

Stay in the Right Lane

Have you ever driven on the interstate and missed an exit? Have you ever done it in heavy traffic and have to drive several miles out of your way to turn around and get back to where you should be? Driving in Naples during “season” is a monumental challenge as no human behind the wheel knows how to drive in the right lane.

I use driving here as a reference frequently as it is something that affects us all and we can all relate to it. It is even more aggravating when you are late for an appointment, and someone is driving five miles an hour under the speed limit in the left lane. This is usually coupled by an equally mentally challenged motorist serving as a pace car for the slowpoke in the left lane. I affectionately call this a “two lane snail race.” Unbelievably, I have learned fairly recently that if you truly desire to get to somewhere, simply stay in the right lane. There is usually nobody there anyway.

When I first moved to Florida in 1985, I could not believe that the left lane was always occupied by some octogenarian in their Lincoln Continental condo

car, putting along at thirty miles per hour in a forty-five mile an hour zone, and with their left turn signal on for several miles. Back then they were labeled as “Q-Tip’s” as you could see a white head of hair barely over the steering wheel and one hand at ten o’clock and one hand at two o’clock. These precious folks have now been compounded by the remaining non-driving populace from third world countries.

Again, bursting blood vessels is now outdated as driving in the right lane accompanied by “spa music” has abated homicidal thoughts. I am a work in progress...

You may have noticed the driving theme, but the aforementioned descriptions are a brief detour. The real focus is on the journey and destination. We need to stay in the right lane to get there. As we just read in this week’s essay, Jesus said that He was the way.

John 14:4-6- “And where I am going you know, and the way you know.”

Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going; how then

can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me.”

Jesus was telling His disciples that He was the way, the road they would travel upon on their journey to His Kingdom. In the Greek context, *hodos*, Christ exemplified the course of conduct, the way they should think and feel.

The illustration Jesus implied they should emulate Him and His character. By doing this, they would grow in His image and come to know God the Father.

John 17:25-26- “Righteous Father, the world has not known You; but I have known You, and these have known that You did send Me. And I have made known Your name to them and will make it known; so that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

This love of and for God is critical in our journey towards His Kingdom. Over these past few years, it has been becoming more difficult to stay focused on our destination than ever before. It is so very easy to take our eyes off the goal

and our reaching the Kingdom of God. All too often we take our eyes off the prize and concentrate on the chaos surrounding us. The world, especially our own nation is locked into a rapidly accelerating downward spiral with no apparent recovery in sight, except the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We tend to emphasize the problems making them bigger than our God. We can lose the ability to see something as clearly as we should.

When flying down the interstate, if we become distracted, we can most definitely miss our exit, or worse, crash and never reach the destination. It is so easy to become distracted when driving, prior to cell phones, billboards or the flashing neon signs would draw your eyes off the highway. Today, how many people do you see behind the wheel texting? Putting on make-up driving with their knees? These folks are oblivious to anything around them. Much like those who profess to be “born again” and going to heaven after saying a “sinner’s prayer.”

They will sit back and set the cruise control as the destination is now set and the journey has been taken care of. I doubt God the Father would have sent Jesus to pay the toll for any trip if it were that easy. These are the same folks

who used to display the bumper sticker with “God is my co-Pilot.” News flash, if God is your co-Pilot, change airlines. It is a sincere leap of faith to let go and let God take control of our lives. I will put all my trust in God and let Him take the wheel. God *is* sovereign. God *can* turn wounds into pearls, and He can absolutely be and *is* our pilot. Jesus Himself put all His trust and faith in God the Father.

John 5:30- “I have no power to do anything of Myself; but as I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father, Who sent Me.”

The unrighteous may think they are riding along on cruise control, but their actions and conduct will not go unnoticed or unpunished.

Proverbs 3:32-35- “For the crooked man *is* an abomination to the LORD, but His secret *is* with the righteous. The curse of the LORD *is* in the house of the wicked, but He blesses the home of the righteous. Surely He scorns the scorners, but He gives grace to the lowly. The wise shall inherit glory, but shame shall be the promotion of fools.”

Proverbs 29:16- “When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increases; but the righteous shall see their fall.”

Driving with blinders on and not keeping God’s Commandments as He instructs us to keep them will *never* yield His truth. People will be content riding on cruise control, worshiping God the way *they* want to, never coming to understand the plan of God. They will miss their destination and get off at the wrong exit. It will only take them a thousand years to get back.

1 John 2:3-4- “And by this *standard* we know that we know Him: if we keep His commandments. The one who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”

If you have ever driven cross country or any great distance, you know how tiresome and challenging a drive can be. Traveling is a journey, and it took the nation of Israel forty years of wandering to reach their destination.

Joshua 5:6- “For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness until all the people, the men of war who came out of Egypt, were destroyed

because they did not obey the voice of the LORD. To them the LORD swore that He would not show them the land which the LORD swore to their fathers that He would give us, a land that flows with milk and honey.”

Why? They failed to follow God and His instructions. They tossed out the map they had been given and forgotten His way. They thought they did not need Him as they were free and could now chose a “short-cut” through their own thoughts and flesh. It destroyed them.

