The Principle of The Path

The Path/Part 1

The Purpose of This Series: This series is not a “self-help” series, trying to provide a formula that will magically make everything bad go away. It is to assist and challenge us to take the appropriate steps to exchange a life that is externally driven and manipulated with a life that is internally driven, one that can lead to the destiny that God has for each of us. It is not without bumps and bruises, but it can be without regret! The Principle of The Path will lead us to the destinations we desire and help us identify the paths we should avoid.

The Purpose of This Message: Today we will set the foundation for understanding the Path, by learning and driving home the principle of the path, DIRECTION- NOT INTENTION- DETERMINES OUR DESTINATION. It is imperative that we understand that it is not taking one big direction, but making several small consistent decisions that create paths of destiny. It is not a fix we are in need of, it’s a different path. Our purpose is to grasp this concept so that we might live fully in Christ and in this life!

Intro: While traveling in Mexico late, past midnight, we were about four hours from the border headed back to the States. What was keeping me alert from the exhausting week of physically building on a church that we had been planted in San Luis Potosi, was that the terrane was undefinable in the late night. Their laws do not require the necessary equipment that would help drivers determine what dangers may lay ahead. On this particular night I was driving and saw what was the typical road warning provided here and there as you traveled, they were football size or smaller rocks painted white to indicate that there was in an attempt to steer you away from potential danger. It could be warning that a road was washed out, road construction ahead or huge holes in the roads that can sometimes be developed over time. It was not clear as to which side of the road I should take, both sides looked right. I was tired and the speed I was going didn’t give me much time to decide- so I took the widest side of the rocks, to the right we went and in a moments time we hit gravel and then launched off a two foot drop off a dead end road. I still don’t know how I maintained control or how we got back on the road- it was going to be a road...eventually, but it was a destiny of death- there was no road beyond it, when we stopped and looked around, there was no road construction beyond the drop off, only wasteland, as if nothing had ever been there.

No matter who you are, regardless of race, creed, color, or sex, you would have all been in danger on that road, not matter who you are, if you were headed in the direction I was, you would have ended up in the same danger, because that is where the road led, and that is the road I chose!

It didn't end that way for one kind of person and have a nice road for another, everybody got the same treatment, a fast, unexpected and dangerous ending. It's obvious but worth stating, every road leads where it leads, every highway, freeway, driveway or path, it leads where it leads regardless of who is on it.

Here is a fact, every time you look at a map or GPS, the roads always leads to the same places, every time, and this principle applies to other arenas of our lives, what's true geographically is equally true relationally, financially, physically, and academically. It affects parenting, dating, marriage, our emotions, our health, and all kinds of other areas of our life. Just as there are physical paths that lead to predictable physical locations, there are
other kinds of paths that are equally predictable.

So what if I'm right? If there are physical paths that lead to predictable locations, can there be other kinds of paths that are equally predictable? Let me ask you some questions:

- What if there is a **dietary** path that leads to a predictable physical destination?
- What if there is a **financial** path that leads to a predictable financial destination?
- What if there is a **relational** path that leads to a predictable relational destination?
- What if there is an **emotional** path that leads to a predictable emotional destination?
- What if there is a **spiritual** path that leads to a predictable spiritual destination?

It's obvious to us when we see someone who makes a not so good, preset decision, that they are going to land in a not-so-good predictable destination, a wilderness called predicament!

- What if there is a universal law, a single principle that governs what happens not only on the highway, but in every area of life? **The Principle of The Path!**

**Archimedes' Principle**

It may not ring a bell, but every time you get into a pool, a boat or a cruise ship, you are being impacted by his principle, the **principle of buoyancy**. See, even thought you don't really know or understand the principle, it is still active and has great impact on our lives. **You don't have to know it to be impacted by it.** This principle explains why a drowning man sinks and a flotation device floats. When this principle is ignored, things sink. According to Archimedes principle,

> "A body immersed in liquid receives an upward thrust from the bottom toward the top, equal to the weight of the displaced liquid."

So, under this principle, five little pebbles sink quickly and a fifty-one-ton battleship floats. When the principle is ignored, things don't turn out too well, actually, they can be disastrous! The truth about Archimedes is that he did not **INVENT** this principle, he **DISCOVERED** it! He provided the explanation for something that had been happening since the beginning of time.

**Now, KNOWING ABOUT THIS PRINCIPLE WON'T KEEP YOU FROM SINKING, BUT LEARNING HOW TO LEVERAGE IT WILL. THAT'S THE NATURE OF A PRINCIPLE.**

The principle of the path was not someone's invention, it's a discovery and it explains why people's dreams don't come true. **It explains why intelligent people with admirable goals and ambitions end up far away from where they intended to be RELATIONALLY, FINANCIALLY, EDUCationally, EMOTIONALLY, EVEN SPIRITUALLY. IT EXPLAINS WHY PEOPLE WHO SEEMINGLY HAVE EVERYTHING END UP WITH NOTHING!**

But, this same principle explains why other individuals are able to attain the life and lifestyle they have always dreamed of. Why rocks sink and boats float! Why some do well in life and others don't.

