



How can I know which way to go?

Seeking God's Path

Everyone in this world has a direction in their lives. It's very rarely that you will find anyone who will admit to not having some kind of aim. Mind you, among unbelievers, the honest ones are those who – in that moment of deep inner reflection – say something like these words in a song:

“How can I go forward when I don't know which way I'm facing?

How can I go forward when I don't know which way to turn? How can I go forward into something I'm not sure of?”

This is the sad state of affairs of a life without saving faith; and it explains the high rate of depression and even suicide today.

But what if it were Christians who became so confused about where they ought to be going? How would it be if among us now there are those who speak in similar tones as to what their present and future is? That would be nothing less than totally devastating!

We could understand that unbelievers would be confused and lacking direction. We could even see it as logical that the further away from the gospel society goes, the more there is depression and frustration, with suicide, because there is no deeper aim or purpose in life.

But when it seems the unbelievers have definite directions, and it's rather Christians who appear so lost and confused, well, what a turn-up for the books! Yet, that's exactly what's happening. For although we have a wealth of Bible knowledge and church history passed on down to us through the ages, it seems that more than ever the church has taken on the world's utterly useless directions!

What is occurring that has made Christians become like this? How is it happening that the patently illogical and new-age ideas become used as the way that believers ought to follow, as they are dressed up with a so-called 'Christian' costume? Why does such a book as *The Bible Code* become so quickly converted into Christian literature, turning into books called by names such as *The Handwriting of God*, or *The Signature of God*, all purporting to give accurate details about world events that have or that will happen?

A code?

But here a little more explanation about this book, *The Bible Code*, might be helpful. The author of this book claims to have found a so-called Bible Code. This kind of code is a method of deciphering a hidden meaning, similar to those used for communication in war. It's something that is hidden – it's a secret – until you crack the code! And once you've done that – wallah! Everything starts to make sense; it's part of this pattern.

Though with this so-called Bible Code we need to understand that the whole Bible doesn't have this code – just the first five books of Moses. So you could be a mystical Jew and believe this. (As in fact the author is, even referring at one stage quite unsympathetically to an Israeli Prime Minister, who pooh-poohed his strange idea.) Invariably that Prime Minister died, allegedly for failing to see the danger this code was telling about him. Because Yitzhak Rabin apparently could have changed history. In the words of the book, “...*the Bible encodes all the probabilities and what we do determines the actual outcome.*”

Ah, we come to real rub, don't we? This is from man, not God! This direction is no divine direction at all because in the end it's what we do what's matters. It really gives us a weak, ineffectual God, some generous spiritual presence, who gives us the way we want to go anyhow. That's really a very small picture.

How different to the true God of Scripture – the God who says to His people through David in Psalm 32, *“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.”* (v8)

The very big picture

Instead of trying to get out of the Bible what we want to fit in with our own direction, we have to first of all let God speak for Himself. And let's be assured, God does speak for Himself – otherwise the Scriptures would not have been written, and certainly Jesus Christ would never have come to show God's self-revelation. There is no way any individual person can take up the centerpiece of this picture.

What matters is what Jesus showed to those two men on the road to Emmaus, and to His disciples, as we read in Luke 24: *“And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.”* And when the Spirit opened their minds, they could understand this! Then they saw the huge plan of God, and their own small part.

But do we? Can we look past our own selves? Or have we, too, become as wrapped up in our own little world, as those two disciples were on their way to Emmaus.

We can say that we use the Bible. We can even show we follow things in the Bible. But for whom are we doing these things?

There was an occasion when I went to a particular church service to hear an address on a particular subject. As it happened, that address wasn't given that day. What I did hear, though, was how a woman had received God's Word for her and her husband to go and serve on the mission field in Africa. That word she heard from the LORD was from the book of Habakkuk, which she happened to open at while she was seeking direction. In the King James version they preferred, she suddenly saw the words, *“I will call thee in the midst of the years.”* What could this prophetic word to Israel six hundred years before Christ possibly mean for her today? Well, she explained that a particular burden for her in seeking the LORD's will had been their age. She wasn't so young anymore – nearly forty, you see! And she wondered if they were meant to go at that kind of age. These words, which fell open before her, were so providential!

“In the midst of the years” meant middle-aged – exactly their age. *“In the midst of the years I will call thee”* – what more specific guidance could they have? So off they went!

This is but one example of the misinterpretation happening among believers today. It's like the story many of the man who, in seeking God's will, closed his eyes, flipped open his Bible, and stabbed his finger on the verse, *“Then Judas went out and hung himself.”* Feeling that this couldn't possibly be the Lord's guidance for him that day, he closed his eyes again, flipped open his Bible, stabbed his finger, and opening his eyes, he read, *“And you go do likewise!”*

While this might seem an extreme example, how many of us haven't talked about “putting out the fleece”? Isn't that also telling God that if he wants us to do **this**, then He has to do **that** as a confirming sign? And how much don't we secretly envy Christians who live by such faith?

But where in Judges 6 are we told that what Gideon did with that fleece was an act of faith? If we read the whole chapter it's obvious that putting out that fleece showed the exact opposite, for God had already told him that He would save Israel by His hand!

