

KNOWING THE WAY



It always begins with where
we are going. It always be-
gins with our destination.

WHENEVER WE NEED TO RESTOCK the empty places in the pantry or refrigerator, Linda and I know where we will be going. We can see in our mind the lone grocery store in Winterset; we know exactly where it is, what it looks like. Based on that, we know how to get there—using one of two ways—and even how long it will take to get there.

Likewise, any trip north to Marshalltown typically begins with an invite from Linda's parents. That is our starting point: the location of a particular house, on a particular street, in a particular town. Based on that location we select a suitable route, gas up the Jeep, and head down the road.

No matter the method of determining our route, we always begin with a destination. If you use an atlas or road map, you first locate

on that map your intended destination. If you use a favorite mapping web site for directions, it will always begin with the question, "What is your destination?" If you have GPS in your car, the first thing you must tell it is where you intend to go. Then, and only then, can it offer what it believes to be an appropriate route of travel.

Not surprisingly, things work a bit differently in the Kingdom realm.

Shortly after Jesus and the disciples had finished the Passover meal, while they were still reclined around the table in that upper room, Jesus mentioned that soon He would be leaving them.

Reflections
by the Pond

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A minister in America was going up the aisle of his church during a revival, when a young man earnestly cried to him, "Sir, can you tell me the way to Christ?" "No," was the answer, very deliberately given, "I cannot." The young man answered, "I beg your pardon; I thought you were a minister of the gospel." "So I am," was the reply. "Then how is it that you cannot tell me the way to Christ?" "My friend," said the minister, "there is no way to Christ. He Himself is the way."

Charles Haddon Spurgeon

"Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.'"

John 13:33

Good old Peter spoke up to pose the obvious question: *Where are You going? Tell us the destination, Lord. Just point to it on a map and we'll pack our bags—at least I will. Do or die, Lord. That's me.*

Jesus answered, "Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you will follow later."

John 13:36b

Jesus spoke to calm the gathering anxiety in the room, saying, essentially, *Don't worry. Just have faith.*

"Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also."

John 14:1-3

Then Jesus finished off with what was a real head-scratcher for His disciples:

"And you know the way where I am going."

John 14:4

The always practical, "Missouri-born-and-bred" Thomas, with his feet planted on terra firma came back with,

"Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?"

John 14:5

Well, of course. That is precisely what your GPS would say to you in the same situation. *How do you expect me to tell you how to get somewhere when you won't tell me the destination?!* But then, Jesus wasn't communicating in earth-speak, but Kingdom-talk.

Then Jesus answered Thomas and the rest of the disciples with a phrase that vibrates with the symphonic majesty of heaven:

"I am the way..."

That, in just a few succinct words, is the most eloquent definition of faith. It is also a critical component of Christianity that sets it apart from every other religion.

Jesus Christ, the incarnated Son of God, was not just a wise teacher or healer or prophet. He was not just a sacrificial lamb, dying for the sins of mankind. He was not just an example for those who wish to live a life pleasing to God. He was not just someone pointing the way *toward* eternal life with God. He was—and still is—all of that, but more than anything else He is *the way!*

Every other religion would have its supplicants reach a state of bliss by somehow proving themselves to that religion's deity or deities. It would say to them, *Here is where you want to go. Here is your goal. Now, to get there, do this. Don't do this. Do that. Don't do that. Sacrifice to me. Worship me. Live this way.*

Google Maps for the gullible. GPS for the ill-informed.

A highway will be there, a roadway,
And it will be called the Highway of Holiness.
The unclean will not travel on it,
But it *will* be for him who walks *that* way,
And fools will not wander *on* it.
No lion will be there,
Nor will any vicious beast go up on it;
These will not be found there.
But the redeemed will walk *there*,
And the ransomed of the Lord will return
And come with joyful shouting to Zion,
With everlasting joy upon their heads.
They will find gladness and joy,
And sorrow and sighing will flee away.

Isaiah 35:8-10

Jesus told His disciples that they needn't concern themselves with the where or the when. Ignorance of the destination would not be an obstacle to their knowing the route. *You know the way where I am going. Don't you see. It is standing right here in front of you. I am the way.*