**Farmers**

It's not unusual around here to find people who understand the **PRINCIPLE OF THE HARVEST**. Like Archimedes’ principle, if you know it or don’t, you have still been impacted by it. **The PRINCIPLE OF THE HARVEST** states that we reap what we sow. If we sow certain seeds, we will only reap what seed we sowed, apples for apples, watermelon for watermelon,
this principle of the harvest applies to friendships, finances, and marriage. What you put into something impacts what you can expect to get out of it!

If you neglect your marriage or your health, the outcome is predictable, you experience the principle whether you are aware of it or not. Someone might have tried to bring it to your attention but you refused to accept it as true. Truth is, you are going to reap what you sow. That’s how the principle works, and the principle of the path is no different.

You will never find anyone who will ever be able to dispute Archimedes’ principle or the principle of the harvest, but there are hundreds of people who refuse to accept the principle of the path, and tragically, remaining ignorant of this principle will not save you from it.

O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.
Psalm 139:1-2

You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD.
Psalm 139:3-4

God has a complete view of you. He knows everything about you. He knows you inside and out and He know why you do what you do. The path you take, He could have told you that you were headed that way, and, He could have said if it was a good idea. He has a path for you.

If you could embrace the PRINCIPLE OF THE PATH, and identify the paths that will lead to the destinations you desire and to avoid the paths you desire to avoid...

• If you are married, this principle will help you stay married.
• If you have kids, this principle will help you transfer your values on to them.
• If you have broken relationships, this principle will help you heal them.
• In the realm of finances, this principle will help you live with less pressure and more margin.
• This principle will help you avoid potential regrets...relational, academic, moral, marital.
  • Regrets like bankruptcy, divorce, custody battles, lawsuits, kids gone wild.
  • Regrets make us wish we married differently, dated differently, spent differently, parented differently, lived differently.

But you can't go back and you probably don't have the time to learn from experience because you don't have enough years in your life to do so. This is not a self-help message and I am not offering you a little formula to an easy life. But I want to draw your attention to a dynamic principle that is active in the background of yours and my life, aware of it or not. You and I have the privilege to leverage this important principle in our lives for our own benefit and it will have lasting affect and benefit on those around us that we love and who love us.

Over twenty-eight years ago I drove off a road in Mexico, right into a wilderness. It could have ended my life. I survived it, but it did damage to the vehicle I was driving. You may have been on a journey similar to mine, you survived, but it left a lot of damage. The principle of the path is leveraging the impact I can have every day of my life. I don't have to keep falling off of dead end roads, I can have a map to get to where I need to go.
The Wizard of Oz

I remember, before there were six hundred channels, DVD's, On-Demand movies, three television networks determined what Americans would and would not watch. For some reason, once a year, the networks decided to pull out *The Wizard of Oz*, blow the dust off of it and show it on a Sunday night. The build up was quite eventful.

The plot was simple, Dorothy had a desire to go home, but can't seem to get there. Early in the show she meets Glinda, the good witch of the east, who informs her that her only option is to seek the assistance of the great and powerful Oz. But that would require a trip to the Emerald City. When Dorothy hears of this she asks Glinda, “But how do you start for the Emerald City?”

Glinda smiles, tilts her head and opens her arms up wide, possibly to avoid crushing that obnoxiously large dress she was wearing, and responds, “It's always best to start at the beginning- and all you do is follow the yellow brick road...just follow the yellow brick road.” Dorothy found out that Glinda was completely right, to find the Emerald City, it was a matter of following the yellow brick road. But she encountered a few obstacles along the way, but she never got lost because she kept following that yellow brick road, and eventually she found herself in the wonderful Land of Oz. It wasn't because she was special that she ended up there, it's because that is where the yellow brick road led.

I think it would be much easier if there was a yellow brick road to lead us to wherever it was we wanted to go in our lives. It would be easier if there were a road that led to a marriage that you wanted to come home to early every day, or, a road that lead to better financial security or better health, back to healthy relationships. If that were the case, YOU WOULD STOP LOOKING FOR SOLUTIONS TO FIX ALL YOUR PROBLEMS AND YOU WOULD START LOOKING FOR THE RIGHT PATH THAT WOULD TAKE YOU TO WHERE YOU WANTED TO BE. To understand the PRINCIPLE OF THE PATH YOU HAVE TO...

1. **UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A SOLUTION AND A PATH**
   
   *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.*
   
   Psalm 119:105

   David understood the principle of the path, he didn't look for a fix, he looked for a path.

   Think of how odd it would be for someone who is thousands of miles from where they wanted to be to say, “I need a solution.” Mark Lowry sings a song and the chorus goes, “First Class, Wrong Flight, I should have checked the destination.”