The exactly right glasses!

This article began with noting that almost everyone has a direction, an aim, of one kind or another. Even if they don't seem to have a purpose, we could even say that their purpose is that they have no purpose! So, if God has this **very big picture** – if the Scriptures are true in testifying about Jesus Christ, and about the essential need to be saved through Him, then we have to see that. In fact, it is so important that this purpose must be the grid through which we draw all our guidance from God through the Scripture – and anywhere else, for that matter!

What are these exactly right glasses? Think about it: They're glasses which don't make physical things into spiritual signs; they're glasses through which we are certain of things we cannot see; ah, what can they be but the glasses of faith! Now – are **you** wearing them?

How can you tell? Well, do you trust God? Is this God your Father in a personal relationship through His Son? Have you the assurance that everything is in His control and is being worked out for His glory?

Not always? That's the difficulty in our lives. That's why we would be comforted by being able to have this physical proof – whether in a so-called Bible code, the stab we have as flip open the Bible, or the symbolical laying out of the fleece. We have to acknowledge that it's not we who **find**, it's we who have been **found**! It's in the acknowledgment that it's God's **will** that we begin to see the way we're meant to go.

God's will is His eternal plan. And it's in recognising, as Ephesians 1 points out, God's plan in Jesus Christ, that we begin to see our part. As we have union with our Lord – through being adopted, redeemed, forgiven, set apart as His own by the indwelling Holy Spirit and raised up with Him to newness of life – we, the Church, individually and together, bring all the honour to Him!

Stick to Him and you won't get lost

What it all comes down to is this: If I am not actively in fellowship with Christ, personally and communally, I am holding back the work of His Spirit in my life and in the relationships I have. Galatians 5 talks about keeping in step with the Spirit, precisely because believers can wander away from God's Word during their lives. It's this keeping in step with the Spirit which keeps those glasses firmly in place.

But one could now ask a practical question: How do I actually keep in step with the Spirit? We have to be careful here. Don't fall into that trap of thinking it's something you have to do.

There was a young minister who visited a senior yet frail senior believer. Over a number of months he had become impressed with her witness while she had so much suffering. During one visit he asked her how he could walk those same steps to be that much closer to God: "How can I go up toward the Lord?"

The lady tut-tutted. "You do have much to learn, don't you? You see, it's not that we go up steps to come closer to the Lord. We actually go down steps and realise more and more the huge distance we are from the Lord, and how far above us He really is!"

Let me ask you now: Is Jesus becoming more of that larger and filling presence in your life? Are you giving Christ more and more glory and honour? In the words of John the Baptist, "*He must become greater; I must become less*". (John 3:30)

The straight narrow way

"Ah," you could be thinking, "finally he's going to tell me which way to go. This is what I've been looking for!" But, without looking at the whole, and without looking by faith at the whole, you won't be able to see the details. If you can't see the forest for the trees, you need to step back first of all. Get your relationship right with the Lord and then you can start to live with Him too.

We should not think that when David was in the hardness of his heart from the sin he committed with Bathsheba that he was still able to live close with the Lord in other areas. In fact, this sin tore apart so much of what had been built up with the Lord, leading to a terrible split in his own family, and severely debilitating the future of Israel. In Psalm 32 David confesses this sin, *“When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.”* (v 3f)

Being right with the Lord is the straight and narrow way. This will mean a lifetime of asking the constant question, “Now what would Jesus want me to do?” And because we read His word, and pray to Him, and worship Him with His Body the Church – He tells us the answer, too! You will find issues and situations that were once real hassles become less so. You will find different challenges before you, for you’re growing. Just like teenagers find their physical and emotional lives are changing, with different things taking on more importance, while other things just don’t seem to matter as much, if at all, so it happens to us spiritually – it grows on you! It was because of his own experience of this that David sang, *“Many are the woes of the wicked, but the LORD’s unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in Him”* (Psalm 32:10).

Consider who Jesus said showed the best example of a person following God’s will. Was there anyone He commended for putting out a big fleece to test the LORD? Quite the opposite! In Luke 19, the Master praises his servants and promotes them to the highest positions because they have been faithful with the very small things. In the same way, the apostle Paul tells Timothy that elders must first of all manage their own household well. Let them demonstrate that God is guiding and blessing them every day, and in every way!

By the practice of faith itself, and so seeing the very big picture of the Lord, you will be shown where to go. Ask yourself: Will what I’m thinking of doing help God’s big picture? Have I exercised my faith by praying about it? Do I know everything I should about it? Is there a trusted Christian friend who might advise me?

If the answer is yes, keep going with what you’re doing. It’s those little things which prove you can do bigger things. Then you’ll find the LORD prompting and leading in His time. In the words of Hebrews 12, *“...let’s throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let’s run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let’s fix our eyes on **Jesus**, the author and perfecter of our faith...”* (v 1 b-2).

Oh, that we would say more and more, with the apostle, *“I have been crucified with Christ – I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body I live by faith in the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me.”* (Gal. 2:20). Then, and only then, can we know which way to go, because it’s not our say – it’s His say that paves the way – the straight and narrow way.

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