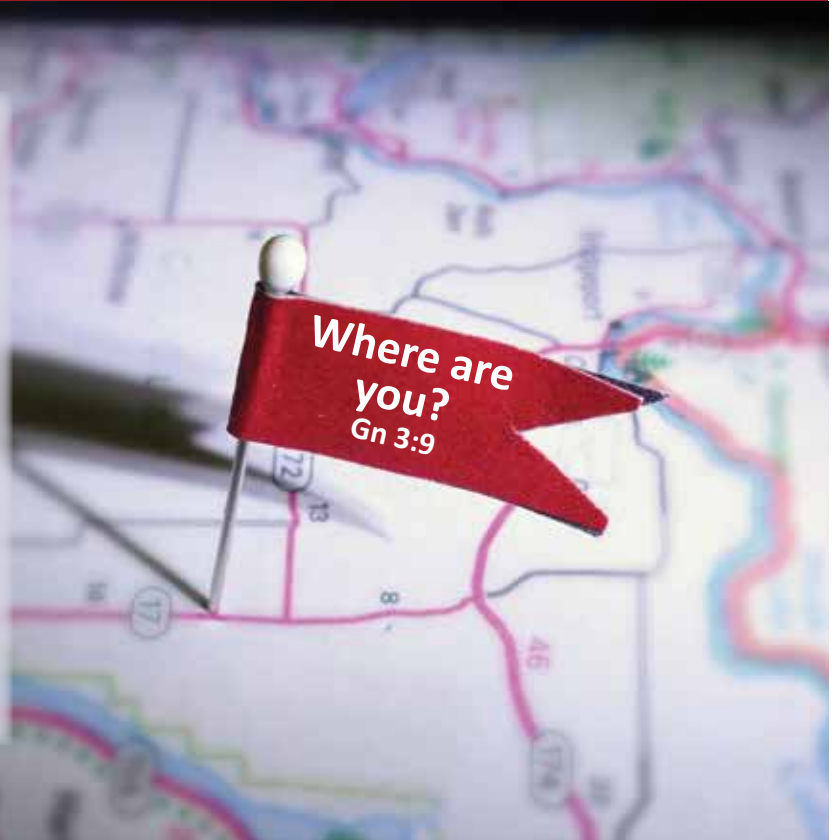


# The High Calling

a bimonthly publication of The Francis Asbury Society

## In This Issue

- *The Map of Salvation* (Mike Powers)
- *Our Human Odyssey* (Os Guinness)
- *The Journey According to George Barna* (George Barna)
- *Why We Need a Map* (C. S. Lewis)
- *Not Where You Walk—But How* (Søren Kierkegaard)
- *Following Hard after God* (A. W. Tozer)
- *The Road Before Us* (John Eldredge)
- *To Be a Pilgrim* (Alister McGrath)



## Salvation as Journey

By Stan Key



After preaching a week-long series of messages on “The Geography of Salvation” at a holiness camp in Virginia a few years ago, a woman told me, “Your preaching on the map has been a game changer for me.” All I knew about this delightful woman of

God was that she prepared the T-shirts for the camp, but her conversation helped me to better understand what she meant:

*I was taught to believe that “getting saved” was about a new status with God. I needed to get my sins forgiven so that I could go to heaven when I die—hopefully 40 or 50 years from now. But Stan, you have shown us that salvation is not just about the destination. It is about the journey; it is a walk with God. You’ve helped me to see that the whole point of this journey is for us to live in intimacy with our Lord so that we can bear fruit and live in victory. Yeah, this “journey” stuff is a game changer!*

With this issue of *The High Calling*, FAS is launching the new and fresh way we have chosen to carry out our old and

historic mission. The “map of salvation” puts the emphasis on understanding the gospel in terms of following Christ, taking a journey, and walking with God. We certainly continue to recognize how the Bible uses other metaphors such as the courtroom, the new birth, and marriage. But we believe that speaking of salvation in terms of a journey not only will keep us anchored in biblical truth, it will also help us to be more effective in connecting with a new generation.

Such an emphasis is hardly new. We claim no originality and have no desire to be considered innovative in our methodology. In preaching *the Map*, we are only doing what the writers of the New Testament—as well as preachers and theologians through the centuries—have done. In fact, one of the hallmarks of “holiness preaching” in the late nineteenth century was its frequent use of the map of the Exodus to proclaim the gospel message of full salvation.

Over the next year, *The High Calling* will devote its issues to the key locations on *the Map* that describe the contours of the journey of salvation: Egypt, Red Sea, the Desert, Jordan

*Continued on page 10*

**Finding your way on the journey of life**

# The Map of Salvation

By Mike Powers



Before coming to the Francis Asbury Society as director of Discipleship, Mike served as a pastor in the Kentucky Conference of the United Methodist Church for over 40 years. Writing from the heart of a pastor who cares deeply for the flock of God, Mike explains the importance of understanding the map of salvation in the life of a disciple.

The Bible uses multiple easy-to-understand metaphors to explain the wonder of salvation. Some scriptures, for example, speak of salvation in terms of a *courtroom*. I am a guilty law-breaker, condemned as a sinner, but Jesus is my Advocate, who not only represents me before the judgment seat but also pays the price of my forgiveness, making it possible for me to be justified (made right with God). Other scriptures speak of salvation as being *born again* into the family of God, making me God's child. Still other passages use *marriage* as a metaphor of salvation. God is the Bridegroom and we are the bride. The culmination of human history will be a marriage feast to celebrate the union. But perhaps the metaphor that resonates most deeply with this present generation is that of the *journey*. It seems almost everyone is willing to talk about his/her journey in life. Advertisers, movies, and everyday conversation make frequent use of journey language to try to make sense of the meaning of life.

