
4. Ask for the good way... as opposed to the bad. Good in the sense of what they bring to our lives - peace and rest for our souls

From this vantage point we began to take a more detailed look at some of the specific proven pathways that God has given us to help us navigate a new year and the question if “Where do we go from here.”

- God is on the throne and is in control... Trust Him with all you heart and He will direct your paths
- Psalm 121 (NIV)

A song of ascents.

1 I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from? **2** My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. **3** He will not let your foot slip—he who watches over you will not slumber; **4** indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. **5** The Lord watches over you—the Lord is your shade at your right hand; **6** the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. **7** The Lord will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life; **8** the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

God is in control. He is watching over us, preserving us and giving us the strength to make it through

Proverbs 3:5-6 (ERV)

5 Trust the Lord completely, and don't depend on your own knowledge. **6** With every step you take, think about what he wants, and he will help you go the right way.

Hebrews 13:8 (NIV)

8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

- The devil is still at work... Resist him and he will flee from you

1 Peter 5:8 (NIV)

8 Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

James 4:7 (NIV)

7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Temptation will come our way but God has given us a way of escape

1 Corinthians 10:13 (NIV)

13 No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

- Our days are numbered... Some of us may not be here next year

James 4:14 (NIV)

14 Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

Psalms 90:12 (NIV)

12 Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

The point is to live in such a way that we make the most of every day both in the way we approach life for our own sakes and in the way we treat others. Love what you have while you have it, for soon it may be gone.

- The Word of God is necessary food and brings nourishment to our souls

Job 23:12 (NIV)

12 I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread (necessary food).

God has given us His word that we might be sustained, but it is up to us to read it, digesting its nutrients on a daily basis. What is your plan for reading and studying His Word this year?

Psalms 119:105 (NIV)

105 Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.

Today I would like us to take a look at four more proven pathways of truth that should guide our steps in the coming days

- **You must be born again**

There is no more important place to begin than with this powerful and uncompromising truth

Let's read a familiar passage from John Chapter 3

John 3:1-15 (NIV)

3 Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. **2** He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

3 Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”

4 “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

5 Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. **6** Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. **7** You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ **8** The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.” **9** “How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.

10 “You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things? **11** Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. **12** I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? **13** No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. **14** Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, **15** that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”

Like Nicodemus, so many people have a knowledge of God and a human understanding of who they believe God to be; but this is not enough. God wants us to have an encounter with him that transforms our lives and births in us a life giving relationship with the one who died for us.

“First of all I want to say that I know this is presumptuous of me. I’m going to talk to you about your religious life, and I have no right to assume that it lacks anything. After

all, you've been writing for Guideposts for ten years; you respect religion, you've studied it from many angles. But there is so much more to it than that. . . ."

I looked at Tib: she sat still as a rock.

"John," said Catherine, "do you believe Jesus was God?"

It was the last question in the world I'd expected. I'd supposed she'd have something to say about God being able to heal, or prayer being a wonderful uplift when you're afraid—something to do with the crisis I was facing.

But she'd put the question to me; so I considered it. Tib and I were Christians, certainly, in the sense that we wrote "Protestant" on application blanks, attended church with some regularity, sent our three children to Sunday school. Still, I knew that these were habits; the fact was I had never come to grips with this very question: Was Jesus of Nazareth, in fact, God? And now, when I tried, there were mountains of logic that halted me. I started to map them for Catherine, but she stopped me.

"You're trying to approach Christianity through your mind, John," she said. "It simply can't be done that way." There it was again. Catherine went on. "It's one of the peculiarities of Christianity that you cannot come to it through intellect. You have to be willing to experience it first, to do something you don't understand—and then oddly enough, understanding often follows. And it's just that which I'm hoping for you today . . . that without understanding, without even knowing why, you say 'Yes' to Christ."

- *Sherrill, John L.. They Speak with Other Tongues (pp. 15-16).*

It does not matter who you are or what credentials you have. I don't care how much knowledge you have of the bible or even how many times you've been to church. What matters above all else is this one question. Have you been born again? Have you had a life changing encounter with God that continues in an ongoing and daily relationship with Him? A relationship that continues to transform your life?