Just as the nation of Israel was delivered from physical bondage in Egypt, we too have come through the waters of baptism and died to our old selves and raised new with Jesus Christ. We too will have trials and temptations on our road ahead, but we have been promised the ultimate rest area upon our journey’s end.

James 1:12- “Blessed *is the* man who endures trials because, after he has been proved, he shall receive a crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”

We may not be called or understand God's plan when we are young or even through our adult life. We certainly may not understand all of the trials and storms we have encountered, but God in His infinite wisdom knew what "detours" would suffice in keeping us in the right lane.

How many miles have we driven in our lives or better yet, how many years have we been driving? Most of us were on the highway for a few decades before we were called to the greatest destination possible.

Without our keeping of God's Sabbaths and Holy Days, we would otherwise be clueless to the Plan of God. Through the gift of God's Holy Spirit, we are given understanding. Understanding is a key component of knowledge. Some people with ample knowledge are incredibly stupid when discerning the plan of God. We know from a previous essay we can't fix stupid, but ignorance can be cured.

Without God's Spirit the Bible makes no sense whatsoever. Discarding the Old Testament because it is "Jewish," or it has "been done away with" sets up the failure for all who subscribe to this thinking. Without the relationship with God and the absence of His Holy Spirit, no matter how much you read the Bible you will never understand His word. Our lives must be in total

submission to His will, completely devoted in our preparation for what God has in store for our lives as a member of His Family.

Just as God was leading Israel out of bondage from Egypt, He is leading us, His elect, out of from the bondage of Satan, sin, and death into eternal life.

Revelation 20:6- “Blessed and holy is the one who has part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power. But they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.”

Eventually all of mankind will have this opportunity.

Revelation 20:5- “(But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were completed.) This *is* the first resurrection.”

The nation of Israel had to leave things behind when they left Egypt. They left behind many of the comforts they were used to on their wilderness journey. But God would equip them with all they needed, all they had to do was stay focused on Him. They chose to cling to what they had left behind and became faithless making a golden calf as a substitute for God. They lost sight of their destination.

Exodus 32:7-8- “And the LORD said to Moses, “Go! Get you down, for your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted *themselves*.

They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them.

They have made them a molten calf, and have worshiped it, and have sacrificed to it, and said, ‘These *are* your gods, O Israel, who have brought you up out of the land of Egypt.’ ”

That did not work out too well for them.

Exodus 32:27-28- “And he said to them, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel, ‘Each man put his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and kill each one his brother, and each one his companion, and each one his neighbor.’” And the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And there fell of the people that day about three thousand men;”

Those that were not put to the sword got to wander in the wilderness for forty years until all of that generation had died off.

Today, we are no different. God gives us all we need for our journey, but we fail to stay focused on Him. We can become so absorbed on looking at what we leave behind, it makes for an easy opportunity for Satan to set up a diversion and get us off course. Is it any wonder that saying a “sinner’s prayer” is a comfortable alternative? Complacency on our part will make us miss our exit.

What happened to the nation of Israel in the Book of Exodus should serve as a warning to us. Out of our love for God, we are duty bound to reflect the image and character of Jesus Christ. Both individually and collectively as the Body of Christ, we must exemplify living God’s way of life.

Along with God’s insights, we also have His Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts. We have instructions and reassurances for the future.

1 Corinthians 12:1-7- “Now brethren, I do not wish you to be ignorant concerning the spiritual *gifts*. You know that you were Gentiles, *and* were carried away with dumb idols, as you yourselves were led away again and again. Therefore, I am letting you know that no one speaking by *the* Spirit

of God calls Jesus accursed; and no one can say *that* Jesus *is* Lord, except by *the* Holy Spirit. Now there are differences of gifts, but the same Spirit; And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are differences of operations, but it is the same God Who is working all things in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for *the* benefit of *all.*”

God has given to us talents and abilities for our journey. How are we using them? Do we honor God with what we have been given? Or do we seek to please men? Are we thoughtful with concern for others and is our motivation for the destination? We can ill afford to get caught up in the distractions of the chaos that surrounds us. The carnal battles will always be present until we arrive.

The gifts we receive and even the journey is not the motivation. Our love of God and of Jesus Christ are the focus to journey’s end and the glory of God. We have an inheritance waiting for us at our exit. We can do nothing greater in this lifetime than to be in righteous standing and fulfilling our creation purpose according to God’s will.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11- “Don’t you know that the unrighteous shall not inherit *the* kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor abusers of themselves as women, nor homosexuals, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit *the* kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

All of humanity is on this journey. Some are at different mile markers, and some will not arrive until a thousand years after the first group of travelers. We need to pay attention to the directions we have as the correct exit is easily missed.

Luke 13:22-24- “Now He was going through the cities and villages teaching, while making progress toward Jerusalem. And one said to Him, “Lord, are those who are being saved few?” Then He said to them, “Strive with your whole being to enter in through *the narrow gate*; for many, I say to you, will seek to enter in, but shall not be able.”

God is with us and if we stay in the right lane, we will not need to make a U-turn that takes a thousand years. Amen.

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