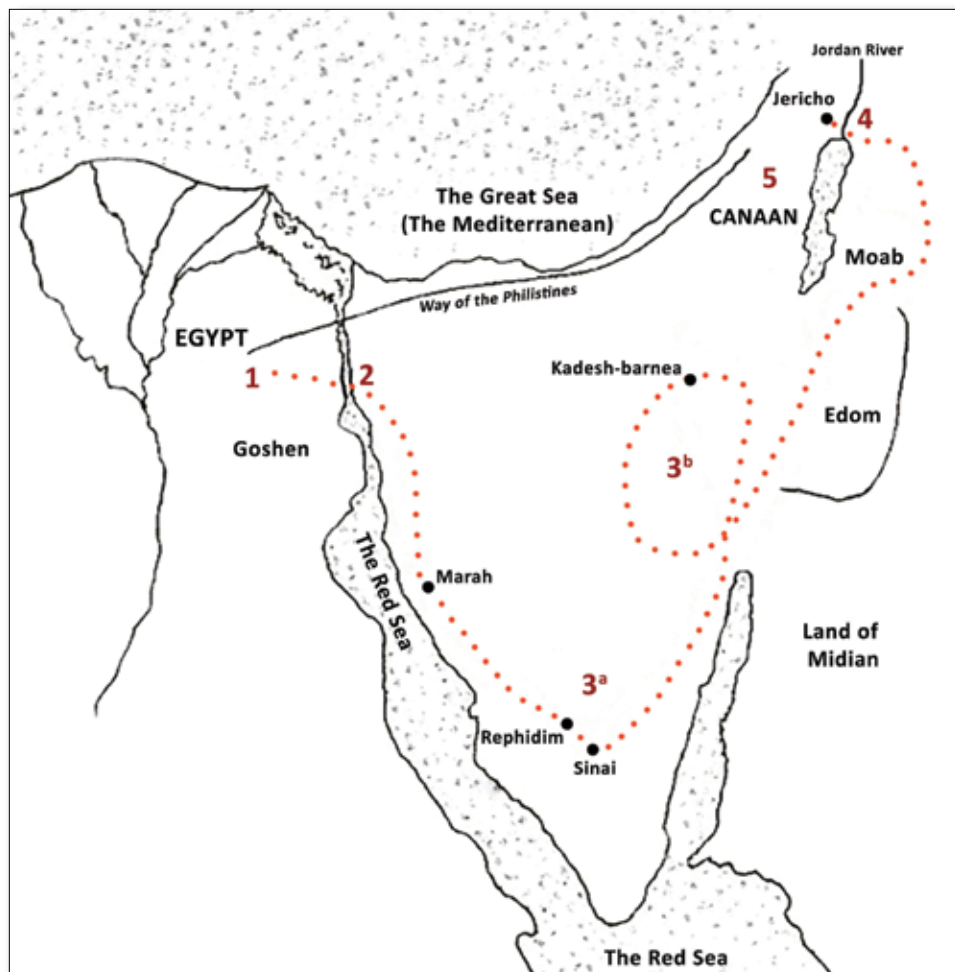
When Jesus first called his disciples, he invited them to join him on a journey; "Follow me," he said. Along the way, day by day, step by step, they would see the salvation of God on full display in the things that he said, in the way that he lived, in the lives that he touched, in the sacrifice that he made, and

in the resurrection power that he demonstrated. The earliest Christians were described as followers of "the Way."

Perhaps the clearest pattern of salvation as a journey is found in the Old Testament story of the Exodus. To get from Egypt to Canaan required more than contemplative prayer and religious piety. It demanded a walk. God provided a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar fire by night to guide their steps. The journey was composed of seasons of growth and development as well as at least two crisis moments of faith. Moses summed up this journey of salvation by succinctly saying "He brought us out [from Egypt] that he might bring us in [to Canaan]" (Deut. 6:23).

It is interesting to see how the writers of the New Testament used this journey of the Hebrews from Egypt to Canaan as a sermonic teaching device to help followers of Jesus better understand their own spiritual journey of Christian discipleship. For example, the writer of the book of Hebrews said:

*Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, "They always go astray in their heart... They shall not enter my rest." Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. (Hebrews 3:7-12)*



In a similar manner, Paul, writing to the believers in Corinth, used the journey of the Exodus to warn and encourage followers of Christ who were drifting from the straight path. After describing a series of tragic events that had happened to the Hebrews during their journey from Egypt to Canaan, Paul told the Corinthians: "Now these things happened to them as an example, but they are written down for our instruction" (1 Cor. 10:11).

The journey of the Jewish people 3,400 years ago is far more than interesting history. It is a picture of the Christian life. It is not just *their* story, it is *ours*. Their journey helps us to understand ours. *The Map*, then, becomes a model for helping pilgrims make sense of the challenges and complexities that confront them as they seek to follow Jesus.

There are five key locations on the map that define the path for all who decide to follow Jesus on the journey to spiritual wholeness:

1. *Egypt*. Although the Hebrews had lived in Egypt for 400 years, they knew deep inside that this was not their true home. When a new pharaoh arose "who did not know Joseph" (Ex. 1:8), Egypt became a

*Continued on page 11*

# Our Human Odyssey

By Os Guinness



Social critic and author, Os Guinness, reminds us that the Bible is not the only place that describes life as a journey. Classical literature has numerous examples of using the metaphor of “the journey” to help readers wrestle with the meaning of life. The following article is a slightly edited abridgment of the first chapter of Guinness’ book *The Journey: Our Quest for Faith and Meaning* (NavPress, 2001), 14–24.

“Midway along the journey of our life, I woke to find myself in a dark wood, for I had wandered off from the straight path.” So begins Dante’s metaphysical adventure story *The Divine Comedy*, his three-part pilgrimage to discover the fate of souls after death. Life as a journey—from the Hebrew *Exodus* to Homer’s *Odyssey* to Virgil’s *Aeneid* to Dante’s *Divine Comedy* to John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* to Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn* to Herman Hesse’s *Siddhartha*, no picture of human life is more universal than to see it as a journey, a voyage, a quest, a pilgrimage, a personal odyssey. We are all midway on life’s journey—or at least we are all at some point unknown to us between the beginning and the end of this odyssey of our human existence.

Webster defines the word *odyssey* as “a long wandering or voyage usually marked by many changes of fortune.” The word, of course, comes to us from the epic age of Greece. More importantly, it aptly describes the progress and setbacks, the twists and turns and ups and downs of our human experience of living. Rooted in an older oral tradition, Homer’s *Odyssey* (written around 725 BC) represents his storyteller’s genius for addressing our fundamental questions as wanderer-seekers: Who are we? Where have we come from? Why are we here? Where are we going? What does it all add up to? What dangers and diversions can make us lose our way or even our very selves?

As Friedrich Nietzsche said well, he who knows *why* can bear any *how*. Odysseus could bear the buffeting of storms and escape the oblivion of enchantments because he was a man on his way home to Ithaca and his wife and son. But for life’s journey to be a homecoming we have to know our bearings and, more importantly, there has to be a home.

Though social realities such as immigration, mobility, and frequent moves from one location to another define our current situation, the greatest dimension of our sense of journey lies much deeper. It is created by the nearly universal intuition that journeying is the most apt metaphor for human life itself—or at

least that the human odyssey at its highest is that life is a quest for purpose, meaning, destination, and home.

The sense of life-as-journey can be seen in the world’s quest stories. Whether we are talking about modern films such as *2001: A Space Odyssey* or *Raiders of the Lost Ark* or the ancient Sumerian tale of Gilgamesh (around 1500 BC), the theme of journey is prominent. In some quest stories, the search is hopeless from the start. In Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick*, for example, the search is mad and the quest meaningless. In other quest stories, such as the varied legends of the Holy Grail, the search is symbolic. The quest is for someone or something that will make the searcher a whole person—some truth or revelation that will unlock the secret of the meaning of life. Whether the searcher takes the high road or the low, whether the search is successful or unsuccessful, it always invests the traveler with an aura of dignity and heroism.



Today many thinkers have openly given up the idea that life has meaning or that there is such a thing as truth. Others talk about “searching” but condemn themselves to fruitless seeking without end because they are open-minded about everything except finding. Eric Hobsbawm, the eminent historian, wrote recently, “The old maps and charts which guided human beings singly and

collectively through life, no longer represent the landscape through which we move, the sea on which we sail . . . We do not know where our journey is taking us, or even ought to take us.”

“The unexamined life is not worth living,” Socrates’ famous statement during his trial is probably the most-quoted but least-followed statement of all antiquity. For although all human beings are serious about the meaning of life at some point on their journeys, most people are unconcerned most of the time. We live life like a headlong rush down the road, with little or no concern about purpose or direction.

