

The Shepherd's Voice

John 10

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A young minister was being interviewed by a church board for the position of pastor. One, old, hard-working Irishman who was on the board looked at the young man sternly and asked, "Young man, did God send you here?" He replied, "Well, I don't know if God sent me here. I am here trying to find the will of God and find out if you would like me for your next pastor."

The board member replied, "Young man, did God send you here?" The young minister was somewhat at a loss for words and came back again, "Well, I just stopped by to talk with the board . . ." The board member interrupted again and said, "Young man, did God send you here?"

Finally, he got up his courage and said, "Well, I guess God didn't send me here. I just stopped by to see about whether we could get together." The old board member leaned back in his seat and said, "That's good. The last four said that God had sent them, and we have had nothing but trouble with all four of them."

Do you think God was speaking to anyone in that story?

In some circles, "God said" has kind of become the Evangelical Christian trump card. It's awfully tempting to play that card in a job interview. *God* is a pretty good reference. And yet, maybe God *did* speak to the four men in the story. Maybe He spoke to the board member. The Bible *does say* that God speaks to His people.

"How do I know God's voice?" or
"Maybe He's not speaking" or
"Maybe I'm not one of His people."

Have you ever thought those things? At times I have.

For a while so many of my friends were casually saying, "God said this" . . . "God said that" as if God's voice was just one voice among many in their heads (just extra deep or Jewish or something). I would strain and strain to hear, like Coleman when he was a toddler. He would put his fingers in his ears and yell, "I can't hear you!" (We had told him Jesus was in his heart.)

Over the years I got suspicious that some folks were just "taking the Lord's name in vain." Do you know that the third commandment doesn't mean "no cussing"? It means, "Don't use God's name for your own purposes." There are people who would never, ever use the phrase "God-damned" (even though it's in the Bible and many things *are*), but they have no problem simply pronouncing, "Jesus wants me to buy the Buick."

Taking God's name in vain is why Old Testament prophets were to be stoned to death if they were wrong. That's why when I preach I use a lot of "I think" and "it seems" and "maybe," and that's why I'm so glad I live in the New Covenant covered by God's grace. If I mess up, you don't have to kill me.

But nonetheless, to say "God said" is serious business.

Yet some people, according to Scripture, are *supposed* to say it. And if God does tell you something and you don't do it or say it, you're being disobedient.

Now, all of that can be *stressful!*

"God, was that you?"

"Am I being disobedient?"

"Did I miss God's will and screw things up for God?"

"Did I speak too quickly and now must get stoned
(be stoned)?"

So many times I've prayed, "God, if I'm not in your will please just break my arms! Because I can't hear too well. I'm not sure I hear *at all.*"

At a Denver Link meeting a few years ago I asked an old, black, inner-city, Pentecostal pastor sitting next to me that question. "How do you hear? I'm not sure I do very well." He looked at me and said, "Well, young man, that's a very strange thing for you to say, because in John 10 Jesus says, 'My sheep hear my voice.'"

Just then the meeting started, and our conversation ended. But it was like a punch in my spiritual solar plexus. This thought attacked me: "I'm not sure I hear His voice, so maybe I'm *not a sheep!*"

I realize now that for years I avoided John 10, terrorized by that question. So let's look at John 10.

"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

"And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."

Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them. Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep."

He's the door.

In those days in Palestine it was common for the sheep to be kept for the night in walled pens out on the hillside where the pastures were. The pens had no gates. So the shepherd would lie down across the entrance, and he himself would become the gate.

Jesus is the *gate*. Whoever enters *through* Him somehow is the shepherd of the sheep. Yet Jesus *is* the Good Shepherd. So it's almost like He is in those who come truly in His name, and the sheep will hear His voice through them.

"All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.

"I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

"Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."

Verse 24: *Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, "How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me. But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you.*

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one."

I believe that whole thing is in the indicative tense, not the imperative. That means, this is just the way it *is* . . . not the way it could be or should be. In verse 27 Jesus just says, "My sheep hear my voice," not "My sheep really *ought* to hear my voice," not "If you hear my voice you're my sheep," but "My sheep hear my voice."

So I must ask, "Am I one of His sheep?"

Acts 2:21: “Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

“Yep, I do that.”

Romans 10: “If you confess with your lips Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

“I believe! Help my unbelief.”

According to Scripture, I’m a sheep. So I hear His voice.

