

Stolen Guitar Returned to Rightful Owner, Beatle Paul McCartney, Half a Century Later

The Wired Word for the Week of March 3, 2024

In the News

An iconic violin-shaped 1961 electric bass that was missing for more than half a century has been returned to its owner, Paul McCartney, a member of The Beatles, after journalists Scott and Naomi Jones joined with the Höfner company that built the instrument in its efforts to recover it.

According to Nick Wass, a semi-retired consultant for Höfner, McCartney requested his help in the search about five years ago.

"Seeing what the lost bass means to Paul, I was determined to solve the mystery," Wass said. But Scott Jones expressed dim hopes for the search.

"We never assumed that we'd find it," he said. "If we had to be honest, the chances were probably very, very slim."

In September 2023, The Lost Bass Project search team received 600 tips within 48 hours after appealing to the public for information.

One of those responding to the appeal was sound engineer Ian Horne, who had worked with McCartney's band Wings. Horne said the bass had been stolen from his van in the Notting Hill neighborhood of London on October 10, 1972. Apparently, McCartney didn't blame him for the theft, since he employed him for six more years after that.

"But I've carried the guilt all my life," Horne said.

When the researchers relayed this information to the public, someone contacted them, claiming that their father had stolen the bass, without realizing it belonged to McCartney. When he discovered the truth, he panicked.

McCartney bought the bass at the Steinway Musikhaus shop in Hamburg, Germany, for about \$37 in 1961.

"Because I was left-handed, it looked less daft because it was symmetrical," McCartney explained once in an interview. "And once I bought it, I fell in love with it," McCartney said. "For a light, dinky little bass, it has a very rich sound."

Today the bass is estimated to have a value of \$12.6 million. The instrument held almost no value during the past half century.

"The thief couldn't sell it," Scott Jones said. "It's a red alert because the minute you come forward someone's going to go, 'That's Paul McCartney's guitar.'"

The unnamed thief did finally sell it, for a few beers and a bit of cash, to Ronald Guest, the proprietor of a Notting Hill pub. His daughter-in-law Cathy heard about the search and contacted McCartney's studio to say that an old bass that had been in her attic in East Sussex, England, for years might be the one they were looking for. The guitar had been passed on from one family member to another until Cathy's son Ruaidhri inherited it in 2020.

"We thought this bass would have gone off on a more glitzy journey," said Jones, musing that "in all of those years, it's hardly traveled any distance at all."

Last December, the instrument, once labeled "the most important bass in history" for its role in helping to launch Beatlemania, was returned to McCartney, who was reportedly "excited as a school boy" to have it back.

Höfner took about two months to officially authenticate the instrument, but their representative, Nick Wass, said "It didn't take me more than 10 seconds to know it was the right one. There it was in my hands," he gushed. The experience, he said, felt "thrilling."

The left-handed guitar was in need of some repair, but Höfner was confident the company was up to the task.

On February 14, [this statement](#) appeared on the official Paul McCartney website: "The guitar has been authenticated by Höfner and Paul is incredibly grateful to all those involved."

It seems appropriate that McCartney's statement appeared on Valentine's Day, in celebration of the return of the instrument that had been featured on such hits as "Love Me Do" and "She Loves You."

More on this story can be found at these links:

[How Paul McCartney's Lost Bass Guitar Was Found Five Decades Later. The New York Times](#)
[The History of Paul McCartney and the Höfner 500/1 Bass Guitar. Bass Player](#)
[Paul McCartney's Long-Lost Bass, Missing for Over 50 Years, Has Been Found. RollingStone](#)
[Paul McCartney Reunited With His Stolen Bass Guitar 50 Years Later. Billboard](#)
[Lost, Mislaid, and Abandoned Property. Wikipedia](#)

Applying the News Story

In the late 1970s, some Christians took to wearing blue buttons with the words, ["I Found It!"](#) stamped in white letters. The buttons were intended to prompt people to ask the wearers what they had found, whereupon the Christians would begin to share how they found new life and purpose through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Some people mocked the evangelistic campaign with responses such as "I lost it" or "I wasn't looking for it." Others objected to the use of the word "It" since they said that the Bible invites us to an encounter with a person, Jesus, not a thing. Still others suggested that we should be talking about how God is the one who searches for and finds lost people, even when they are not looking for God.