Looking at our own culture from the perspective of history, we see that, in America, faith has been the leading hope of the founding pioneers, the early home of intellectual life, a vital harbinger of such pivotal national events as revolution and abolition, and the hub of a myriad of reforms and concerns, including the women’s movement. In short, understanding

Continued on page 11

# The Journey According to George Barna

By George Barna



George Barna is the founder of The Barna Group, a leading research firm that specializes in faith-related surveys. In his book *Maximum Faith* (2011), he reports on his six-year study of how Americans become Christians and how their lives are transformed by the power of God—or, most often, *aren't!* While many may want to debate the fine points of Barna's theology, we hope all our readers will benefit from his insightful analysis. This article is a slightly edited abridgment of the second chapter entitled "Mapping the Journey" (15–32).

Everyone loves an extended vacation. Suppose you earned a two-week getaway after months of hard work. On the day you are scheduled to begin that time off, would you wake up and ask yourself what you should do for the next two weeks? Of course not! You would have spent many hours over the previous months thinking about what you would most want do, how to save up the money to do it, exploring your options, and developing a day-by-day plan for those two weeks.

On that first morning of vacation, would you simply put your suitcase in your car and start driving, hoping that you will eventually find your destination? Certainly not! You'd get directions and plan the drive accordingly. Maybe you'd print out directions from MapQuest or perhaps rely upon a GPS system to guide you. If you're old school, you might get a map out of the glove compartment and carefully chart your route. Only a fool would simply turn on the car and randomly drive in the hope of reaching the desired destination.

That's how we treat our vacations—as if they are sacred escapes into personal renewal. But what about our spiritual renewal and development? Do we invest the same level of energy in meticulous planning and execution?

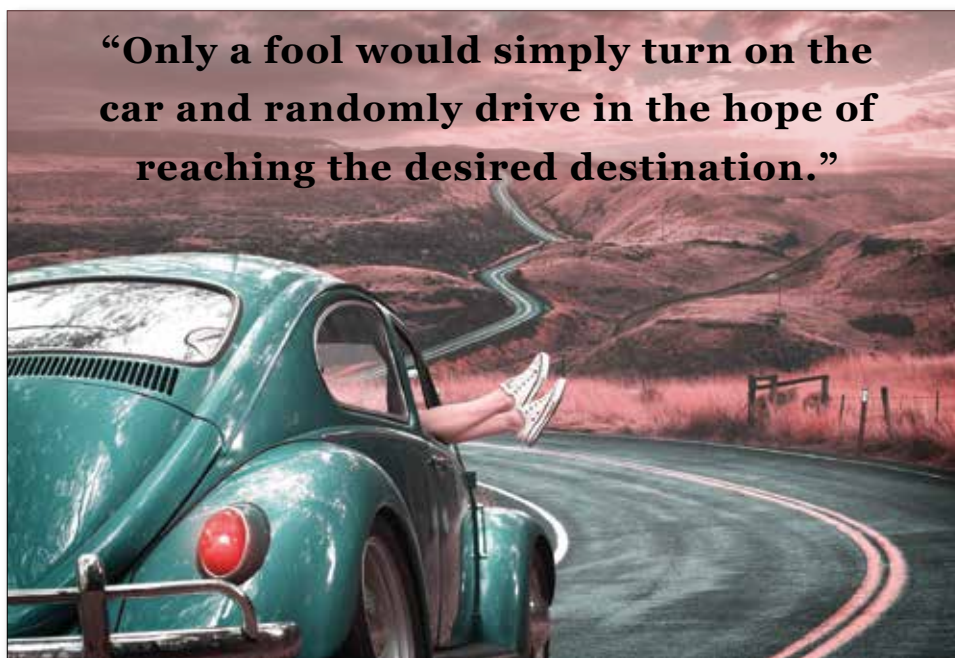
Unfortunately, after surveying the spiritual journey of several thousand people, it seems that we are pretty random about our efforts to experience genuine God-driven transformation. We refuse to give God control of our lives, but we're not really guiding the ship toward a particular destination; we just keep meandering in the ocean of life hoping to find an appealing place to dock. Forgive the impertinence, but sometimes it seems as if the Church—the aggregate collection of Christ believers—is indeed a ship of fools.

What we need, then, is a map to help us figure out where we're going with our lives. Based on the research, we can now

identify the stops on our lifelong adventure with God—not as a straitjacket that God must honor, but as a reasonable guide to help us stay focused and advancing. Let's begin by identifying ten stops on the journey to wholeness.

**STOP 1: Ignorance of the concept or existence of sin.** Millions grow up oblivious to the fact that God exists and that he has provided moral and spiritual standards for us to satisfy. The idea that they are sinners does not register at any conscious level. Few Americans remain in this state of ignorance beyond their elementary school years. Current population size: 1 percent of adults.

**STOP 2: Aware of and indifferent to sin.** As life goes on, most people gain exposure to the idea of sin. That doesn't mean they believe it is real. This stop is populated by people who are intellectually aware of the concept but do not accept it as valid or significant. Current population size: 16 percent of adults.



**“Only a fool would simply turn on the car and randomly drive in the hope of reaching the desired destination.”**

**STOP 3: Concerned about the implications of personal sin.** People that reach Stop 3 begin to feel uneasy about the “what if” possibilities—as in “what if there is a God, sin ticks him off, and I could spend eternity in Hell because of it?” Most people at Stop 3 have some sort of connection to a Christian church. Current population size: 39 percent of adults.

**STOP 4: Confess sins and ask Jesus Christ to be their Savior.** Some people decide it is best to ask God for forgiveness and for Jesus Christ to save them from the eternal consequences of their sins. Some will treat this as the pinnacle of their spiritual life and plateau here. They may see this as a “one and done” moment: “I said the prayer, I got the gift; now, where was I before this unexpected life interruption occurred?” Others will see Stop 4 as a point of departure and seek to go deeper with Christ. Current population size: 9 percent of adults.

**STOP 5: Commitment to faith activities.** The most common reaction after embracing Christ is to become more active in both personal spiritual growth and a community of faith. Current population size: 24 percent of adults.

**STOP 6: Experience a prolonged period of spiritual discontent.** After years of involvement in the Christian faith, most people slip into a spiritual coma. Their faith becomes a series of rituals, routines, recitations, rules, relationships, and responsibilities.