In verses 26-27 Jesus seems to equate “believing in him” with “hearing his voice.” That’s very significant, because most sheep tend to think that following Jesus is simply a great idea on *their* part. Jesus says, “Nope. *God* gave you to me. My sheep hear my voice.”

Jesus asked His disciples, “Who do men say that I am?”

They said, “Some say Elijah, some John the Baptist, some Jeremiah.”

Jesus said, “What do *you* say?”

Peter piped up and said, “You’re the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” I imagine Peter was thinking, “Bingo! I did it! I got it! Points for Peter!”

What does Jesus say? “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona, because you are as sharp as a tack!” *No*. He says, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona, because flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in Heaven.”

If you’re a follower of Christ, it wasn’t merely because of a Josh McDowell book or a Jr. High camp or mom’s good example. It was because you heard the voice of the Shepherd, and you heard it because God gave you to the Shepherd. So then I, we, *all* who follow Jesus hear the Shepherd’s voice.

But what does it sound like? . . . to a sheep?

Well, I’ve done some cutting edge scientific research in my secret laboratory under the church to ascertain exactly what the shepherd’s voice sounds like to a sheep. I’ve determined this is what it sounds like: “Blah Blah Blah Blah Blah Blah Fluffy Blah Blah Blah.” To older sheep sometimes: “Blah Blah Blah Blah No! Blah Blah Fluffy Blah Blah Blah Come Blah Blah.”

This is the scientific breakthrough: Most sheep, most of the time, don’t understand language but do recognize their shepherd’s voice.

In verse 4 the shepherd goes before them, and the sheep follow him. Why? Because he gives good direction? *No*. Because they “know his voice.” You’ll notice the shepherd does not give them a map. (That’s what we want.)

“Okay, Lord, lay it out . . . where, when, why, what purpose, how many steps . . . I’ll *do* it!”

But the Good Shepherd goes to where He wants us to be and calls us. And when we go to where He is, He's already there . . . working.

Now . . . to a sheep, the voice of the good shepherd who cares for it must be like the voice of peace. In Colossians 3:15 Paul says, "Let the peace of Christ rule [or literally "umpire"] in your hearts." Let the peace of Christ call the shots.

So I would imagine that any time a sheep wanders from the fold and into a porn shop or a wicked conversation or wherever the Shepherd is not speaking, there would be a lack of peace somewhere deep inside.

The shepherd's voice is very critical for Palestinian sheep, because the terrain changes constantly as they cross hills and valleys looking for green pasture. They don't follow a map, a plan, a guide book; they follow a *person*—the shepherd. They need more than their own ability to reason. They need a shepherd.

In that time and place, the shepherd didn't go behind the sheep driving them, he went in front of them calling them. So many times I feel like a driven sheep. Perhaps then it's not the Good Shepherd who is driving me.

I'm driven by fear, but I'm called by love.

John 3:1: "We are the little children of God . . ." When my children were toddlers, this is what they heard: "Blah Blah Blah Blah Becky Blah Blah Blah" and she would come . . . not in fear but in love.

When my first child Jonathan was born five weeks early after incredible trauma (cone-headed, black-eyed), he lay on a table under lights, kicking and crying, and the nurse said, "Hold his legs and speak to him. He knows your voice." I spoke to my son. I said his name. He knew my voice, and my little boy had peace. Just like that he stopped crying.

With Becky, I drew a smiley face on Susan's pregnant belly. I would speak to her at night. (One night I used indelible ink, which made for an embarrassing doctor's visit.) But my children knew my voice.

Martin Luther said that this world is like a womb, and we are children in the womb. Imagine what my voice sounded like to my children in the womb. It wasn't a voice in their world, but when I spoke, everything in their world moved—vibrated—with the sound. They knew my voice, and I would call them by name.

Jesus said, "The shepherd calls his sheep by name." Each name is unique. And you have a unique and individual relationship with the Good Shepherd.

Some hear Him well with their heart,
some with their mind,

some with their soul,
some with their body (their strength).

But “love Him with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength,” and you do hear Him. The Shepherd speaks to each of us uniquely, and I must respect your personal relationship with Him.

Yet the Shepherd also leads us in flocks—folds. And that’s an incredible blessing, because if the truth be known, most sheep just follow the tail end of the sheep in front of them. That’s not a bad arrangement at all, but it is, in fact, *safe* for each one of us. To hear the Shepherd’s voice more fully you need the Church, that is, the flock, as He leads groups to green pastures.