   Do you need a solution or to fix the problem? If you are not where you want to be, you need to change your direction! There is no fix for being lost. If you are going to get to where you want to be from where you are at there are two key requirements:

   1. Time
   2. Change of Direction

   Being lost or far from where you want to be is not a problem you can fix, it is a journey you take, you put one foot in front of the other in the direction, on the path to where you want to go. **Cars have problems that can be fixed, but people have directions that need to be changed!**
When you look back on your relationships, our finances, your spirituality, do you ever see a pattern to your behavior? You followed a specific path financially that has created your current financial reality. There are things that happen out of your control, but truth being, there were many financial decisions that were made that contributed to where you are financially...good or bad. Most people see a financial decision just a decision, not a step in a direction, you are where you are because you have stepped in the direction that got you there, **small decisions create paths of destiny**.

An economic down turn doesn't create problems as it does reveals problems. Hard times reveal where we really are really fast. What is true financially is true academically, spiritually, physically, and relationally.

There are times in our lives where we get mowed over and we sit on the curb of our mind and say, "I should have saw that coming." We are ran over and knew it because you knew where the direction you were going was taking you but you thought you could beat the odds. Hey, you're a nice person, you deserve a break, why not you? And you make a bad choice, and you want to fix it, but it can't be fixed, you have to take the right path.

**The Path of Jesus**

The Via Dolorosa is believed to be the path Jesus took to Calvary, where he was crucified for claiming to be King of the Jews. His path did not lead Him to the cross, His path ultimately led Him to the Right Hand of the Father! Some say there are up 14 marks along the way to the cross, stops that Jesus made on his path of suffering from the judgement seat to the heights of Calvary. One of those stops occurs when Jesus is condemned to death and He carries His cross. Under the burden of that cross, Jesus falls and a man by the name of Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry His cross. This is one of the most profound points on the path that Jesus takes, it is where Simon of Cyrene helped Jesus. He was forced to do this act, but eventually saw it as a privilege. I think we often think that somehow, this unfair call of God, seeking us out to DO HIS WILL is an interference with our life when God sees it all the time as THE LIFE!

**Dot-To-Dot**

I remember as a kid taking a piece of paper, throwing a ton of dots on it, numbering them and then connecting the dots, trying to figure out what animal my drawing looked like. I would hold it up, turn it upside down, in every which way, but it never looked like anything I could describe, even though it was accurately numbered and drawn. The problem was, I had no destination, my dot's were not reflective of anything, it just was.

It's probably easy to think that life only consisted of a zillion different decisions, which I'll call dots. They are all unrelated, one decision disconnected from any other decision. It would be easy to entertain the idea that, "It will all work out." But if we were drawing your path, it would look more like one of my dot-to-dot drawings that looked like a mess.

2. **DIRECTION- NOT INTENTION- DETERMINES OUR DESTINATION**

The direction you are currently taking- relationally, financially, spiritually, physically- will determine where you end up in each of those areas. It doesn't matter what your
dreams and goals, or even what you want in life, the PRINCIPLE OF THE PATH trumps all of those things.

**YOUR CURRENT DIRECTION WILL DETERMINE YOUR DESTINATION.**

Just as there are paths that have led us to where we never intended to go, there are paths that lead us away from those places too! The principle of the path governs all aspects of life; including dating, marriage, child-raising, our careers, finances, health.

Direction, not intentions, hopes, dreams, prayers, beliefs, intellect, or education-determines destination. It's so easy to believe that our good intentions will somehow do an end around the decisions that we make on a daily basis. But at the end of the day, the principle of the path determines the outcome.

Most people don't fall, fall out of love, fail financially, fall out of a promising career, fall away from God, they journey out of it. You start choosing a path that had the wrong direction all over it, but you ignored all the yield and warning signs..."Do Not Enter!" We don't intend to veer off, ignore the facts and avoid the right path, but our head gets turned, something grabs our attention before you know it, we are off track, headed in a different direction:

- Zero Percent Interest, no money down for thirty years!
- She makes me feel so good...
- But he's rich...

Maybe you are already seeing some decisions you've made, a path you chose that led you to places you didn't want to go. Maybe you see some relational patterns, financial patterns, physical patterns that have left you with consequences you never imagined would be part of your life? Maybe there is a life of regret, and if so, you are already seeing the principle of the path. **SEE, YOU DON'T HAVE PROBLEMS YOU NEED TO FIX, YOU HAVE A DIRECTION THAT NEEDS TO CHANGE.**

*For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!*

Romans 5:10

Now is the time to face a new direction. As much as the principle of the path reveals how you ended up where you are, it also offers us hope for our future to end up at a different place. Some of you are so used to making mistakes, that is life for you, it is one problem after another...but the truth is, it's more likely one decisions after another one, one dot and then another dot.