*Continued on page 10*

# Why We Need a Map

By C. S. Lewis (1898–1963)



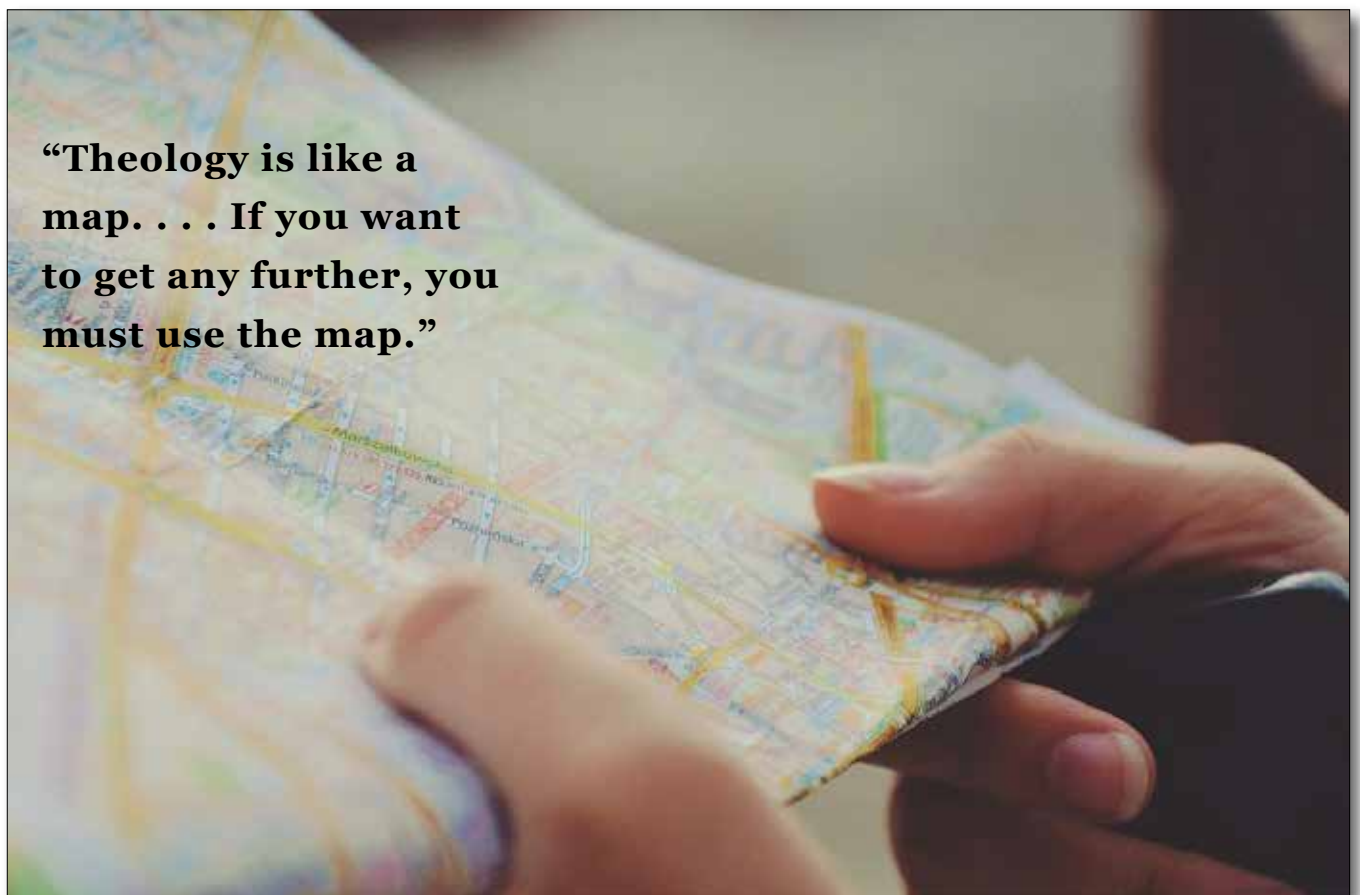
While many express a dislike for the academic discipline called geography (where maps play a crucial role), they will immediately discover the subject's importance once they set out on a journey! In his classic *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis compares theology to a map. His words remind us that salvation is also a journey and to arrive at our destination we will need a good map. This article is taken from Book IV, Chapter 1 (153–155).

In a way I quite understand why some people are put off by theology. I remember once when I had been giving a talk to the R.A.F., an old, hard-bitten officer got up and said, "I've no use for all that stuff. But, mind you, I'm a religious man too. I *know* there's a God. I've *felt* him: out alone in the desert at night: the tremendous mystery. And that's just why I don't believe all your neat little dogmas and formulas about him. To anyone who's met the real thing, they all seem so petty and pedantic and unreal!"

Now in a sense I quite agreed with that man. I think he had probably had a real experience of God in the desert. And when he turned from that experience to the Christian creeds, I think he really was turning from something real to something

less real. In the same way, if a man has once looked at the Atlantic from the beach, and then goes and looks at a map of the Atlantic, he also will be turning from something real to something less real: turning from real waves to a bit of colored paper. But here comes the point. The map is admittedly only colored paper, but there are two things you have to remember about it. In the first place, it is based on what hundreds and thousands of people have found out by sailing the real Atlantic. In that way it has behind it masses of experience just as real as the one you could have from the beach; only, while yours would be a single isolated glimpse, the map fits all those different experiences together. In the second place, if you want to go anywhere, the map is absolutely necessary. As long as you are content with walks on the beach, your own glimpses are far more fun than looking at a map. But the map is going to be more use than walks on the beach if you want to get to America.

Theology is like a map. Merely learning and thinking about the Christian doctrines, if you stop there, is less real and less exciting than the sort of thing my friend got in the desert. Doctrines are not God: they are only a kind of map. But that map is based on the experience of hundreds of people who really were in touch with God—experiences compared with which any thrills or pious feelings you and I are likely to get on our own are very elementary and very confused. And secondly, if you want to get any further, you must use the map. You see, what happened to that man in the desert may have been real, and was certainly exciting but nothing comes of it. It leads nowhere. There is nothing to do about it. In fact, that is just why a vague religion—all about feeling God in nature, and so on—is so attractive. It is all thrills and no work; like watching the waves from the beach. But you will not get to Newfoundland by studying the Atlantic that way, and you will not get eternal



life by simply feeling the presence of God in flowers or music. Neither will you get anywhere by looking at maps without going to sea. Nor will you be very safe if you go to sea without a map.

In other words, theology is practical: especially now. In the old days, when there was less education and discussion, perhaps it was possible to get on with a very few simple ideas about God. But it is not so now. Everyone reads, everyone hears things discussed. Consequently, if you do not listen to theology, that will not mean that you have no ideas about God. It will mean that you have a lot of wrong ones—bad, muddled, out-of-date ideas. For a great many of the ideas about God which are trotted out as novelties today are simply the ones which real theologians tried centuries ago and rejected. To believe in the popular religion of modern England is retrogression—like believing the earth is flat. ✨

# Not Where You Walk—But How

By Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855)



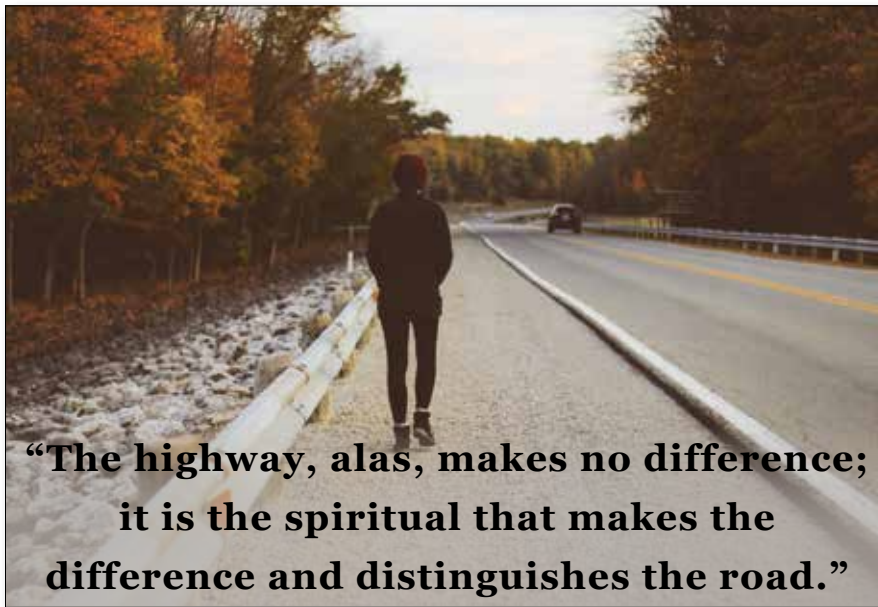
Philosopher, theologian, and social critic, Søren Kierkegaard had a unique way of presenting the truth and exposing hypocrisy. In the following article, he uses the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) to help us better understand the road of life we are currently travelling. The text (slightly edited) is taken from *Provocations: Spiritual Writings of Kierkegaard* (Plough, 1999), 55–57.