We’re not a feedlot; we’re a flock on the move.

Our church is led by a Session made up of elders who are pastors and laymen. The elders’ primary job is not to run a business by reading a map, but to listen for the voice of the Good Shepherd, enter through Him, and lead others to green pastures.

So then . . .
the Shepherd speaks,
the sheep hear,
they follow in peace and love,
He calls them each by name (uniquely), and
He leads them in flocks.

But not *every* flock is led by Jesus. So where can *I* hear Him, and how do *I* distinguish His voice?

1. The Shepherd is Jesus, and His story—words—are recorded in Scripture. Jesus now speaks through Scripture, and when He speaks to you, “The word is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, joint and marrow, discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”
2. In prayer and worship we “draw near to Him” and “He draws near to us.” He speaks through heart, soul, mind, and strength . . . thoughts, visions, impressions, desires, and feelings in worship.
3. He speaks through other sheep; He even speaks through preachers — “under shepherds” who enter the sheepfold through Him, the gate. (Sometimes I’m just shocked by the realization God actually spoke through me to someone in a very specific way, and I had no clue at the time.)
4. God speaks through our circumstances (open and closed doors). He made the universe with a Word. “All things work together for the good of them who love him, who are called according to his purpose.” He’s sovereign. He speaks, and the universe (like a womb) vibrates to the sound of His voice.

We know that you heard Him when you, like Peter, confessed, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God!” How did He speak? Well, maybe you came to Him . . .

- because an English teacher sat you next to that weird guy
- because you forgot your homework and cheated off his paper
- because his friend needed a double-date, and he had at last won a swim meet and had the courage to ask you out
- because he took you to youth group, and a talk made you ask questions
- because a demon appeared in your room, and you grabbed a Bible, and it disappeared . . . and you thought, Maybe Jesus *is* “the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” (Besides, Peter’s kind of cute.)

So Susan Coleman Hiett gave her life to Christ. And where was the Shepherd speaking?
Everywhere.

We think the issue is, “Can He speak?” or “Can I hear?”

Several years ago at a conference in Canada, where it was clear God was moving in miraculous ways all around me, I told God I was quitting the ministry because He didn’t speak to me. To make a very long story very short, that night I found myself pinned to the floor. (It’s never happened to me before or since.)

I was pinned to the floor by an unseen force. My arms were stuck in the air, and I thought God was literally going to break them. It was *awesome!* I was filled with joy, and I believe God showed me He had been speaking to me all my life, wherever I had loved Him. And I needed to stop worrying about His speaking to me. (I think it’s when I’m filled with worry about hearing that I stop hearing.)

But this is my point: He can break your arms if He wants to. So *relax.*

It wasn’t until years later that I remembered I had always prayed, “Break my arms if I’m out of your will.” I guess it wasn’t His will that I quit my ministry and doubt He speaks to me or that He loves me. And He showed me He could break my arms if He wanted to.

We think the issue is that He is not able to speak or I am not able to hear. The issue for Him is, “Do you want to hear?” If you *want* to hear, you *do*.

Proverbs 3:5: “If you trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledging Him, He’ll make your path straight.” You see, He can move the path under your feet. You ask, “Which way to go?” and He can move the path under your feet.

In the case of my wife He used seating charts, swim team, me, youth group, a demon from Hell, and Scripture *all* to get my wife on the right road, or to get the right road under her feet.

Kierkegaard wrote, “The road is how it is walked.” That is, walk by faith in Jesus, and the road will be under your feet.

Whatever the case, love Jesus and stop stressing. Spend more time seeing Him . . .

listening to Him in Scripture,
worshipping Him in church,
loving Him in people,
thanking Him in all circumstances.

Keep trusting, and I imagine you’ll understand His voice more and more . . . not just “Blah Blah Blah Fuffy” but “Blah Blah Blah Fluffy lie down Blah Blah.”

But now, what do you do when another sheep turns to you and says this? —

“Hey, the Shepherd just told me that He loves you. You have been patient. Soon we will go to the high meadow, and you will feast on the greenest grass.”

What do you do with that? What do you do with talking sheep who understand English? Be careful, because it could be someone trying to get a job . . . *or* it could be God. That’s what Scripture calls “prophecy” or a “word of knowledge.”