While we might legitimately address evangelistic methodology in this lesson, we'll focus more on practical questions regarding what to do if we become aware that we have come into possession of goods that belong to someone else. We begin with the psalmist's question, "What I did not steal, must I now restore?" (Psalm 69:4)

The Big Questions

1. Have you ever come into possession of stolen property? How did that happen, and what, if anything, did you do about it?
2. Have you ever been a victim of theft? Were you ever able to recover your stolen goods? What was involved in your search effort?
3. What should a person do upon finding a wallet someone dropped on the street? Would it make any difference if the wallet contained a small or large amount of cash? Why or why not?
4. What do you think of the aphorism, "Finders, keepers; losers, weepers"? What about the saying that "Possession is nine-tenths of the law"? How do these adages square with your understanding of what the Bible teaches about items that may be lost or found?
5. How would you apply "The Golden Rule" ("Do to others as you would have them do to you" Luke 6:31) to a situation in which one person finds something valuable that another person lost or mislaid?

Confronting the News With Scripture and Hope

Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

Exodus 22:7-9

When someone delivers to a neighbor money or goods for safekeeping and they are stolen from the neighbor's house, then the thief, if caught, shall pay double. If the thief is not caught, the owner of the house shall be brought before God, to determine whether or not the owner had laid hands on the neighbor's goods. In any case of disputed ownership involving ox, donkey, sheep, clothing, or any other loss, of which one party says, "This is mine," the case of both parties shall come before God; the one whom God condemns shall pay double to the other. (For context, read [Exodus 22:1-15](#).)

In the news above, the name of the person who stole Paul McCartney's bass is not divulged. Other people who were impacted by the theft included sound engineer Ian Horne, into whose hands McCartney had entrusted his instrument for safekeeping, and Ronald Guest, the pub owner who purchased the bass from the thief, and several members of his family.

Questions: How do you suppose the thief's crime hurt McCartney, Horne and others? How might a sin we commit ensnare and harm innocent people who had nothing to do with our action? When have the sins of others harmed you, even though you were not involved in their sin?

Leviticus 6:1-5

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "When any of you sin and commit a trespass against the LORD by deceiving a neighbor in a matter of a deposit or a pledge or by robbery or if you have defrauded a neighbor or have found something lost and lied about it -- if you swear falsely regarding any of the various things that one may do and sin -- when you have sinned and recognize your guilt and would restore what you took by robbery or by fraud or the deposit that was committed to you or the lost thing that you found or anything else about which you have sworn falsely, you shall repay the principal amount and add one-fifth to it. You shall pay it to its owner when you recognize your guilt." (For context, read [Leviticus 6:1-7](#).)

God instructed Moses about how to deal with matters of deceit, robbery or fraud. Whether a sin was committed intentionally, inadvertently or unintentionally, when people recognized their guilt they had the responsibility to restore the lost thing to the neighbor who was harmed, "and add one-fifth to it." Beyond that, they were to bring an animal as a guilt offering to the Lord, because the offense was not only against a human being, but also against the Lord (vv. 6-7). Then, having made restitution, the offenders were promised forgiveness.

Questions: How might people justify not telling the truth about something they found and kept, even though it didn't belong to them? What makes theft or fraud a sin against God as well as a sin against a human being?

Deuteronomy 22:1-3

You shall not watch your neighbor's ox or sheep straying away and ignore them; you shall take them back to their owner. If the owner does not reside near you or you do not know who the owner is, you shall bring it to your own house, and it shall remain with you until the owner claims it; then you shall return it. You shall do the same with a neighbor's donkey; you shall do the same with a neighbor's garment; and you shall do the same with anything else that your neighbor loses and you find. You may not withhold your help. (No context needed.)

Here is further guidance about practical situations involving property belonging to a neighbor that happens to fall into your hands. The laws regarding the loss of animals differed somewhat from laws concerning the loss of other items, such as a garment, but the principles are the same: You have an obligation to help when you see your neighbor stands to lose an animal or other property. If you are able to do so, you are to take the lost animal or property back to the owner.

There are certain limits to your responsibilities, however. If the owner lives far from you, or you don't know who the owner is, you are to keep the lost animal or item at your own house until the owner comes to claim it, and then you are to return it. In that case, you still don't treat the item as if it belongs to you, but you become a caretaker of the item, so that you can return it to the owner in the same condition in which you found it.