There is a generally accepted metaphor that compares life to a road. To compare life to a road can indeed be fruitful in many ways, but we must consider how life is unlike a road. 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 dissimilarity in the metaphor shows up most clearly when the discussion is simultaneously about a physical road and a road in the spiritual sense. For example, when we read in the Gospel about the Good Samaritan, there is mention of the road between Jericho and Jerusalem. The story tells of five people who walked “along the same road.” Spiritually speaking, however, each one walked his own road. The highway, alas, makes no difference; it is the spiritual that makes the difference and distinguishes the road. Let us consider more carefully how this is.

The first man was a peaceful traveler who walked along the road from Jericho to Jerusalem, along a lawful road. The second man was a robber who “walked along the same road”—and yet on an unlawful road. Then a priest came “along the same road”; he saw the poor unfortunate man who had been assaulted by the robber. Perhaps he was momentarily moved but went right

on by. He walked the road of indifference. Next a Levite came “along the same road.” He saw the poor unfortunate man; he too walked past unmoved, continuing his road. The Levite walked “along the same road” but was walking his way, the way of selfishness and callousness. Finally, a Samaritan came “along the same road.” He found the poor unfortunate man on the road of mercy. He showed by example how to walk the road of mercy; he demonstrated that the road, spiritually speaking, is precisely this; *how* one walks. This is why the Gospel says, “Go and do likewise.” Yes, there were five travelers who walked “along the same road,” and yet each one walked his own road.



The question “how one walks life’s road” makes all the difference. In other words, when life is compared to a road, the metaphor simply expresses the universal, that which everyone who is alive has in common by being alive. To that extent we are all walking along the road of life and are all walking along the same road. But when living becomes a matter of truth, then the question becomes: How

shall we walk in order to walk the right road on the road of life? 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.

Worldly wisdom teaches that the road goes to this place or to that, or that it goes through this discipline, or these doctrines, or these 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 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 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. ✦

## The Road Not Taken

Robert Frost (1874–1963)

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;*

*Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,*

*And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.*

*I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.*

# Following Hard after God

By A. W. Tozer (1897–1963)



Pastor, author, and conference preacher, A. W. Tozer was one of the most influential American evangelists of the 20th century. In his classic little book, *The Pursuit of God*, he devotes the first chapter to the inner motivation that drives a man or a woman to both begin and continue the journey of salvation. This article is a slightly edited abridgment of that chapter (Christian Publications, 1982), 11–20.

Christian theology teaches the doctrine of prevenient grace, which, briefly stated, means that before a man can seek God, God must first have sought the man. Before a sinful man can think a right thought of God, there must have been a work of enlightenment done within him. We pursue God because, and only because, He has first put an urge within us that spurs us to the pursuit. “No one can come to me,” said our Lord, “unless the Father who sent me draws him” (John 6:44). It is by this prevenient *drawing* that God takes from us every vestige of credit for the act of coming. The impulse to pursue God originates with God, but the outworking of that impulse is our following hard after Him.

The doctrine of justification by faith has in our time fallen into evil company and been interpreted by many in such a manner as actually to bar men from the knowledge of God. The whole transaction of religious conversion has been made mechanical and spiritless. Faith may now be exercised without a jar to the moral life and without embarrassment to the Adamic ego. Christ may be “received” without creating any special love for Him in the soul of the receiver. The man is “saved,” but he is not hungry nor thirsty after God. In fact, he is specifically taught to be satisfied and is encouraged to be content with little.

Being made in the image of God, we have within us the capacity to know Him. But in our sins, we lack the power. The moment the Spirit has brought us to life in regeneration our whole being senses its kinship to God and leaps up in joyous recognition. That is the heavenly birth without which we cannot see the Kingdom of God. It is, however, not an end but an inception, for now begins the glorious pursuit, the heart’s happy exploration of the infinite riches of the Godhead. That is where we begin, I say, but where we stop no man has yet discovered, for there is in the awful and mysterious depths of the Triune God neither limit nor end.

To have found God and still to pursue him is the soul’s paradox of love, scorned indeed by the too-easily-satisfied religionist, but justified in happy experience by the children

of the burning heart. St. Bernard stated this holy paradox in a musical quatrain that will be instantly understood by every worshipping soul:

*We taste Thee, O Thou Living Bread,  
And long to feast upon Thee still:  
We drink of Thee, the Fountainhead  
And thirst our souls from Thee to fill.*

How tragic that we in this dark day have had our seeking done for us by our teachers. Everything is made to center upon the initial act of “accepting” Christ (a term, incidentally, which is not found in the Bible) and we are not expected thereafter to crave any further revelation of God to our souls. We have been snared in the coils of a spurious logic which insists that if we have found Him, we need no more seek Him.

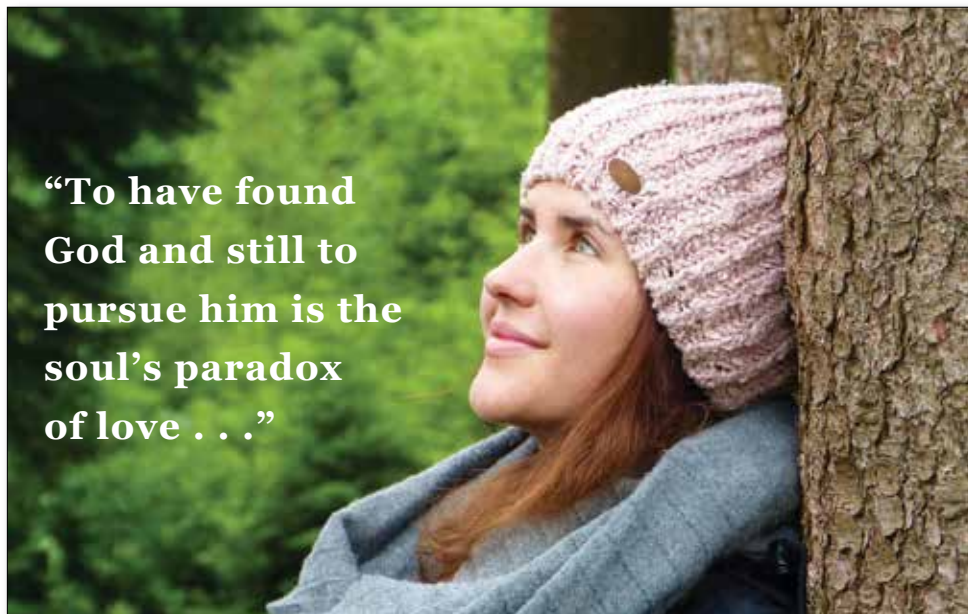
I want deliberately to encourage a mighty longing after God. The lack of it has brought us to our present low estate. The stiff

and wooden quality about our religious lives is a result of our lack of holy desire. Complacency is a deadly foe of all spiritual growth. Acute desire must be present or there will be no manifestation of Christ to His people. He waits to be wanted. Too bad that with many of us He waits so long, so very long, in vain.

