

Lesson #2

Introduction

Starting The Journey

My Search for Purpose

I grew up with Christian influence and, though I believed in Jesus Christ from a young age, Jesus was not my Lord. There came a time as a teenager when the lure of worldliness overcame my religion and I consciously rebelled against the values I had been taught - and God Himself. Rebellion, though it looked fun and exciting, led me into the most confusing period of my life.

As is commonly the case, my pursuit of worldliness also involved a peer group of like-minded individuals that served as a sort of support group which rationalized and encouraged the way of worldliness. Also common in such peer groups is the intense need to be accepted into this group. Though I was unaware of it at the time, it is painfully clear in hindsight just how pathetic I was. Blinded by the insecure desire to fit into the group, I had no conviction of my own. I was not being myself. I was a chameleon trying to change myself into whatever seemed to be “cool.” There is nothing so pathetic as the person who does not know who they are.

I found myself pushing the limits of my own moral boundaries, and often doing things that I really did not want to do. I drank beer even though I hated the taste of it. I used foul language, even though I would often feel repulsed by the ugliness of it. I would lie to my parents about where I was going and attend parties where drugs and alcohol were present.

At one party, I remember going to the restroom and, while washing my hands, I looked at myself in the mirror. I did not like what I saw so I quickly looked away and went back to the party. But in that fleeting moment, I saw the truth about myself. I was a silly boy, half drunk and totally phony. I didn't know who I was and I had no direction or purpose for my life.

I was searching for my true identity in all the wrong places, but God had mercy on me. He allowed me to see my pathetic self and brought me to a place of surrender. By grace through faith Jesus saved me, and as Ephesians 2:10 points out, it was for a purpose.

Finding True Identity

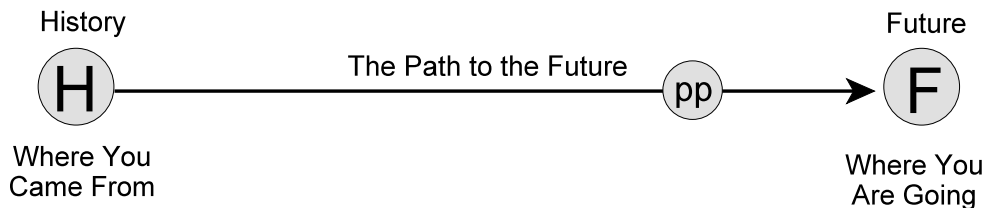
When we surrender to Jesus, we are saved, but it is only the beginning of our journey to learn our full identity in Christ and fulfill our destiny. If there was ever a person on earth who embodied clear identity, security, and purpose, it was Jesus Christ. He faced every temptation that we face, yet He never compromised His purpose or wavered in any way. He was absolutely secure in Himself and confident in fulfilling His destiny. Why? The scripture below reveals why.

Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I bear witness of Myself, **My witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going**; but you do not know where I come from and where I am going.

— John 8:14 (NKJV)

We can have the same kind of clarity and purpose that Jesus had, but to have it, we must be anchored in the same principles. If we want to have a true, confident and clear witness, we must know where we came from and where we are going.

Below is a diagram which I will call, The Destiny Diagram. It will be modified several times as this study develops. For now, it simply illustrates how a path can easily be plotted between two points. By establishing two points, “H” (history—where we came from), and “F” (future—where we are going), we can plot a course from “H” to “F” which is The Path to the Future.



Destiny Diagram 1

Having plotted that course, our present plans (pp) must be on that course if we wish to be on track and arrive at our destination. Therefore, having accurate information about our history and our future enables us to plot a course to our destiny and gives credibility to our present plans, or witness.

Strategic Foundations

God has called us to be disciples. As we continue as disciples, there are many teachers, topics and lessons we will study. The amount of information can sometimes be overwhelming! Because of this huge volume of information it is very important that we establish a strategic foundation by grasping God’s overall plan – we must see the big picture. The Apostle Paul voiced this concept in his prayer for the Ephesians, praying that they would “...be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height” (Ephesians 3:18 (NKJV)). This overall plan, or strategic foundation is laid out in Hebrews 6:1-2, as:

- 1) Repentance from dead works and faith toward God
- 2) Doctrines of baptisms (washings)
- 3) Laying on of hands
- 4) Resurrection of the dead
- 5) Eternal judgment

These five things are more than a list of topics for bible study. They represent a strategic plan that is unfolding along God’s time line. Once this foundation is established, we can then build on it as we gather more knowledge. This foundation and the framework we build on it becomes an information management system making each piece of information accessible, applicable and a functioning part of the whole. The result is increasing order and discernment in our studies that helps us decide which information is good, how to prioritize it, or whether it should be considered at all.

General Study Plan

First, based on John 8:14, we will look at where we are going and establish a biblical view of the future by exploring what the Bible says about 4) Resurrection of the dead, and 5) Eternal judgment (from

Hebrews 6:1-2). Contrary to what some people believe, the Bible has some very clear things to say about the future.

Again, based on John 8:14, we will study where we came from with a historical overview. One might think that history is established and cannot be changed. Though this is true, there are those who attempt to revise history with distortions and outright falsehoods in an attempt to manipulate what people do in the present. We will expose this plan and explore some key historical facts that shape our future. The insights gained from the past and the future will help us begin to reveal 1) Repentance from dead works, 2) Baptisms (washings), and 3) Laying on of Hands as part of God's strategy unfolding as a brilliant masterpiece being painted on the canvas of time revealing the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven.

Then, having established where we came from and where we are going, we will establish a preparation mindset by applying what we have learned to our present plans and join the race that is set before us with new clarity and purpose. Then, we too can say, "My witness is true because I know where I came from and I know where I am going!"