Obviously, if finders end up caring for an animal that strayed away from home, they might have some expense of time and money, until the owner comes to claim it. Moses doesn't specify how long finders are required to keep the animal, when, if ever, finders could consider a lost animal or item their own property, or whether the owner should offer to reimburse finders for their time and trouble. Whatever the owner does or doesn't do, whoever found the lost item is still instructed to render whatever help they can to restore it.

Questions: Why do you think Moses didn't give more details on how to help a neighbor recover lost property, if help is needed on a longer-term basis? What aspects of the guidelines he provides should be applied universally, to any situation involving lost property? What aspects might be flexible, or not applicable, for us today?

Matthew 13:44

[Jesus said,] "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and reburied; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field." (For context, read [Matthew 13:44-46](#).)

If the thief who stole McCartney's bass had offered to buy the instrument, the news story might have been totally different. Of course, the musician would have been within his rights to refuse to sell, but the person who took the bass wouldn't have been forced to live in the shadows because of his crime.

This parable offers insight on how people can enjoy the treasure of participation in God's kingdom legitimately: not by stealing what is precious, but by giving everything they have to gain spiritual treasure.

Questions: What makes the kingdom of heaven like a treasure? In what sense is it hidden?

Under what circumstances might people find a treasure hidden in a field? What might they have been doing when they found the treasure?

Why doesn't the man in the parable just take the treasure away when he first discovers it?

For Further Discussion

1. Reflect on this bit of poetry from *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* by novelist J.K. Rowling:

Enter, stranger, but take heed
Of what awaits the sin of greed,
For those who take, but do not earn,
Must pay most dearly in their turn,
So if you seek beneath our floors
A treasure that was never yours,
Thief, you have been warned, beware
Of finding more than treasure there.

When thieves seek treasure that was never theirs, what "more than treasure" might they find? And what might they end up paying most dearly in their turn for what they did not earn?

2. A character in *A Darker Shade of Magic* by American writer V.E. Schwab opines: "Crime isn't that complicated. People steal because taking something gives them something. If they're not in it for the money, they're in it for control. The act of taking, of breaking the rules, makes them feel powerful. They're in it for the sheer defiance. Some people steal to stay alive, and some steal to feel alive. Simple as that."

Is it that simple? Why else might people steal?

3. Mina Dickhurtz, a landlord and investor, wrote: "The punk next door stole my weed Wacker. Scratched off the serial number, and painted the metal parts Red. Then started whacking with it. He got a phone call and set it on the ground. I looked at it, the serial number was sanded off. However, He failed to remove My Name and address that was etched in the metal. I called the police, gave them the information. They brought him and my weed Wacker to me, he apologized, and he will never do anything that stupid again, and offered to weed wack and mow my areas for the rest of the summer. FREE!"

What do you think about the way Dickhurtz handled the situation?

4. Here's an explanation of how the law regarding possession of lost property works in one state: [I Didn't Steal the Property, But I Failed to Return It: When Possessing Lost Property Is a Crime in New York](#). The law may vary in other jurisdictions.

Brenda Walker, an attorney, wrote that if you find someone's property, "you are legally required to at least attempt to find the owner; otherwise you are guilty of larceny. 'Finders keepers' is NOT an actual legal doctrine. If you find something and keep it, legally it is theft."

If you were writing a law about what people should do if they find property that doesn't belong to them, how would it read?

Responding to the News

Here's a song you might want to teach the children in your life:

[Ask and It Shall Be Given You, Seek and Ye Shall Find \(Lyrics\) \(Video 2:50\). Lost and Found Hymns](#)

Here's a different children's song based on the same scripture you might like:

[Seek and Ye Shall Find \(Video 3:14\). Music Fun with Suzie Sunshine](#)

Or try this version:

[Seek and You Shall Find \(Live at Cazenovia College 1964\) \(Video 2:51\). Jim Croce](#)

Prayer suggested by [Luke 19:10](#); [Jeremiah 29:13](#); [Matthew 7:7-8, 13-14](#); [Mark 1:35-37](#); [Matthew 6:33](#); [John 7:32-36](#); [Acts 17:26-28](#); [Luke 6:31](#)

O Great Shepherd, who sent your Son to seek us when we were lost, teach us to search first for you and for your kingdom with all our hearts, so that we may find you. For you are not far from us, and in you we live and move and have our being. May your Spirit guide us to know how to treat others who have been harmed, so that our actions would bring healing and justice to them, when it is in our power to do so. For the sake of Christ our Savior. Amen.