The evil habit of seeking *God-and* effectively prevents us from finding God

in full revelation. In the *and* lies our great woe. If we omit the *and* we shall soon find God, and in Him we shall find that for which we have all our lives been secretly longing. When the Lord divided Canaan among the tribes of Israel, Levi received no share of the land. God said to him simply, “I am your portion and your inheritance among the people of Israel” (Numbers 18:20). By these words God made Levi richer than all his brethren. And there is a spiritual principle here, a principle still valid for every priest of the Most High God: the man who has God for his treasure has all things in One; all satisfaction, all pleasure, all delight.

Prayer: *O God, I have tasted Your goodness, and it has both satisfied me and made me thirsty for more. I am painfully conscious of my need of further grace. I am ashamed of my lack of desire. O God, I want to want You; I long to be filled with longing; I thirst to be made more thirsty still. Begin a new work of love within me. Say to my soul, “Rise up, my love, and come away.” Then give me grace to rise and follow You, up from this misty lowland where I have wandered so long. In Jesus’ name. Amen. ✨*



**“To have found  
God and still to  
pursue him is the  
soul’s paradox  
of love . . .”**

# The Road Before Us

By John Eldredge



John Eldredge rescues the Christian faith from doctrinal abstractions and boring dogmatism by reminding us that God is telling a story of cosmic proportions and has written us into the script. In his little book *Epic* (Nelson, 2004), he orients us to the big picture of what God is doing in the world and the role that is ours to play. This article is from the Epilogue (99–104).

**W**e live in a far more dramatic, far more dangerous Story than we ever imagined. The reason we love *The Chronicles of Narnia* or *Star Wars* or *The Matrix* or *The Lord of the Rings* is because they are telling us something about our lives that we never, ever get on the evening news. Or from most pulpits. They are reminding us of the Epic we are created for. This is the sort of tale you've fallen into. How would you live differently if you believed it to be true?

The final test of any belief or faith that claims to provide an answer to our lives is this: Does the one explain the other? Does the story bring into perspective the pages you are already holding, the days of your life? Does it take everything into account? Does it explain the longing in your heart for a life you haven't yet found? Does it explain the evil cast around us? Most of all, does it give you back your heart, lead you to the Source of life?

Something has been calling to you all the days of your life. You've heard it on the wind and in the music you love, in laughter and in tears, and most especially in the stories that have ever captured your heart. There is a secret written on our heart. A valiant Hero-Lover and his Beloved. An Evil One and a great battle to fight. A Journey and a Quest, more dangerous and more thrilling than you could imagine. A little Fellowship to see you through. This is the gospel of Christianity.

Now—what is *your* part? What is your role in the Story?

In truth, the only one who can tell you that is the Author. To find our lives, we must turn to Jesus. We must yield our all to him and ask him to restore us as his own. We ask his forgiveness for our betrayal of him. We ask him to make us all he intended us to be—to tell us who we are and what we are now to do. We ask him to remove the veil from our eyes and from our hearts. It might be good to pause and do that right now.

*A veil covers their heart. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. (2 Corinthians 3:15–16)*

*We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from start to finish. He was willing to die a shameful death on the cross because of the joy he knew*

*would be his afterward. Now he is seated in the place of highest honor beside God's throne in heaven. (Hebrews 12:2 NLT)*

The Story God is telling—like every great story that echoes it—reminds us of three eternal truths it would be good to keep in mind as we take the next step out the door.

First, *things are not what they seem*. Where would we be if Eve had recognized the serpent for who he really was? And that carpenter from Nazareth—he's not what he appears to be, either. There is far more going on around us than meets the eye. We live in a world with two halves, one part that we can see and another part that we cannot. We must live as though the unseen world (the rest of reality) is more weighty and more real and more dangerous than the part of reality we can see.

Second, *we are at war*. This is a love Story, set in the midst of a life-and-death battle. Just look around you. Look at all the casualties strewn across the field. The lost souls, the broken

hearts, the captives. We must take this battle seriously. This is no child's game. This is war—a battle for the human heart.

Third, *you have a crucial role to play*. That is the third eternal truth spoken by every great story, and it happens to be the one we most desperately need if we are ever to understand our days. Frodo underestimated who he was. As did Neo. As did Wallace. As did Peter, James, and John. It is a dangerous thing to underestimate your role in

the Story. You will lose heart, and you will miss your cues. This is our most desperate hour. You are needed.

We are now far into this Epic that every great story points to. We have reached the moment where we, too, must find our courage and rise up to recover our hearts and fight for the hearts of others. The hour is late, and much time has been wasted. Aslan is on the move; we must rally to him at the stone table. We must find Geppetto lost at sea. We must ride hard, ride to Minas Tirith and join the last great battle for Middle Earth.

Jesus calls to you to be his intimate ally once more. There are great things to be done and great sacrifices to be made. You won't lose heart if you know what's really going on here, where this Story is headed, and what your Lover has promised you.

*It is a world of magic and mystery, of deep darkness and flickering starlight. It is a world where terrible things happen and wonderful things too. It is a world where goodness is pitted against evil, love against hate, order against chaos, in a great struggle where often it is hard to*

*Continued on page 10*



# To Be a Pilgrim

By Alister E. McGrath



Anglican priest and professor in science and theology at the University of Oxford, Alister McGrath writes to make the Christian faith more understandable to contemporary men and women. In his book *Christian Spirituality* (Blackwell, 1999), he explains how “the journey” is one of the Bible’s important images for understanding Christian spirituality. This article is abridged and slightly edited (91–93).

Both Old and new Testaments depict journeys, such as Abraham’s journey to Canaan, or Paul’s great missionary journeys. Perhaps the two most important journeys described in the Old Testament are the wandering of the people of Israel through the wilderness for forty years prior to entering into the Promised Land, and the return of the people of Jerusalem to their native city after decades of exile in the great city of Babylon. Each of these journeys has become an image of considerable importance for Christian spirituality.

One of the most powerful images of the Christian life is that of a journey. Indeed, the New Testament records that the early Christians initially referred to themselves as followers of “the way” (see, for example, Acts 9:2; 24:14). Just as God led the people of Israel out of captivity in Egypt into the Promised Land, so the Christian life can be seen as a slow process of deliverance from bondage to sin before being led triumphantly into the heavenly city.

At several points in the writings of St. Paul, we find a modification of the image of a journey. For Paul, the Christian life is like a race—a long and arduous journey, undertaken under pressure, in which the winners receive a crown (see Gal. 2:2; 2 Tim. 4:7). The image is also used in the letter to the Hebrews, which urges its readers to persevere in the race of life

by keeping their eyes focused firmly on Jesus (Heb. 12:1–2). This image allows Paul to stress the importance of discipline in the Christian life.

