



Mary and Bob often find themselves sharing common ground when it comes to philosophy and ministry. When approaching ministerial concerns from different angles, He Said - She Said is a venue to share differing perspectives.

Re-evaluating the Path

Bob's Perspective:

A number of times over the years, many people have heard me quote the definition of insanity, which is "doing the same thing over and over the same way and expecting a different result." I would venture to say that most of us probably have a touch of insanity within, only because most of us fall into that very pattern every once in a while. By and large, it usually takes some sort of unexpected turn of events or some mild catastrophe to jar us out of that loop.

To avoid such a situation, I would suggest that every so often on a regular basis, it's a good idea to take stock of our personal life situations, evaluate them, and then take aim to either improve, reform, change, or abandon some of those components that are causing us to stray off our path. Moreover, it would be highly advisable to clarify in our minds what indeed is the ultimate goal or destination of our path.

Too many times, because we get comfortable, ambivalent, or just unambitious (a polite way to say "lazy"), we wind up in a cycle of doing the same thing, in the same way, day after day after day.... you get the idea. To make things even worse, in the deep, dark recesses of our mind, we expect that something, somehow, will change, and there you go..."Insanity." Life becomes the proverbial treadmill – plodding along with no end in sight.

So, what about goals? We've talked a number of times about the small step approach – easily attainable steps to reach an ultimate goal. But how often do we look at and evaluate our ultimate goal? Sometimes, we can get so caught up in the small steps, and never think about where those small steps will actually lead. I dare to say that many people have never even articulated an ultimate goal in any kind of detail.

For example, if our goal is to be happy, what does that mean? What, exactly, would bring us true happiness? A flippant response would be something like, a bazillion dollars and a mansion with 500 rooms. But seriously, what would really bring us true happiness – that is, realistically? Maybe it's healing a relationship, or maybe it's learning a new skill, or maybe it's making a career change, or maybe it's (fill in the blank).

Once our goal is established, then we can look at the individual elements of our life. What are the things that we are currently doing that will help us to realize our path? Are there little ways that we can improve on them to be even more effective? What is the baggage we carry that hinders us, or makes us



stray from the path? What other necessary elements are we lacking? Can we name them, or at least describe them? What will bring us to fulfillment, and just as importantly, what detours us from fulfillment?

These are all tough questions that probably can't be answered in a few sentences, or in one session of conversation. But every time we add a new perspective, or another piece to defining the ultimate goal of our path, we move that much closer to the fulfillment of our journey. Don't forget the famous quote by the ancient Chinese philosopher Lao Tsu, "the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."

Godspeed!

Mary's Perspective:

When I was younger, I had a bucket list. Somewhere along the way, I decided that bucket lists, along with New Year's resolutions, were avenues for disappointment and frustration, and I determined to let go of them. Same for expectations. I rationalized these decisions by saying that, if I approach life with my cup already full, I don't leave much room for growth, or for the Spirit to intervene. When Bob and I first started *Sustaining the Journey*, I was the one that wanted the map in all its detail. Tell me not only the next best step, but the next dozen best steps, exactly where this is headed, and what the end looks like. At that point, Bob was more of a "I don't need to know all that, just let me know if I'm on the right path" kind of guy.

I almost feel like life has made a big fat circle here. Now Bob is the one who wants to be mindful of the end goal and figure out the next best steps. I'm still a little on the fence. On the one hand, I have a number of friends who have retired – and then unretired – because they realized perhaps they didn't have a clear plan for fulfillment. Recognizing a need for balance, they have needed to stoke some of the parts of life that had been neglected or overshadowed for whatever reason. Some have been intentional about developing hobbies and nurturing the friendships that didn't get as much attention when they were immersed in the work world.

I guess part of the issue here is that my goals used to be very tangible things. Write a book, learn a language, drop some weight, visit exotic locales, accomplish some specific milestones or whatever. As my circle of friends has aged (interesting, it feels like everyone else is marking birthdays, yet I still feel pretty young, at least in my head! But I digress...) they seem to fall into two camps. Some are celebrating retirement as the time they can



really focus on those goals, such as visiting the states they haven't yet traversed, or improving their golf game, or learning pickleball. Others are taking the time of retirement to just be joyful, peaceful, family folks, with less tangible goals in mind. Time spent hanging out with the grandkids makes for a good day.

Driven by nature, my sense of achievement has naturally been fed by crossing items off a list or accomplishing the specific. The question becomes, when you get to the point where you have either accomplished all the "stuff" or revised the desire and plan, now what? To echo Bob's words, what will bring – or distract us from – fulfillment?

I don't want to be disappointed. I don't want to feel like I was given all these skills and opportunities, and I blew it. I don't want to fail, in whatever area I'm considering. I do want people to feel like they always leave an encounter with me feeling uplifted and joyful. I do want those in my circle of influence to be in a better place because of whatever impact I've had. I do want the Lord, when I am called home, to say, "well done, good and faithful servant."

So how do I get there?

A final note from Mary:

About a week ago, Bob and I were discussing the contents of this blog, and he said something really insightful. I mentioned at that point that he should remove "Godspeed" at the end of his perspective and replace it with that insight. Typically, when we have these thoughts, we text them to each other (more accurately, I text it to him as a "note to self"), but that particular day, I was driving. You guessed it – neither of us remember the insight! I suppose here is where I admit that aging might be catching up to both of us just a bit...

Anyway, Bob ends many of his blogs, all of his emails, and nearly all of his texts with "Godspeed." I'm consciously refraining from commenting on the social norms of texts not including a formal salutation and closing. But I was curious enough to look up the meaning of the phrase. Depending on which source you check, Godspeed means to wish someone success upon parting, or to offer well wishes at the start of a journey. Given the nature this particular blog, maybe that is insightful!