

My wife and I both like hiking, but there's a difference between us in what we like. I love being in the forest. I could happily spend all day walking around, smelling the fresh air, admiring the trees and rocks and mosses, listening to the birds... But my wife wants a bigger reward for her effort of tromping along the trail. She wants to arrive at a destination – something like a summit view, a peaceful lakeshore, a canyon, a waterfall. As a result, there is always a higher level of satisfaction in hiking when she comes along. **There is something great to be said about a worthy destination.**

But surely, you've heard that getting there is half the fun, haven't you? Do you believe it? I guess it depends on what you like, where you are headed, how you are getting there, and, most importantly, what actually happens along the way. But I think the statement has some truth to it. Maybe getting there is not always "half" the fun, but there is **always some enjoyment we can get from the journey.** Especially when considering the anticipation of the trip with optimism.

*For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, **with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.** (Romans 8:24-25)*

With the planning of any trip there comes the anticipation of the journey and the destination. We use this anticipation to help us plan. If we take climbing a mountain as an example, we can set our minds on the destination of the summit; that is where the reward is, an expansive view and a sense of accomplishment. Many times, you can even see the destination before you start the trek. But generally, the trail is invisible from a distance, hidden by the forest, winding through the terrain. In planning, we **try to anticipate what we might experience along the way:** chilly winds – we pack a jacket, physical exertion – we bring water and food, slippery rocks – we wear good boots and find a sturdy walking stick, beautiful views – don't forget a camera. And, in case something bad happens, we may want a first aid kit, a compass, a knife, some matches... Because you never know. In our anticipation, we **hope for the best, but prepare for the worst.**

But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. (1 Thessalonians 5:8)

Prepare for the worst; that is, put on your armor. **An arrow in the chest may or may not come,** but either way, a breastplate is a good idea. Hope for the best; what could be better than salvation and eternal life? In Matthew 25, there is the story of the 10 virgins who went out to meet the bridegroom, not knowing when He would come. Five of them were prepared for the worst and brought an auxiliary supply of oil for their lamps. The other 5 did not anticipate the delay and not only were they called foolish, they missed out on the opportunity of a lifetime.

Choosing the path is also an important aspect of the journey. **Any hiker certainly has the option to start "bushwhacking" up the hill,** hopefully finding their way to the top. But, there's a risk in choosing that method. Even though most people stick to the trail network, there are generally choices to make there as well. Would a short, steep climb be preferred over a meandering scenic route? How does one even know what the choices are? I can think of a few options for making an informed choice. Find a trail map, or a guidebook. Talk with someone who has experience. Or, you could contact the authority, the park service, the body that oversees the trails. This method also seems to work for other journeys that you might want to plan. How would you get from Paris to Melbourne? And once you're there, what's the best way to get from your hotel to a good restaurant? If you're seeking eternal life, what decisions should you consider as you make your way. For these and other destinations: Check the guidebook,

***Your Word** is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path. (Psalms 119:105)*

Talk with others who share your destination,

*Then those who feared the LORD **spoke to one another**, and the LORD gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name. (Malachi 3:16)*

if possible, consult with the authority. (Seek the Eternal while He may be found... Isaiah 55:6)

*Thus says the LORD, "Stand by the ways and see and **ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; And you will find rest for your souls. But they said, 'We will not walk in it.'**" (Jeremiah 6:16)*

Yes, go to Melbourne, climb the mountain, journey to various places, and experience this beautiful world. Our physical walk here is not only for "toil and strife," eating our bread by the sweat of our brow as it says in Gen 3:19. We certainly are in a training ground just as the Israelites were in the wilderness for 40 years, training for the Promised Land, but **God made this world beautiful and marvelous for us to enjoy and explore**. Likewise, our spiritual walk is intended for intense training, refinement, and development, but we need to balance that with joy, fulfillment, and celebration. Because, that is what we are training for. The route may be strenuous and challenging, but the destination will undoubtedly have the peace, joy, and beauty much like what you find after climbing to the summit of a mountain. Let's not forget, however, that proper training is essential to reaching the destination safely. Choosing the wrong path can be fatal. Please read all of Proverbs 2 for the full effect, and to learn who "she" is. But, here is the key warning from that chapter:

*For her house sinks down to death and **her tracks lead to the dead**; None who go to her return again, Nor do they reach the paths of life. (Proverbs 2:18-19)*

Proverbs 4 is another chapter that speaks of keeping to the right path. Our training has much to do with avoiding those temptations of life that divert our path from joy, success, and long life to ruin, destruction, and death. Our ability to avoid and resist temptation comes from the preparation we are willing to work for. The better we prepare, the easier our path will be. The Israelites, enjoying the grace of God, smoothly sailed through the Red Sea and directly to the Promised Land. But, other than Jacob and Caleb, they were not prepared to Trust in God. This unpreparedness and lack of trust resulted in 40 years of hard training, wandering through the wilderness. You and I **need to familiarize ourselves with the Guidebook, share our experiences with others and learn from theirs, and most importantly, consult the Authority**, the Creator of the trail network. "Ask for where the good way is and walk in it." This advice from Jeremiah is simple, but extremely valuable. If we ask, He will answer.

I've seen a coffee mug, or bumper sticker, or tee shirt with the admission "I live for the weekend." Well, I can relate to that somewhat. The Sabbath is the day of rest that comes at the end of the week. **The Sabbath is the week's destination**. And I think an extension of that is our Ultimate Destination, the final Rest. The promise of eternal life, whatever that looks like, is perfect, unending rest.

Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. (Colossians 3:2)

Peace to you and glory to God!

-Nate

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