The role of discipline in the Christian life is traditionally explored in asceticism (which derives from the Greek term *askesis*, “discipline”). Although this term has acquired unhelpful associations, it is meant to be about the process of self-discipline which enables Christians to lead more authentic and effective lives. The New Testament models of the athlete and the soldier are intended to convey the importance of discipline and training as a means of ensuring the quality of the person’s actions.

Both soldiers and athletes require training in order to undertake their tasks properly. Asceticism is thus a means to an end, not an end in itself. Training leads to better Christian living; self-discipline is thus not to be seen as a goal in itself, but as a process which enables a greater goal to be achieved.

Self-denial can thus be seen as a systematic program of eliminating influences—such as pride, self-centeredness, and general lack of

consideration and love for others—which are a barrier to spiritual growth. Fasting, for example, is an excellent means of self-discipline, which tests our ability to undertake tasks, and also reminds us of the excesses of consumption to which we are prone, which can distract us from our heavenly goal and lead us to neglect the discipline which enables us to achieve it.

Two works of Christian spirituality which focus on the theme of “journeying” may be noted. The central theme of the *Divine Comedy* of Dante Aligheri (1265–1321) is that of a journey from the darkness of a wood to an encounter with God in the

*Continued on page 10*

## Being Resourceful

By Charlie Fiskeaux, Special Assistant to the President for Development

Many years ago, when I was a fourth grader, the teacher stated in my report card that I “wasted time.” I did not know then—nor now—how I wasted time, but the consequence was to write 1000 times, “I will not waste time.” That experience left an indelible mark on my character that persists to the present time. As another has said, “wasted time can never be made up.”

The general application of being resourceful with time naturally expands to being resourceful in other areas of life involving time-limited resources; for example, personal energy, money, and assets. As the Apostle Paul challenges us, “Those who use the things of the world should not become attached to them. For this world as we know it will soon pass away” (1 Cor 7:31 NLT). So when we consider that much

of what we now have in our hands will one day pass away, the question is how we can convert these things into other measures that will *not* pass away. The application to the spiritual realm is direct: how can we take the things of this world and convert them into that which will endure into eternity. Investing in our Lord’s work by enabling persons to develop a more intimate personal relationship with Jesus is being resourceful with earthly possessions. Supporting the ministries of FAS is a significant means of being resourceful with that which is in your hands.

Details for various methods of giving to the ministries of the Francis Asbury Society are available on our website <http://www.francisasburysociety.com/support>. ✚

Salvation as Journey continued from page 1

River, and Canaan. We are excited to explore with our readers the wonders and dangers of the spiritual terrain as the Spirit of Holiness leads us out of bondage into freedom, out of barrenness into fruitfulness, out of fatigue into rest, and out of spiritual mediocrity into abundant living.

This first issue serves to launch our new emphasis by providing a big picture view of the entire geography of salvation. The various articles will introduce you to a fresh and creative way to think about the salvation Jesus made possible through his shed blood and poured out Spirit. Will you join us on the journey? We pray that for many of our readers, this endeavor will be a genuine game changer! ✨

The Road Before Us continued from page 8

*be sure who belongs to which side because appearances are endlessly deceptive. Yet for all its confusion and wildness, it is a world where the battle goes ultimately to the good, who live happily ever after, and where in the long run everybody, good and evil alike, becomes known by his true name. . . . That is the fairy tale of the Gospel with, of course, one crucial difference from all other fairy tales, which is that the claim made for it is that it is true, that it not only happened once upon a time but has kept on happening ever since and is happening still. (Frederick Buechner, Telling the Truth).*

This is the gospel.

This the Story we are living in.

May you play your part well. ✨

To Be a Pilgrim continued from page 9

beatific vision. Perhaps more familiar is the famous *Pilgrim's Progress* of John Bunyan (1628–1688). Its dominant theme is the journey of Christian from the “City of Destruction” to “the Heavenly City.” The leading theme is the difficulties, temptations, and the encouragements which are to be had on the journey to the new Jerusalem, intended to encourage and admonish its readers.

So, what insights does this image of a journey offer those wishing to develop their spirituality? The image is rich, and a number of different insights can be identified.

1. Before setting out on a journey, it is usually thought to be wise to get hold of a map, which will indicate how to get to the desired destination. In the case of spirituality, the “map” in question is the shared experience of the many Christians who have undertaken this journey before us, and passed down to us their wisdom, knowledge, and encouragement.
2. One of the best ways of gaining encouragement on a long journey is to anticipate one’s arrival. This means picturing one’s final destination, anticipating the joy of arrival, and picturing those who will be present.
3. For most Christian writers, the journey of faith is not to be seen as an individual pilgrimage, but as a corporate achievement, in which those who are weak help the strong. The Christian journey is, and is meant to be, a corporate and supportive matter. This points to the importance of fellowship and mutual support in the Christian life. ✨

The Journey According to George Barna continued from page 4

People at Stop 6 will typically experience a season of “holy discontent”—most likely instigated by God to jar them into re-evaluating what they want from him and from life. It is at this point in their pilgrimage that they must make some momentous choices. Most believers who get to Stop 6 abandon the investigation once they realize the commitment and cost of moving forward on the journey to wholeness. Instead, they retreat to an earlier stop on the path and simply settle for what the local church and other spiritual entities have to offer. A small proportion, however, decides to press forward believing that God has something more in store for them. Current population: 6 percent of adults.

**STOP 7: *Experiencing personal brokenness.*** As believers dive into this new commitment, God meets them head-on with the realization that they are still too self-reliant and have never fully come to grips with the implications of their sin. Confession is one thing; feeling and dealing with the weight of what the confessed sins have done to their relationship with a holy and loving God is another. So God takes them through a time of in-your-face confrontation. This phase is largely about realigning our spirit with God’s. Current population size: 3 percent of adults.

**STOP 8: *Choosing to surrender and submit fully to God—radical dependence.*** God never wants us to remain shattered. His ultimate desire is for us to become one with him and mature into the human beings he envisioned. But getting there is a difficult journey. It is at this juncture that we understand what total surrender, complete submission, and utter dependence upon God really mean. These are no longer concepts preached about or written about in a vague, arms-length manner; they now become the core of our existence. Current population size: 1 percent of adults.

**STOP 9: *Enjoying a profound intimacy with and love for God.*** At some point, God blesses us with the ability to know and love him so profoundly that it is difficult to put into words. Reaching this point transforms everything. The believer experiences levels of joy, peace, and wisdom previously unknown. Current population size: 0.5 percent of adults.

**STOP 10: *Experiencing a profound compassion and love for humanity.*** With their profound love of God in place, believers become able to see people the way God does and to love them as he loves them. The transformed believer engages with the world from a very different perspective and shares the joys and heartaches felt by God. Being the blessing to others that God made them to be consumes their hours. Current population size: 0.5 percent of adults.

The most dramatic conclusion to draw from this information is that most of the people who ever pray to God to receive his forgiveness for their sins and to invite Jesus Christ to save them will probably never experience brokenness over those sins. Sadly, without that personal devastation they cannot advance to the more significant places on the trail—or have the most fulfilling life possible.