John 17:3 (NIV)

3 Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

2 Corinthians 6:2 (ERV)

2 God says, "I heard you at the right time, and I gave you help on the day of salvation." I tell you that the "right time" is now. The "day of salvation" is now.

- There is encouragement through the Fellowship of Believers

Hebrews 10:25 (NIRV)

25 And let us not give up meeting together. Some are in the habit of doing this. Instead, let us encourage one another with words of hope. Let us do this even more as you see Christ's return approaching.

Why do we ignore God's command to assemble together? Why do we continue to let our fellowship with other believers slide downward in the list of our priorities until there is nothing left but crumbs - minimal amounts of leftover time when everything else has been completed and we finally decide to give the house of God some time?

And once finally there, we expect God to pour out all His promises to us in one big dose of blessing that will solve all our problems and sustain us completely until the next time we find room in our schedules to return to His house.

The Apostle John outlines a correlation between our relationship with Christ and our fellowship with other believers.

1 John 1:7 (NIV)

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

The New Testament believers exemplify a strong commitment to church as we read in the book of Acts...

Acts 2:42 (NIV)

42 They devoted themselves to fellowship...

There is a reason we call it God's house. It is a place where we live, abide and dwell. A place that provides shelter, warmth and protection. A place in which we eat, experience relationship and find rest.

Our final stop is at Hayuni, a church above the tree line. I reach for my water bottle: it has shrunk in volume due to the drop in air temperature at 14,000 feet. We park the car on a flat area just before a pile of rocks flanking a waterfall. "Pastor Anjel says that we walk from here on," Debbie announces. All I see are mountaintops and no sign of civilization. I follow Leonarda up the mountain as she treks with her *manta*, a colorful Peruvian blanket in which she lugs musical instruments as heavy as a small person. I stop frequently to catch my breath; she does not.

At the summit of the hill, a short-maned chestnut horse stands near a greying mud building. Everything looks abandoned. I walk through the building's entrance and am awestruck by a sea of young faces: More than 80 children sit waiting for us!

Pastor Anjel and Windel give warm greetings while elders busy themselves on one side of the church. In honor of the superintendent's visit, they don traditional *ch'ullo*, white-beaded hats with colorful tassels worn only for celebrations. They play worship songs on metal flutes and keep time with an animal skin

drum four generations old. Having a district leader or missionary — or any guests at all — is a rare occurrence for the remote Hayuni church.

We ask one of the youngest girls how far she walked to church today. "Two hours," she answers, and her mother, baby on back, affirms. Numbers of the children have walked as far over the pathless highlands.

We depart just before sunset so we can make it back down the mountain to our vehicle without stumbling. The Quechua indulge in long

goodbyes; as we drive away, I look over my shoulder to see them just beginning their long journeys home, the night sky creeping quickly over them. →

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Instead we treat it more like God's hotel - a temporary place where we occasionally stop, and expect our immediate needs to be met; but where there is no true relationship and certainly no need for commitment on our part to keep the place maintained

January-February 2018 – Research from YouGov in October 2017 found a majority of the British people still respect many of the Ten Commandments – all but the ones specifically honoring God.

The first four commandments – having no other gods, not having idols, not taking God's name in vain, and keeping the Sabbath day holy – are the least popular.

Only 43% of Christians said idolatry matters, and 38% of Christians and 7% of non-religious (23% of the total population) said it was wrong to say "God" as a curse word. Even fewer, 36% of Christians and 5% of non-religious (20% total) said the first commandment to have no other god is still relevant. And only 19% of all British (31% of Christians and 7% of non-religious) believe it is important to keep the Sabbath holy.

The remaining six commandments, which deal with human interactions, are taken more seriously.

- ▶ 93% agree with "you shall not kill."
- ▶ 93% agree with "you shall not steal."
- ▶ 87% agree with "you shall not bear false witness."
- ▶ 73% agree with "you shall not commit adultery."
- ▶ 69% agree with "you shall honor your father and mother."
- ▶ 61% agree with "you shall not covet."

