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Navigating Life
“How To Determine The Course”
(Part 1)

Intro: Life is a journey. We all have to figure out how to successfully navigate through it. It's easy to wake up one day and ask yourself, “Where am I going?” “Where am I at?” “Where is life taking me?” This series is all about How Do We Navigate Life Successfully? Today, we're going to look at the first step in the process...we have to Determining the right Course.

I see people navigating life in a variety ways.

- Some people are adrift in life, letting whatever currents move them through life. There's really no thought about direction. Life just creates the course.
- Some people have been blown off course by the storms of life. Because of some type of painful events, (sickness / job loss / financial issues / relational pain) you know you're not where you want to be but have no idea how to get back on course.
- Some people are moving ahead full steam making great progress, but in the wrong direction. They are convinced their direction will get them where they want to go.
- Some people are going in circles repeating the same mistakes over and over again. Like a treadmill...lots of effort and no progress! Don't know how to change it.

Can you relate to any of these?

So, how does one determine the course in life? God has given us His word to help us navigate life. It doesn't have to be a big mystery. Let me give you three truths that will help determine the course.

I. Realize God Has A Course For Your Life He Wants You To Discover

A. God's course is personal

Jer. 29:11 “For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.” (NLT)

1. God has a course for your life that is tailor made for you! God knows your talents / your gifts / your passions / dreams / your personality / and the plans He has for you fit you perfectly and no one else!
2. God doesn't have good plans for only a few special people and the rest just have to fumble through life. He has personal plans for you!

3. If God is so personal and good then why is my life so painful? Even though God is a personal God with personal plans for your life, He created a world filled with the freedom of choice.
4. You and I can refuse God's plans / His ways / We make choices that hurt ourselves / Other people make choices that effect our lives in painful ways.
5. Here's the good news though. Nobody can take God's plan for your life away from you. Only you can do that by refusing it! God's course is personal, just for you.

B. God's course is purposeful

Jer. 1:5 "I knew you before I formed you in your mother's womb. Before you were born, I set you apart and appointed you..." (NLT) (To Jeremiah)

1. God is a God of purpose. He has established a purposeful life for you before you were even born! Some people are afraid to open their lives up to God and what He wants because they think that it has to be boring / unexciting / monotonous / Can't be any fun / Or worse, be a missionary!
2. I constantly see people today who are unfulfilled. They are just trying to satisfy themselves with the next new possession / relationship / pleasure / career move /
3. Embracing God's course for your life will never leave you wondering about your purpose in life. It will never leave you unfulfilled. God's purposes satisfy like nothing else can.
4. God's course for our lives is personal, but also purposeful. It fulfills the desires of our hearts like nothing else can.

C. God's course is protecting

1. God's course protects us from the dangers of taking alternative courses. God's word warns us about taking paths that can be destructive.

Prov. 16:25 "There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death." (NLT) Not all paths in life are good / not all benefit our lives / some are destructive / Some hurt us.

Matt. 7:14 "the gateway to life is small and the road is narrow, and only a few ever find it." (NLT) Not all paths lead to life.

2. How many things have we pursued in life only to later regret it? Only to later wished we could turn back the clock / do it over again / made choices that hurt us and others?
3. Following God's course for our lives will NOT protect us from all the pain in this life. It will protect us from all the self-inflicted pain in this life! I don't know about you, but I am my own worst enemy!

4. God is a great Father. He is always wanting to protect His kids. As a parent, I don't want to see my kids make life choices that I know will cause them pain. Therefore, I instruct them on a specific path for their protection.
5. God does the same with us. He's not trying to ruin our fun, He's trying to protect us from choices and directions that will wound us.

The first step in determining the course, is realizing God has a course for your life to discover