Clearly all sheep hear the voice of the Shepherd, but clearly (according to Scripture) in some instances, at some times, in certain places, as a gift, God will give sentences, phrases, and paragraphs directly to sheep for the purpose of “encourage-ment, strength, and comfort” (I Corinthians 14:3).

We are not to treat prophecies with contempt (I Thessalonians 5:20). In fact (I Corinthians 14:1), we are to especially desire that gift, because (I Corinthians 14:4) it’s to edify the church. But (I Thessalonians 5:21) we are to test it. And prophets are subject to the elders—the overseers—in a church. And clearly New Testament prophets are imperfect in their prophecies (I Corinthians 13).

So if someone says to you, “I believe God spoke to me and said . . .” don’t freak out. Because words of knowledge and prophecy in the New Testament church are meant to clarify the voice of the Shepherd, to “encourage, strengthen, and comfort.” They are not foreign to you, because you already know His voice. You know Him, He loves you . . . let Him use other sheep if He wants to bless you with clarity. You know His voice.

And since we all hear the Shepherd’s voice, we’re all called to test and discern the spirits and voices, rather than stone to death false prophets. I’m *so glad*, because that would be such a mess, not to mention the liability issues after Living Stone Service!

So it could be Jesus . . .
in which case, rejoice!

Or it could be a whacko . . .
in which case, smile and walk away.

But you may still say:

“How do we distinguish whackos from Jesus?”

“How do we recognize the hireling (the guy out for his own gain)?”

“How do we recognize the thief out to steal and destroy?”

“How do we recognize the counterfeit?”

The Royal Canadian police train detectives to discern counterfeit bills. During their training, police never allow them to see a counterfeit. They must so thoroughly study the genuine article, that anything else will immediately be exposed.

In the same way we can look at the Shepherd in Scripture. He is the genuine article. The voice of the Shepherd today will never contradict His voice in Scripture. And Scripture tells us (as it does here) that the Good Shepherd is the one who cares for the sheep, who lays His life down for the sheep. We're not to follow voices . . .

. . . that simply promise us wealth or power or pleasure, as if there's no cross involved.

. . . that merely flatter us and tell us everything is OK, as if we are our own savior.

. . . that seek to make deals and trades and business arrangements, as if the grace of God is something that could be purchased.

We are to follow the voice of the One who lays His life down for us, the One who loves us truly. He is love. “In this is love that He loved us and sent His Son to be the expiation for our sins.” “The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.”

I wish I had more formulas for you. But we're not following a map; we're following a person—a Shepherd.

Thomas said, “Jesus we don't know the way. How can we know the way?” And Jesus said, “I am the way.” He's the One who lays His life down for the sheep. That's how we know Him.

Six chapters later in John, Thomas is doubting that it was Jesus that the other disciples said they had seen resurrected. Jesus appears to Thomas and says, “Put your finger here. See my hands.” That's how Thomas knew it was Jesus.

A small, orphaned boy lived with his grandmother. One night their house caught fire. The grandmother, trying to rescue the little boy asleep upstairs, perished in the smoke and flames. A crowd gathered around the burning house. The boy's cries for help were heard above the crackling of the blaze. No one seemed to know what to do, for the front of the house was a mass of flames.

Suddenly a stranger rushed from the crowd and circled to the back where he spotted an iron pipe that reached an upstairs window. He disappeared for a minute, then reappeared with the boy in his arms. Amid the cheers of the crowd, he climbed down the hot pipe as the boy hung around his neck.

Weeks later a public hearing was held in the town hall to determine in whose custody the boy would be placed. Each person wanting the boy was allowed to speak briefly. The first man said, "I have a big farm. Everybody needs the out-of-doors."

The second man told of the advantages he could provide. "I'm a teacher. I have a large library. He would get a good education." Others spoke. Finally, the richest man in the community said, "I'm wealthy. I could give the boy everything mentioned tonight: farm, education, and more, including money and travel. I'd like him in my home."

The chairman asked, "Anyone else like to say a word?" From the backseat rose a stranger who had slipped in unnoticed. As he walked toward the front, deep suffering showed on his face. Reaching the front of the room, he stood directly in front of the little boy. Slowly the stranger removed his hands from his pockets.