If you want to become the holy person whom God created you to be, prepare to pay the price. Jesus paid the most costly part. You must pay the most prolonged part. If ever there was a deal based on the “no pain, no gain” reality, this is it. That’s a major reason why you will discover that the farther you go down the path of wholeness, the less company you’ll have by your side. ✨

place of pain, oppression, fear, powerlessness and a search for identity. In a word, the people became homesick. No one begins the journey to spiritual wholeness until the pain of staying where they are becomes greater than the pain of moving to where God wants them to be.

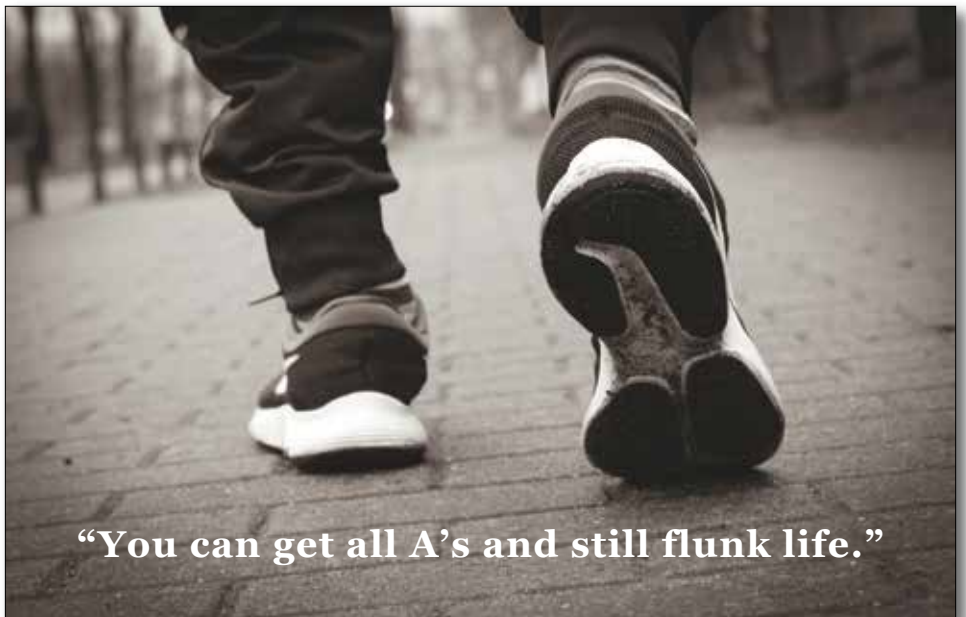
2. *The Red Sea.* It takes more than good intentions to get out of bondage in Egyptian. The Passover lamb must be killed so that the people can take their first steps toward freedom. At the Red Sea the people experience their first crisis moment of faith. With the Egyptian army on their heels and the waters of the Red Sea blocking their advance, they need a miracle of divine grace to move forward. God comes through and makes a way where there is no way. Jesus Christ came into our world, taking on human flesh, bearing our sin as the Lamb of God. The water of baptism is a witness of God's redeeming grace – a new beginning.
3. *The Desert (Parts One and Two).*
  - a. *The Desert (Part One: University).* Though there is a shorter, quicker, and easier route to Canaan, God leads his people by a path that takes them into one of the most desolate places on Planet Earth: the Sinai Peninsula. Why? Because his people need an education. Over a two-year period at the "University of the Desert," the Hebrews learn how to trust God for provision, protection, and guidance. Entering a marriage covenant with God at Mount Sinai, they learn how to love and obey the One who has redeemed them.
  - b. *The Desert (Part Two: Doing Laps).* Tragically, upon reaching the southern border of Canaan at a place called Kadesh-barnea, the people harden their hearts and rebel in unbelief. Rather than pressing forward to possess their inheritance, they decide to return to Egypt. In anger, God condemns the entire generation to 38 additional years of aimless wandering. The desert is an inevitable part of the journey of salvation but the choice is ours whether it will be a rich place of spiritual growth and development or a frustrating place of doing laps in the wilderness.
4. *The Jordan River.* A second crisis experience occurs at the Jordan River. Getting out of the desert of spiritual mediocrity requires a decisive step of faith. Believing God will cleanse their hearts and empower them for the battles ahead, the people move into a whole new dimension of Christian experience when they cross the Jordan River.
5. *Canaan.* Far from being a metaphor of heaven, Canaan is a picture of the normal Christian life, characterized by fruitfulness, victory, purity, and rest. It is a place of growth and development, service and mission. There are battles to fight, crops to plant, cities to build, and a world to win. Far from being the end of the journey, Canaan is only the beginning.

So, dear friend, where are you on the journey of salvation? Can you determine your current location on the map? Are you ready to take the next step to spiritual wholeness? "And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it.'" (Isa. 30:21) ✨

the United States without seeing the importance of faith is like describing Switzerland without mentioning the Alps. Yet many American leaders have the equivalent of an Alpless map of Switzerland when it comes to understanding their own country.

Consider the fact that many of the greatest thinkers, writers, artists, musicians, scientists, and reformers in the history of the West and the United States have been people of deep faith—Augustine, Gutenberg, Pascal, Rembrandt, Isaac Newton, Johann Sebastian Bach, Jonathan Edwards, William Wilberforce, and Fyodor Dostoyevsky, to name a few. Yet somehow faith today is considered to be appropriate only for the uneducated and uncultured. In sum, we are at an odd moment in the life of our civilization, a time when someone examining faith must choose Robert Frost's road "less traveled by."

We are all distinct individuals who are at different stages on the journey of life. For some the road is simple; for others it is tortuous. For some the outer journey is hard enough; for others the inner journey may prove even more strenuous and long. But for all of us the invitation stands: to set out on the most important journey of our lives, bringing us to that place of faith in God that is the first step toward home.



Significantly, the very earliest name for followers of Christ was "the Way." Jesus announced simply that he was "the way and the truth and the life." A narrow way rather than a broad way, he added, so the road "less traveled by" is nothing new.

As novelist Walker Percy put it: "You can get all A's and still flunk life." Or as G. K. Chesterton put it a little earlier:

*Man has always lost his way. He has been a tramp ever since Eden; but he always knew, or thought he knew, what he was looking for . . . [But now,] for the first time in history, he begins to doubt the object of his wanderings on earth. He has always lost way; but now he has lost his address.*

Or again, as Augustine wrote much earlier still in what might be the epigraph for all that is said in this book: "For You have formed us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You." ✨



# *The* High Calling

PRSR STD  
AUTO  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
SHOALS, IN  
PERMIT NO 18

*The* Francis Asbury Society

PO Box 7  
Wilmore, KY 40390

Sign up to receive our companion e-newsletter, *Ministry Matters*, at [www.francisasburysociety.com](http://www.francisasburysociety.com)

We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.

—T. S. Eliot (from *Little Gidding*)

***The High Calling—January–February 2020***

*The High Calling* is a bimonthly publication of The Francis Asbury Society to serve as a link between FAS and its constituents, building loyalty and awareness so that the teaching and experience of Christian holiness may continue to be lived and proclaimed throughout the world.

**The Francis Asbury Society**

PO Box 7 | Wilmore, KY 40390 | 859-858-4222

FAS@francisasburysociety.com

[www.francisasburysociety.com](http://www.francisasburysociety.com)

Managing Editor: Stan Key

Editing/Design/Layout: Jennie Lovell