Other News This Week

You Can Improve the 'GPS' in Your Head

The Wired Word for the Week of March 3, 2024

In the News

Did you know that you have spatial memory and that you use it every day? And do you know it's possible to have spatial anxiety?

Spatial memory, also sometimes called "cognitive maps," are essentially mental models of space -- not outer space but the physical areas you move through in life. One explanation says that spatial memory is what enables you to roam freely about your home, remember the route to your workplace, and locate things soon after putting them down.

Being able to find your way to the place of your employment may not sound like that big a deal, but some people seem able -- without consciously thinking about it -- to form cognitive maps even for places they've visited only once, and if they ever go back there, they can navigate easily and have an inner sense of where things are in relation to other things, as in "McDonalds is here, so the library is to the left, and the street beside that should take me back to the main highway."

While not tied to any specific news this week, these terms came up in a February article from *BBC* titled "How to Improve Your Sense of Direction." The article acknowledges that some people are far better at finding their way than are others, but it maintains that the seeming inability of some people to mentally navigate away from familiar places unaided by a GPS device, a map or a guide can be improved with practice.

There is even a sport called "orienteering" where the activity is wayfinding in varied environments, sometimes using a compass, but in some cases not even that. Successful orienteers report having better-than-average spatial memory, but that is often because they have had a lot of navigation practice and have thus developed their cognitive mapping skills, researchers in that field say. In fact, the latest findings from neuroscience and psychology suggest that there are several ways for people not skilled in navigation to improve their spatial abilities.

In an article on the same subject in *The Cut*, Roni Jacobson tells about neuroscientist Sue Barry who for a time, wore a hat with a magnet in it every time she went out. No, she wasn't trying to attract stray bits of metal or deflect impulses from UFOs. Rather, she was hoping it would help her improve her sense of direction, which had always been poor. Barry's husband, who is also a scientist, rigged up the magnetic hat and set it so that it buzzed every time she turned north. After

wearing the hat around town, she began to anticipate not just which way north was, but also "how things connect," she says.

Eventually, she swapped her buzzing magnetic hat for an app on her smartphone, also developed by her husband, that vibrates when facing north. But with either device, it was worth the effort, Barry says. She began associating certain streets and landmarks with north -- due to the cues from the hat and the phone -- and from there she could make connections about which streets were parallel and which ones intersected. Her direction-finding skills improved, and in effect, she disproved the common notion that if one's sense of direction isn't well developed, there's nothing one can do about it.

One misconception about wayfinding is that women are innately worse at it than men, but researchers now say that in many societies, girls and women have limited opportunities to develop their navigational skills. A 2019 study in the Republic of Congo of the Mbendjele BaYaka people who hunt and gather food in the rainforest without the aid of maps or compasses found that both women and men of that group were equally skilled at finding their way around places with no obvious trails.

In his book *Inner Navigation*, Erik Jonsson, a Swedish-born engineer who has spent a lifetime exploring navigation over every terrain, from the crowded cities of Europe to the emptiness of the desert, offers an opinion as to why not everyone has good inner navigation skills. In describing how cognitive maps form, Jonsson said, "Our natural curiosity, the interest with which we look at new things, especially those that stand out as landmarks, is enough to create the cognitive map without any conscious effort." (See more from Jonsson in the "For Further Discussion" section below, item #1.)

Thus, the level of our curiosity about some features of the natural landscape may be a factor in determining how good our cognitive maps are.

TWW team member Stan Purdum says that his directional sense seems more developed than his wife's, and he explains that because she is able to read while in a moving vehicle, when they are on long journeys, and he is at the wheel, she often reads books or magazines. But periodically on the trip, she may look up from what she's been engrossed in and say, "Where are we?" Stan says he's always able to answer accurately because he's doing the route plotting and watching the road signs, but, he adds, "if we're on a route we've traveled before, I also know the answer because I'm always noticing -- and apparently remembering -- various unique buildings, geographic features, highway intersections, roadside vistas and other landmarks that help orient me."

Stan adds, "My wife can find her way when she needs to, but it doesn't come naturally to her, and she prefers to let me do it when we're together. I suspect that's because she doesn't have the interest in visual landmarks that I do." (See more from Stan in the "For Further Discussion" section below, item #2.)

