



Series: Directions

Title: Who Are You Going With?

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Smythe Street Cathedral

Pre-Sermon

Dismiss Switch if forgotten

Last Week

Last week we looked at words that Moses spoke to God's people before they entered the promised land.

Deuteronomy 30:15–16 (NIV84)

See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.

The Big Choice

Moses tells the people that at that moment, they face a big opportunity, before them lie God's life, what is good, blessing, prosperity on one hand. On the other hand, they are facing death, evil, calamity, disaster or destruction.

When faced with those options, what would you choose, well, who wouldn't choose life and goodness. I'm honestly interested in those too.

So what does Moses tell them is key to realizing God's best and good?

For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, ... and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.

We talk of the commands of God, and we think of them simply as rules.

God's Laws are not just rules, they are paths, they take you somewhere.

If We Know God's Commands Are Paths, How Can We Stay on Them?

Those of us who claim to be Christians acknowledge that we battle against sin inside of ourselves. There are desires within us that pull us away from following God's laws.

Yet we know that there are times even when we know what is right that we end up heading down the wrong track.

So how can we gain go forward? The Bible has a number of things to say on this, and I couldn't cover them all well today, but I do want to focus on one, and the best way I could think to get us to talk about it is with a story we find in the Old Testament.

1 Kings 12:1-15 (NIV84)

1 Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all the Israelites had gone there to make him king. 2 When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard this (he was still in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon), he returned from Egypt. 3 So they sent for Jeroboam, and he and the whole assembly of Israel went to Rehoboam and said to him: 4 "Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but now lighten the harsh labor and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you."

5 Rehoboam answered, "Go away for three days and then come back to me." So the people went away.

6 Then King Rehoboam consulted the elders who had served his father Solomon during his lifetime. "How would you advise me to answer these people?" he asked.

7 They replied, "If today you will be a servant to these people and serve them and give them a favorable answer, they will always be your servants."

8 But Rehoboam rejected the advice the elders gave him and consulted the young men who had grown up with him and were serving him. 9 He asked them, "What is your advice? How should we answer these people who say to me, 'Lighten the yoke your father put on us'?"

10 The young men who had grown up with him replied, "Tell these people who have said to you, 'Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but make our yoke lighter'—tell

them, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's waist. 11 My father laid on you a heavy yoke; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions.' "

12 Three days later Jeroboam and all the people returned to Rehoboam, as the king had said, "Come back to me in three days." 13 The king answered the people harshly. Rejecting the advice given him by the elders, 14 he followed the advice of the young men and said, "My father made your yoke heavy; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions." 15 So the king did not listen to the people, for this turn of events was from the LORD, to fulfill the word the LORD had spoken to Jeroboam son of Nebat through Ahijah the Shilonite.

16 When all Israel saw that the king refused to listen to them, they answered the king:

"What share do we have in David,
what part in Jesse's son?

To your tents, O Israel!

Look after your own house, O David!"

So the Israelites went home. 17 But as for the Israelites who were living in the towns of Judah, Rehoboam still ruled over them.

18 King Rehoboam sent out Adoniram, who was in charge of forced labor, but all Israel stoned him to death. King Rehoboam, however, managed to get into his chariot and escape to Jerusalem. 19 So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.

Rehoboam faced a decision

It is a decision not unlike the one that Moses set before his people. The choice that would bring life, or bring destruction.

In this case, out of his insecurity or his pride, he shunned those he knew had a track record of wisdom with his father, and chose to listen to his friends.

WHO YOU CHOOSE TO FOLLOW WILL DETERMINE WHERE YOU GO.

Who you follow matters, because your friends are more than just fellow travellers on the road of life, your friends actually have the power to turn the needle on your inner compass.

STORY:

A YOUNG MAN WAS STUCK IN A SNOWSTORM WHEN SHE REMEMBERED HER DAD'S ADVICE: "IF YOU EVER GET STUCK IN A SNOWSTORM, WAIT UNTIL A SNOWPLOW DRIVES BY AND THEN FOLLOW IT." EVENTUALLY HE SAW A SNOWPLOW SO SHE FOLLOWED IT ALONG IN HIS CAR. AFTER 30 MINUTES, THE SNOWPLOW DRIVER STOPPED, GOT OUT, AND WALKED UP TO THE WOMAN'S CAR ASKING, "WHY ARE YOU FOLLOWING ME?" HE EXPLAINED WHAT HIS FATHER HAD TOLD HIM AND THE DRIVER SAID, "WELL I'M DONE WITH THE WALMART PARKING LOT NOW. DO YOU WANT TO FOLLOW ME TO BEST BUY?"¹

We need to pay attention to who we align with.

There is a famous passage found in 1 Corinthians 6

2 Corinthians 6:14 (LEB)

Do not become unevenly yoked with unbelievers, for what participation *is there between* righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship *does* light have with darkness?

Word in other translations is translated as 'mismatched'.

Idea is an oxen with a yoke, they are to pull together to plough the field or pull a load.

While I have heard this passage as sound dating advice, it goes beyond this. If you are tied to someone who wants to pull in a significantly different direction than you, you will either end up with much conflict, or go in a different direction than you intend.

KEY TIMES I'VE BEEN YOKED:

- RICHARD BRAGDON – KEY FRIEND IN SCHOOL YEARS
- HEIDI BILLINGTON (MY WIFE) – WE DISAGREE ABOUT SOME THINGS, BUT BIG DIRECTION WE HAVE ALIGNMENT.

¹ A revised version of a joke found at https://www.reddit.com/r/Jokes/comments/33411x/follow_the_leader/

What Do We Do?

First, the passage does not say to isolate yourself from people who do not believe. Paul devoted his life and built relationships with people of every stripe, with people who were very different from himself, but he was also careful to look at who he tied himself to. Who were his key influencers and friends.

WHO YOU CHOOSE TO FOLLOW WILL DETERMINE WHERE YOU GO.

Proverbs 13:20 (NIV84)

He who walks with the wise grows wise,
but a companion of fools suffers harm.

Who are you those you have yoked yourself to? Who are you following? Are they making the choices to follow God's ways, the ways that fairly self evidently lead to life and blessing, or are they not?

Your relationships will push you in a direction, and you are responsible for where you end up.

The Best One to Follow

This all makes sense, and is good counsel, even if you are not a believer in Jesus. If you're new, I'd say to you the Bible is full of good insights like this, but I would argue one step further, and ask you to consider it.

Ultimately the way to the blessed life, is not a command, it is a relationship with Jesus.

Jesus came to this earth, and when he met those who would become his disciples he went to them and said, "Follow Me." (Matthew 4:19)

They followed him, and it radically changed the trajectory of their lives from fishermen, tax collectors, and mercenaries into apostles.

Eventually, Jesus told them not just to follow him, but something greater.

John 14:6 (NIV84)

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Jesus told his disciples, he was the road, the path that leads to life.

Would you decide to trust Jesus with your life and follow him, and where he leads?