II. Recognize God Sent His Son To Help You Discover His Course

- In determining direction, you have to have some type of fixed point of reference. (compass / north star / horizon – Something that does NOT change.) Belize and ability of man to find lobster traps without any markers / floats – explain)
 - Our point of reference is crucial to the journey.
- A. The wrong point of reference takes us on the wrong course
1. Everyone's life is driven by something. What is the point of reference for your life? What are you aiming at? Is it a career / prosperity / retirement / success / a relationship / pleasure / possession / prestige? What navigates your life?
 2. Why can't these things work? Because they're all unstable. They're not fixed points. They change. They're like charting your course by the end of a rainbow. It is always moving away from you!
 3. It's like making directional decisions based upon your feelings. Our feelings are unreliable. (A few years ago they did research trying to understand why there were so many bad accidents in foggy conditions. Conclusion: people tend to speed up in the fog. WHY? It feels like they're going slower! There's no point of reference)
- Prov. 28:26 "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool..." (NASB)*
4. Maybe you feel that you really don't have any point of reference that charts your life. You're just living life as it comes. You're just walking ahead hoping the path takes you somewhere good. BUT, does life really have to be this unpredictable? Accident waiting to happen!
 5. If we have the wrong point of reference for life, we will automatically be on the wrong course. It's like operating life with a broken compass. It takes you in the wrong direction.
 6. So what is the point of reference we need to navigate life successfully?
- B. Jesus came to be our point of reference to discover God's course
- Heb. 12:1-2 "...run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus...from start to finish." (NLT)*
1. Jesus came to help people get back on course. He came to find lost people
- Luke 19:10 "I... have come to seek and save those like him who are lost." (NLT)*

2. Jesus came to be our compass for life. He came to be our northern star to guide us. He is our spiritual GPS that we get our coordinates from. He is that fixed point of reference that never changes that we can always trust.

3. So how does Jesus become this for us? Jesus came to remove the barrier that exists that keeps us from God's plan for our lives. What's the barrier? The Bible says the barrier is sin.

Is. 59:2 "But there is a problem – your sins have cut you off from God..." (NLT)

It is the universal problem of mankind! All people have sin. God is sinless.

There is a barrier between us and God.

- How does Jesus remove the barrier?

Is. 53:6 "All of us have strayed away like sheep. We have left God's paths to follow our own. (Sin makes us lost) Yet the Lord laid on Him the guilt and sins of us all." (NLT)

4. Jesus paid the price that our sin required through His death on the cross. The barrier is now removed and God's course for our lives can be discovered.

Eph. 1:5,7 "His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into His own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus...He purchased our freedom through the blood of His Son, and our sins are forgiven." (NLT)

5. Jesus is now our fixed point of reference to chart the course of our life. How?

III. Readjust Your Life Direction According To God's Course

- How does one do this?

A. Accept the relationship He offers

1. God's course is only experienced through relationship not religious activities or rituals. Jesus said, "Follow Me" / Accept Me / Believe in Me / Trust Me / God's course is a relationship journey with Him!

2. Therefore, the journey begins by accepting the relationship He offers first. He doesn't ask you to go on this journey alone. It's a life journey with Him.

John 14:6 "I Am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one can come to the Father except through Me."

3. Have you made a choice to enter into relationship with Him? If you were going on a hike in a national wilderness area. In an a place you've never been before. I could offer you a GPS at the trailhead, but you'd have to be willing to receive it.

4. God offers us His Son to be the One who will guide us on the right course for this life. We simply have to be willing to receive Him.

B. Allow Him to give new directions

Prov. 3:5-6 "Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek His will in all you do, and He will direct your paths." (NLT)

1. God wants to direct our paths each and every day. He wants to give us new

direction, new coordinates to live life. He just may take you places you never dreamed you would go.

2. Our understanding in this life is too limited and our feelings are not always correct. This is why Scripture tells us to NOT place our trust in ourselves.
3. Battleship and lighthouse illustration. Whose signals are you following? Whose directions are you following? Yours, or the ones God is giving you?
4. Some of you have been believers for years, but you still don't allow Him to give you directions for your life. You're still charting your own course. It's like having a GPS in your pack, but you never take it out and use it.
5. Are you tired of charting your own course? Are you ready to let God give you some new coordinates?

C. Agree to His new destination

1. God wants to take you in a new direction that has a new destination for your life. It's not a combination of your plans and His plans. It is a choice of your will to trust Him with the future of your life. The fulfillment of His plans for your life.
2. This is not just your eternal destination, but what also He does with your life. You may have thought being a housewife was your destination / working for that company until retirement / going to that college for that degree / God may have other plans.
3. Will you trust Him with your future?
I Cor. 2:9 "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love Him." (NLT)
In this life and the next!
4. Doesn't it make you wonder what He has in store for you? What He has prepared for you? So many people want to trust God with their eternal destination, but are unwilling to trust Him with their earthly one.
5. I don't want to be in eternity someday and find out I missed what God wanted to do with my life while on planet earth. How about you? Will you agree to let God take your life where He wants it to go?

If we are going to successfully navigate this life, we're going to have to be on God's course for our lives. This means...

- We realize God has a course He wants us to discover.
- We recognize God sent His Son Jesus to help us discover His course
- We are willing to readjust our live direction according to God's course