Researchers believe the cognitive maps reside in the hippocampus, a region of the brain involved in memory. One well-known example is of London cab drivers, who take years to acquire a

mental map of the city -- something they refer to as "The Knowledge." The cabbies' brains show growth in the hippocampus.

And that brain growth is evidence of the brain's plasticity, which means that it's possible for most people to learn wayfinding skills. Some technical advances, however, may work against that. Nora Newcombe, a psychology professor at Temple University in Philadelphia, is bothered by people who consider navigational skills irrelevant when we have GPS. One TWW team member tells of moving to a new state, and wanting to get an overview of the area, sought to purchase a map. In one store where he inquired about a map, the owner told him they had stopped carrying maps because there wasn't enough demand for them. "Besides," the owner said, "with GPS, who needs a map?"

We can improve our navigational skills, Newcombe says, and train ourselves to notice environmental cues, like wind, sun and slopes. But she also says that getting better at wayfinding requires changing our relationship with risk. "A lot of people aren't willing to explore because they're afraid," she says. "Lots of adults have quite a lot of spatial anxiety. Basically, they don't want to waste time, but also they are afraid that something bad will happen."

Newcombe says that anxiety can worsen navigation, as the anxiety takes up the mental space needed for spatial tasks. On the other hand, getting lost occasionally (but not permanently) serves our overall sense of direction, she said.

More on this story can be found at these links:

[How to Improve Your Sense of Direction. BBC](#)
[Teach Yourself to Have a Better Sense of Direction. The Cut](#)
[The GPS in Your Head. Road Bike Rider](#)
[The GPS in Your Head, Part 2. Road Bike Rider](#)

Applying the News Story

The "In the News" story deals with how to improve the "GPS" in our head. For the application, we are thinking about how to improve the "GPS" in your heart and spirit.

The Big Questions

1. How has natural curiosity helped you in your spiritual life?
2. When has getting lost made you a better wayfinder? (Feel free to answer this either in terms of getting physically lost or spiritually lost, or both.)
3. What milestones are significant on your spiritual journey?
4. If you are a good navigator, what do you make of the idea of cognitive maps? If you are not a good navigator, what do you make of the idea of cognitive maps?

5. In navigational terms, how does Jesus function? (Hint: See [John 14:6](#).)

Confronting the News With Scripture and Hope

Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

Psalm 25:4

*Make me to know your ways, O LORD;
teach me your paths.*

(For context, read [Psalm 25:1-22](#).)

To use a modern metaphor, the psalmist is praying for a spiritual GPS.

"God's paths" connotes movement and direction, the response to God's word, as well as a way of living that pleases God. In the Psalms, "path" often refers to the kind of conduct prescribed by the scripture, especially in the laws of Moses. The Mosaic laws and the books containing them, the first five books of the Bible, were called the Torah. The basic meaning of Torah, however, is not "rules," but "instruction." Thus by praying, "Make known to me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth . . .," the psalmist is asking for instruction in traveling God's way.

Psalm 25 tells us some specific things about the path to God:

- First, it tells us that the godly path is not necessarily a way that we know intuitively. When the psalmist prays, "Make me to know your ways ... teach me your paths," there seems to be an acknowledgment that the path of the Lord is not necessarily obvious, but rather a direction that needs to be studied out, discerned and discovered. Sometimes, we even learn about God's path when we have walked too far on another trail and discovered that it leads to trouble. Beating a hasty retreat, we finally call out to God for direction, and we encounter Jesus.
- Second, the psalmist acknowledges that the Lord's way is a path sinners are invited to walk: "God ... instructs sinners in the way," the psalmist says in verse 8.
- Third, the psalmist acknowledges in verse 10 that all the ways of God are characterized by steadfast love and faithfulness for those who follow his instruction. One thing the psalmist is sure about: The way of the Lord is a good way.

In Psalm 25, of course, the writer is speaking of the instruction provided by a loving God so that God's human creatures can find the right direction in this confusing world. The psalmist opens by praying, "To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul" (v. 1). Clearly the psalmist knew where the right path started!

Questions: What might lead you to pray the prayer of this psalmist, quoted in verse 4 above? What do you think might be the result of praying this? What might the path of the Lord look like in your life?

Isaiah 30:21

And when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left, your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it." (For context, read [Isaiah 30:18-26](#).)