A gasp went up from the crowd. The little boy, whose eyes had been focused on the floor until now, looked up. The man's hands were terribly scarred. Suddenly the boy emitted a cry of recognition. It was the man who had saved his life.

With a leap the boy threw himself around the stranger's neck and held on for life. The farmer rose and left. The teacher, too. Then the rich man. Everyone departed, leaving the boy and his rescuer.

And the boy followed his new daddy out of the courthouse and into green pastures.

He discerned
He heard
He chose . . . *correctly*.

He chose the one who laid down his life. Or better yet, you could say the *stranger* chose the boy the day he climbed the hot drainpipe.

Jesus climbed up on a cross and chose you. To discern the voice of God, look at this cross and ask yourself this question: "Who loves me?"

"Father, we thank you for speaking. You spoke the universe into existence with a word. 'In many and various ways you spoke to the fathers, but in these days you have spoken to us through a Son.' And the Son is that Word—Jesus. And you wrapped Him in flesh; we placed Him in a manger and crucified Him on a cross. Through Him you speak.

“Lord God, there are some here this morning who have never given their lives to you. They hear all kinds of different voices: Buddha, Mohamed, Carl Sagan . . .”

How do you decide? This is my advice. Look at their hands. Who loves you? I know there are a million philosophical, rational questions, and they can all be addressed, but the bottom line is this: Do you want to be loved like that? If you do, silently in your heart say:

“Lord God, I’m yours. Thank you for saving me in Jesus, for climbing up on that cross and dying in my place for my sins, because now, Jesus, you’ve got me. I believe, and help my unbelief.”

If you prayed that prayer, you need to tell people about it. But I want to encourage you . . . Jesus is with you. He leads you; He’s the Good Shepherd. And *He* can address all those questions in His time. He will help your unbelief. He’s the one who loves you.

“Lord God, I imagine there are some here who have heard your voice a lot. Very clearly you have been speaking to them saying things like, ‘Stop sleeping with her.’ ‘Stop drinking so much.’ ‘Forgive your mother.’ ‘Love your kids.’ ‘Go back to your kids.’”

If that’s you, do you understand who is it speaking to you? To disobey Him is literally utter insanity. When you do, look at His cross, His hands . . . it hurts. Repent.

“Lord God, I imagine there are some here who have been walking in the wilderness. They’ve been wondering, Does God even love me? Do I hear him? Lord Jesus, I pray that through this sermon you would remind them you love them.

“Lord Jesus, because they so earnestly want to hear you, they *do* hear you. And their faith, in the midst of the wilderness, is a great, great treasure for all eternity, to you.

“So, Lord Jesus, thank you for speaking. Thank you that we hear. Thank you that we’re yours. Thank you that you lead us to the greenest pastures forever and ever. It’s in your name we pray, Lord Jesus, amen.”

Further Reading

"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers." Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them. Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd. Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father." Therefore there was a division again among the Jews because of these sayings. And many of them said, "He has a demon and is mad. Why do you listen to Him?" Others said, "These are not the words of one who has a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?" Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon's porch. Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, "How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me. But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one."

-John 10:1-30

And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule [umpire] in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

-Colossians 3:14-17

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

-Proverbs 3:5-6

In a physical sense a road is an external actuality, no matter whether anyone is walking on it or not, no matter how the individual travels on it – the road is the road. But in the spiritual sense, the road comes into existence only when we walk on it. That is, the road *is* how it is walked. . . . The traveler who in truth walks life's road does not ask, "Where is the road?" but asks how one ought to walk along the road. Yet, because impatience does not mind being deceived it merely asks where the road is, as if that decided everything as when the traveler finally has found the highway. Worldly wisdom is very willing to deceive by answering correctly the question, "Where is the road?" while life's true task is omitted, that spiritually understood the road is: how it is walked. Worldly sagacity teaches that the road goes over Gerizim, or over Moriah, or that it goes through some science or other, or that the road is certain doctrines, or certain behaviors. But all this is a deception, because the road is how it is walked. It is indeed as Scripture says – two people can be sleeping in the same bed – the one is saved, the other is lost. Two people can go up to the same house of worship – the one goes home saved, the other is lost. Two people can recite the same creed – the one can be saved, the other is lost. How does this happen except for the fact that spiritually speaking, it is a deception to know where the road is, because the road is: how it is walked?

-Soren Kierkegaard

"And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also; henceforth you know him and have seen him."

-John 14:3-7

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