

Why Is This Road So Much Better?

Have You Ever Gone on the Road Less Taken?

When I was in graduate school I was asked to preach at a country church in Mississippi. The directions went something like this. Get off at county road number 12. So far so good. Then it got weird. Turn left at the big tree. Turn right at the rock. Keep going past the house with the long porch. Turn right just past the creek. Turn left at the house with the flagpole. Go past the hill on the right and veer to the right at v in the road. The church is on the left. To say it was an adventure getting to the church is an understatement. I am sure I never would have gone down that road if I didn't have a preaching assignment. I wonder how many at my graduate school classmates ever went on that route; I would guess I am the only one who ever did.

What road you take makes all the difference in your life. Jesus said that each of us must choose the narrow road. **"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.** (Matthew 7: 13-14 NIV) You might call it the "road less taken". You have friends and neighbors and family members who won't try out the narrow road. Maybe there are those who share your home who are opposed to taking that road. At the end of the Gospel of Luke two disciples of Jesus were walking down a road together. They were struggling to cope with the execution of Jesus and then a bizarre report that came to them. Some women had visited Jesus' tomb, only to discover it missing His body and even more strangely, two angels were there who insisted Jesus was now alive. It was all too much and the disciples in despair, having no use for the tale of the women, headed home. Emmaus was a tiny village just down the road from Jerusalem and as they commiserated together, a stranger suddenly came alongside them.

He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" (Luke 24: 17 NIV) Shocked that the stranger hadn't heard the biggest news of the time, they recounted what had happened to Jesus and the bizarre report of the women who had visited the tomb of Jesus that morning. The stranger reprimanded the two disciples for being ignorant of the Scriptures that foretold all that had happened to Jesus and even the glory He would receive after He suffered and died. He then went on to explain everything the Bible had to say about the Messiah and what was to come of Him. That is a strange road for many, using the Bible to understand life. Many see it as a fairy tale, some a good book of interesting insights, others a study of a religion that is opaque or a bit off. There are those however who know the Bible is God's word to us. **All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.** (2 Timothy 3: 16-17 NIV) Thus they use it to show the way. **Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.** (Psalm 119: 105 NIV) How should you go? What should you do? The Bible shines light on how to live. Those on this road focus on what it has to say and chew on it with great interest. **I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways.** (Psalm 119: 15 NIV) They even go so far as to memorize it which clearly the stranger on the road had done. **I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.** (Psalm 119: 11 NIV)

It truly is a narrow road to see the Bible this way. Very few make it the object of their intense interest, searching out the Bible to see what God has to say to them that day through it. Do you think the store clerk memorizes parts of the Bible so she will know what to do? Is your banker or your physician studying it so it is a light to the path they take? Has the president of Microsoft or the United States given focused time and effort to reading the Bible so they will be equipped to make the right decision when faced with a crucial choice? Are you carving out prime time to read your Bible, study it or give it deep thought? The stranger on the road to Emmaus must have because He knew it well enough to explain to the two heart-broken disciples of Jesus what the Bible taught about the Messiah.

We know now that the stranger was in fact Jesus raised from the dead! As the three approached Emmaus, the two disciples urged the stranger to stay and eat with them. The stranger had a shock for the disciples. **When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"** (Luke 24: 30-32 NIV) Pause just a moment here. What put them in awe over what just happened? It was that their hearts were burning as Jesus went over the Scriptures with them! The Bible plus God was momentous and captivating.

Would you say that it was supernatural for the two disciples to go through the Bible? Was studying it with a stranger supernatural? They probably would not have seen it that way and you might not either. It would seem to be a perfectly human and ordinary endeavor. Add God to the mix and you have something altogether different. Take a deep breath and consider this.. It is always God who brings the Bible to you. You never open the Scriptures just because you decided to do it. The Lord is every time in there with you going through it with you. Look carefully at a verse we just considered. **All Scripture is God-breathed...** The Greek term translated "God-breathed" is actually a hybrid term combining God and breathe; "theopneustos". Many misunderstand the intention of this term as connected to the Bible. It does not indicate that God inspired or breathed the Bible into existence and then let it go on its own to be considered however anyone wants. It is God-breathed, today, tomorrow and for eternity. That means that whenever you dive into the Scriptures, God is right there in it, working through it with you. Just as God-breathed as the Bible was when Jesus explained to the two disciples what it had to say about the death, burial, and resurrection of the Messiah, so it is equally God with you when you go through the Words found in it.

I know it doesn't seem as cool to read the Bible in your chair as it would with Jesus physically explaining everything to you as you walk along a dusty path in Judea. But it is equally Christ in it with you as you take each word into your brain and process it. The Bible is always you and God together and that is most disconcerting and inspiring to consider. You have God shaping your thinking, decision-making and your way of seeing everything. The Bible with God in it can remake your past and give you a different, God built future. We talk about the Bible being God-inspired. It is much more than that, infinitely more than that. The Bible is God breathed...God breathes in you when you go through it. He meets you, empowers you, inspires you and remakes you. I cannot imagine how wasted your time is when the Bible is not part of your day. How much mental turmoil and confusion and foolish decision making occurs when the Bible is not opened and consumed. I know someone right now who is battling a terrible depression, and he has abandoned the Bible as unnecessary. Is it? Would his mental state be raised if he took the Bible seriously as God breathed?

What a waste of life if you don't let the Bible choose the life you live! Several years ago I was invited by a friend to invest in his plan to make lots of money. He showed me how I could be rich if I trusted him with some of my savings. I could feel the hunger for wealth growing in me and I came very close to giving him what I had saved for retirement. As I spent time with God on this, it came to me that Jesus warned far more about greed and growing rich than He did even about sexual immorality. After much prayer and meditation upon the Scripture as well as discussions with a couple of Godly friends, I decided to pass on the investment opportunity. It turned out that several who invested with my friend lost hundreds of thousands of dollars. Much preaching today in the US but particularly in other parts of the world is on how God wants you rich and successful. Are they reading the Scriptures and following along with what Jesus actually said? The Bible is not just a book to study, to argue or even to defend. It is God-breathed and every time you read it and put it into practice, God is there right with you making your life bigger, nobler, more beautiful than would be possible without the Christ and the Scripture working in and through you.

Notice specifically how it impacted the two disciples when they had Jesus and the Bible together. Jesus never told the two He was Jesus. He didn't make a show of His presence or in any way "reveal Himself" to them. They just knew, supernaturally they knew. Jesus and the Bible had been there with them. Their response is stunning when you think about it. **They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.** (Luke 24: 33-35 NIV) Why did they go back to Jerusalem to join the Eleven? It was because the presence of Jesus as He revealed Himself through the Bible transformed them. The despair and fear and confusion were gone. Strength and courage and joy was in them instead. You can be just as supernaturally transformed by the Bible and God as they were if you let the Bible be a time of meeting directly with Jesus and letting the Spirit of God have you in His grip. When you read the Bible, study it, memorize it, you are with God, and anything can happen when that takes place. Be prepared for God sized changes in your life.