Street maps, and their intellectual equivalent -- general knowledge -- have their place in living our lives every day. But the way of the Lord is a special application of knowledge that is guided by the Holy Spirit. Thus we need God's help to develop our cognitive sense -- so that we can hear within the word that says, "This is the way; walk in it," which helps us orient ourselves on God's path.

Well, how do we do that? Here are three ways:

First, make it a matter of prayer. "To pray is to change," says Richard Foster, who has written extensively about the spiritual practices that help us grow. "Prayer is the central avenue God uses to change us," Foster adds, and in so saying he answers the question about why pray when God already knows our needs: We should pray because God uses prayer to change us. In fact, Foster says, "If we are unwilling to change, we will abandon prayer as a noticeable characteristic of our lives."

If you find praying difficult -- and a great many of us do -- we might spend some time reading and praying the prayers others have written. You might, for example, use [A Diary of Private Prayer](#), by John Baillie. That little book contains two prayers a day, one for morning and one for evening, for 31 days. In the original book, published in the middle of the last century, Baillie used some "thees" and "thous" when addressing God, but those shouldn't cause you to stumble. In any case, there's a revised edition, published in 2014, where editor Susanna Wright updated Baillie's daily prayers using modern, accessible language. But whichever version you use, it's likely your own prayers will begin to flow through the Baillie's timeless imagery, and you will find your spiritual navigation skills improving.

Second, make your quest for a spiritual cognitive map a matter of scripture reading. Select a passage each day from the Gospels or the Epistles or the Psalms, of say, no more than 10-12 verses. Read it to focus not on what the passage meant to the original audience, but what God might say through it to you. As you read, notice if a word, phrase or verse especially speaks to you, perhaps in light of your life right now. If so, pause and savor the insight, feeling or understanding, and realize that what you've just noticed is likely a landmark on the inner journey, something that will help you find the Lord's way in the future as well. Then go back and read the passage again because it will have a fuller meaning. Pause again and note what happened. Follow with prayer. This exercise will help your spiritual way-finding skills, as one of the psalms tells us: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105).

And third, this being Lent, consider how fasting might help you in your spiritual orienteering. As you probably know, there are several levels of fasting, from going without all food (but not water) for a set period to a partial fast, perhaps omitting a single meal one day a week, with many other possibilities in between. But at whatever level you might choose, the point is to consider how the fast helps you focus on matters (besides food!) that you might not have focused on otherwise, to help you hear things from God you might not have otherwise.

For finding the Lord's path, it's hard to beat prayer, Bible reading and fasting.

Questions: What other spiritual practices besides prayer, Bible reading and fasting have you found helpful in hearing God's word saying "This is the way; walk in it"? How specifically have they been helpful?

Hebrews 11:8

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance, and he set out, not knowing where he was going. (For context, read [Hebrews 11:8-16](#).)

Hebrews 11 refers back to God's call to Abraham in Genesis 12 to set out on a journey, "not knowing where he was going." From Genesis, we know that Abraham's journey was from the city of Haran (near the present-day Syria/Turkey border) to Canaan (present-day Israel). He set out because of the call of God, so obviously there was a distinctly spiritual aspect to his journey.

Abraham embarked with a goal to get to land he was "to receive as an inheritance," and he didn't find exactly what he was looking for. He eventually got to Canaan, but he had a sense of impermanence there. Hebrews speaks of this as "living in tents," and says that Abraham died in faith without having "received the promises," but only having glimpsed them by faith "from a distance."

Nonetheless, Abraham found other things that in the end were more valuable than his original goal. He didn't end up with a city and a permanent dwelling, but the journey taught him a great deal about how reliable and trustworthy God is. The journey taught Abraham to trust God. In fact, the reason Abraham, an Old Testament figure, is mentioned in this New Testament scripture is because the author of Hebrews was discussing faith. In leaving his homeland and all that he knew and following a previously unknown God, Abraham became a powerful example of faith.

From his journey, Abraham has some things to teach us:

In life, the purpose of the spiritual journey has as much to do with the trip itself as with the destination. The writer of Hebrews holds up Abraham's relocation as an example of faith not because of where his journey took him, but because when God told Abraham to hit the road, Abraham did it, "not knowing where he was going." The journey was itself an act of faith.

Journey is defined both by the roads we take and by those not taken. Whatever Abraham's life might have been had he stayed in Ur, Abraham would never know. As far as we know, once he left there, he never went back, not even for a visit. It might have been an easier life -- Ur was a much more civilized place than barren Canaan -- but Abraham could not both stay there and obey God. He had to make a choice.