Instead, like Joshua, we should have a strong commitment to abiding in the House of God

Exodus 33:7-11 (NIV)

The Tent of Meeting

7 Now Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the “tent of meeting.” Anyone inquiring of the Lord would go to the tent of meeting outside the camp. **8** And whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people rose and stood at the entrances to their tents, watching Moses until he entered the tent. **9** As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the Lord spoke with Moses. **10** Whenever the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance to the tent, they all stood and worshiped, each at the entrance to their tent. **11** The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Then Moses would return to the camp, but his young aide Joshua son of Nun did not leave the tent.

Like the Psalmist, we should have a passionate longing for being in Church

Psalm 42:1-2 (NIV)

1 As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. **2** My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?

The church is an ancient path that we should continue to travel. Let's be fanatical about fellowship with other believers

A Fanatical Fan

There was a Packers fan who had a terrible seat at Lambeau field way up in the nose bleed section. Looking with his binoculars, he spotted an empty seat down close to the field on the 50-yard line. Thinking to himself "what a waste" he made his way down to the empty seat.

When he arrived at the seat, he asked the man sitting next to it, "Is this seat taken?" The man replied, "This was my wife's seat, but she passed away. She was a big Packers fan."

The other man replied, "I'm so sorry to hear of your loss. May I ask why you didn't give the ticket to a friend or a relative?"

The man replied, "They're all at the funeral."

- Prayer is powerful and brings us into the presence of God

James 5:16 (NIV)

16 ...The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

James 5:16 (KJV)

16 ...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

In teaching us how to pray, Jesus first words demonstrate that prayer begins with relationship (Our Father who art in heaven). But his next few words reveal that he intent of our prayer is to bring the presence of God.

In following this ancient path we realize that we do not need to try to make prayer powerful. Prayer is powerful. It is powerful because God is powerful. Prayer is nothing more than a deliberate entering into the presence of God and an entering of the presence of God into our realities through purposeful and continued invitation.

Revelation 3:20 (NIV)

20 Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.

- The great commission is still God's Mission and should be ours

Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV)

19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Luke 14:23 (NLV)

23 Then the owner said to his servant, 'Go out along the roads leading away from the city and into the fields. Tell them they must come. Do this so my house will be filled.

What are we doing to fulfill the great commission?

Many of us bring Jesus with us when we go to church but not so much to our everyday lives. We pray for the sick and ask people to receive Christ in church services. What about living like Jesus, going about doing good, healing, delivering, setting captives free, and bringing good news every day, everywhere to everyone? We bring him to our home group meetings and Christian conferences, where we profess him amid safe, supportive community. But much of the rest of the time we

keep him hidden in our hearts. Deep down, for many of us, that doesn't sit right. And it shouldn't.

When we consider our lifestyles as Jesus followers, most of ours don't fit the New Testament model. Christ sent out his 12 disciples to proclaim the good news, heal the sick and be willing vessels to bring about his kingdom on earth. Later, he sent out 70 disciples with the same instructions. He baptized 120 people and sent them out to do the same. Finally, after his Resurrection, he gave this commission to 500 people who saw him. Jesus told each of these groups, "Everything I've taught you to do—preach the gospel, heal the afflicted and bring about my kingdom—you're to do in my name. Now go into all the world and do as I've commanded. I'll supply you with all the power you need to be my witnesses."

That's the New Testament model. But the gap between it and the way we live our faith is vast. At one end is God's wonder-working power, and on the opposite end is our lifestyle. That night in the hotel, I was compelled by the Holy Spirit to close the gap.

In Bosnia, a pastor and I were leaving a café when we saw a military veteran in a wheelchair, begging. He had lost a leg in the civil war, and his other leg was hurting. "I may have to lose this limb too," he told us. "It's burning, and I can barely stand being out here."

I asked if we could pray for him. Like a lot of people I approach, he looked skeptical but seemed also to have a yearning hope. As we prayed, his expression softened. "My leg feels better," he said. "It's cool, not burning anymore." I told him, "Jesus did that." "Jesus?" he said. "I just watched a video that somebody gave me called 'The Jesus Movie.' You mean it's not just historical? I didn't know he was still alive today." I've seen firsthand that reaching out to people in love isn't duty—it's exciting, adventurous and fun. And it's a reality meant for all of us, from the most gifted preacher to the shyest introvert. It was a lifestyle for Jesus' followers in the first century, and it is meant to be ours today.

- From <<https://www.worldchallenge.org/newsletter/2017/doing-works-jesus>>