



stories

your stories ... God's stories

When The Promised Land Isn't Necessarily A Place

Steven Cole

For a believer, our sojourn through this life encounters a vast array of milestones, emotions and crossroads. I once heard it said that life is a temporary march to an eternal destination. I've also heard it said that life is a progression of decisions – from one to the next. The further I sojourn, the more I believe both statements are true. Taken at mere face value, though, neither of those statements encapsulates a meaningful Christian journey – a Kingdom journey. Thus, God teaches us and leads us, and, prayerfully, His teaching and leadership are met by lives of willingness and obedience – the key to discovering the peace that surpasses all understanding and God's greatest favor and provision.

On New Year's morning 2008, God spoke to me in a very powerful way. He had already been working in my heart and mind and soul – now He would begin working on my strength. In order for me to be poised to become the person He was leading me to be, I had to make some changes. Big changes. Changes that came with high costs. Dana and I had wrestled with some of these changes for quite some time, but it was clear that the Word of the Lord for today – that day – was to put His teaching and His leading into action.

God led me to Joshua 1. Through the story of Joshua taking Moses' command of the Israelites and proceeding into a land toward which they had been journeying for decades, God spoke to my situation with unquestionable specificity. With a sense of boldness and renewal, we confidently proceeded down the pathway revealed for us. Little did I know that motion and momentum alone were God's requirement for that time – I actually thought I understood the destination. Oops.

We continued our journey. God continued to speak. And provide. He always proves faithful. The big changes came, but the other side of those changes wasn't always what I anticipated. Innate within man is the desire to know. To see. To be affirmed. To feel safe. To have some confidence about ourselves. All of these desires were being challenged, and my inner self – my spirit man – was becoming confused. I knew the Lord had spoken, and I knew we were on the right path. But the further we traveled, I felt we were stepping deeper and deeper into oblivion. As it turns out, I was focused on the destination, and God was focused on the journey.

Recently, we all stepped across the threshold of yet another new year; it's now 2011. Somewhere along the way, God allowed me to see that where He is taking me isn't actually a place at all. Learning to let go of the map, keep my hands off the tangibles and trust Him one seemingly senseless step after another has proven to be more of a challenge for the helpless little me that it turns out I am than I ever would have wanted to admit. In so doing, however, He is progressing me right along. Better said – He is changing me.

Along this winding road, He has shown me a lot about myself, His Kingdom and how He intends the two to converge and proceed. There is so much Kingdom work to be done, and He has uniquely and masterfully-crafted each of us to take part. The world resounds a never-ending and maddening call to build barns and to fill those barns, but Christ calls with a simple (yet most profound), "Follow me." The world says, "Show me what you're made of! Show me your name on a mortgage and an impressive portfolio of a bright and safe tomorrow!" Yet Christ had no place to lay His head and tells us not to worry. There's a fine line between responsibility and obedience on matters such as these, and I've learned that such a line is different for us all. Such a line is found between the voice of the world and the voice of the Lord. In order to see His Kingdom come, we must refuse to straddle that line like a fence and ground ourselves on the soil of His Kingdom.

As a family of faith, we all sojourn together. I'm so thankful for our great church and the sense of Kingdom community we share. I'm new around here. But I love you, and I'm thankful that you have graciously loved me. I suppose one of the biggest mistakes I've made in journeying toward "a" destination is thinking that there was such a thing as "my" destination. Apparently, as believers, our destination is a shared one. It is the Kingdom of God come within, through and around us for now, and, ultimately, arrival into His very presence. If there is a promised land for us – a "place," it is certain to be at His feet. Until then, may His Kingdom come. May we obey the words of Christ and seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness. He said He'd handle "all these other things."

So journey well, my friends. And I trust you'll help me do the same. Know that line. Know His voice. Accept the changes, and willingly become. Motion. Momentum. Change. Progress. That's the Kingdom journey. Become.



Memory Lane

Sherry Young Abrams

I was five years old when we started attending FBC, before that we attended the Methodist Church in town. Carolyn Taylor invited my mother, my brother (Sam), and myself to visit while her first husband, Paul, and my Dad were away for two weeks at National Guard Camp in Ft. Smith.

I do have so many memories of growing up in the downtown church, from a primary SS class with Lavern Hancock, GA's, Bible Drills, Valentine Banquets, church camps at Beavers Bend and Boggs Springs with Wanda Wilson, E. Butler Abbingdon and Bro. Joe (my guardian angel-always asking me if I had a boyfriend then checking him out), youth choir with Katie Smiley and the trips we took to sing at places we had never been. Katie was also my 9th grade SS teacher, which was the year she gave birth to her daughter, Dee! Then there was Arlene Revels who said we were her first class of high school girls to teach. Now she and Katie think they are old since their SS "kids" are coming home to retire. We did retire early and NO ladies you are not old, just mature! You will just never know how much you touched our lives when we were younger and we do thank and love you for it. There is also Mr. David Lewis who introduced me to my wonderful husband, Dean. David will never know how much he embarrassed me when he introduced me to Dean as one of the "singles" in church. Mike Archer also had a hand in introducing us. It all worked out as the Lord planned it and we thank Him for it.

Not A One - Backward Rules of the Kingdom

Dr. Dale Galloway tells the story of a shy, unassuming little guy named Chad. One February before Valentine's Day, Chad came home and told his mother he wanted to make Valentine's cards for everyone in his class. Her heart sank for Chad as he told her because she watched every day as the children from Chad's class walked home from school, talking and running, and playing, but never including Chad in their fun. She chose to remain silent, though, and to help Chad with his desire to give his classmates Valentines. For nearly three weeks, Chad and his mother worked tirelessly to craft thirty-five different cards.

Valentine's Day finally arrived, and Chad excitedly loaded his hand-made Valentine's cards into his bag and bolted out the door. Mom thought it was going to be a tough day for Chad so she thought some nice warm cookies and a glass of milk would help to ease the pain of the day when he returned from school. Surely he would be disappointed, for she knew the children were unlikely to remember Chad in their Valentine's. She was hurt to think how bad this day was going to be.

That afternoon she had the cookies and milk ready when school was out. She heard children outside so she looked out the window, and sure enough, here they came laughing and playing as always. Chad was following behind all alone, as always. He was walking a little faster than usual, though. She waited for Chad to burst into tears as he made it to the door. His arms were empty, and she could hardly choke back the tears as he burst through the door. "Mommy has some warm cookies and milk for you," she said. But Chad hardly heard a word she said. He just walked right by her, his face aglow, and all he could say was: "Not a one...not a single one!" Mom's heart sank. Then Chad added, "I didn't forget a one, not a single one!" Little Chad demonstrated the backward rules of the kingdom