If we end not with a distilled bit of wisdom, but with faith, the journey has been successful. It's unlikely that Abraham had much idea of what he was going to find when he set out on that strange journey in obedience to the call of God. Whatever else he did discover, he did not find the answers to all his questions about life. He only glimpsed the fulfillment of God's promise. He

didn't see the whole picture. Read his story in Genesis and you'll discover that he made some blunders too. But he died a man of faith, and according to the author of Hebrews, that was what counted. He discovered the spiritual dimensions of life and let its values direct his steps.

As we travel life's journey seeking God's guidance, we don't necessarily become more certain of the meaning of life or clearer about which roads to travel just because we've been on the road longer. Rather, we can learn what Abraham learned: Traveling whatever road we find ourselves on, but being faithful to God and discovering the spiritual dimension, gives the journey of life a divine meaning on its own.

Questions: What spiritual "tents" are you currently living in? What divine promises have you only glimpsed by faith? What makes the journey as important as the destination?

Luke 15:17-19

But when he came to his senses he said, "How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.'" (For context, read [Luke 15:11-24](#).)

The biblical character we know as the prodigal son didn't realize it when he was living at home before he left for the distant country, but his "inner navigator" was soaking up the fact that he had a father whose love was constant. So we can hear his self-talk quoted above as the voice of that navigator telling him where to go to find his way out of the swamp of trouble he'd gotten into to the place where he would cease to be lost and instead be *found* -- which is exactly what his father said of him after he returned: "And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate, for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; *he was lost and is found!*" (vv. 23-24, italics added).

We are reminded of Newcombe's comment in the news story above that getting lost occasionally (but not permanently) serves our overall sense of direction.

Questions: What other term might you use to describe the prodigal's inner navigator? What are the spiritual implications of becoming *found*? How might the prodigal's experience of being lost for a while have helped his overall sense of spiritual direction?

For Further Discussion

1. Here's more from Erik Jonsson's book [Inner Navigation](#): "The cognitive map ... is tailor made for us, showing only what we need to see. In contrast, a street map ... shows mostly what we don't need, and it takes quite a bit of practice in map reading to use it efficiently, to get past the wealth of useless information and find what one actually needs.

"... if you have lived for a long time in a place and thus have a great deal of information stored in your spatial memory, the spatial system will automatically sort out just what you need at any given moment and present you with a cognitive map showing only where you are and the streets that will take you to your destination.

"When we want to go to a faraway familiar place, we first see the direction to it in our

cognitive map. We see it from where we are without any detail; it is just an awareness of direction and a distance. Later when we think about how to get there, we picture the route we have to follow. Usually we cannot visualize this route as one picture all the way from our starting point to our destination with sufficient detail to be useful; instead a cognitive route map is a series of pictures seen from points along the route and in the direction in which we are traveling. It is as if we, when we encoded the map of this route earlier, had a camera and snapped a picture every time something interesting appeared ahead. This means that a monotonous boring part is neglected on our map, whereas a stretch with many outstanding landmarks is well covered. ... all the places along this route where we could possibly take the wrong road (like forks and intersections) are shown with enough detail to prevent mistakes."

How might you apply this explanation of cognitive maps to your spiritual journey?

2. TWW team member Stan Purdum says that he was unknowingly developing his wayfinding skills starting at a young age due to his natural curiosity about the outdoors and his hunger for adventure: "From the time I was 12 until I was 14, my family lived in Saratoga Springs, New York, and Saratoga Spa State Park was a couple miles from our house. The park had several attractions, but what drew me to it repeatedly was its natural environment -- its forested grounds and hiking trails. I walked to the park as often as I could. I had a map of the park, the sort produced for visitors, and it showed its roads, picnic areas, buildings, attractions and the waterway that coursed through the grounds, but none of the park's 12 miles of trails. So, over two summers, I spent many happy hours following every trail, figuring out my own links between them, and penciling them in on the map."

How might you apply this to your spiritual journey?

3. Consider this, from a TWW consultant: When I was a child, our family used to drive out to a ranch my grandfather owned a ways east of the town they lived in. We drove down a highway tending east, then turned left onto a long and somewhat curvy road. To my own spatial sense, it seemed like the road was curving back to the town, and I didn't understand why we'd drive out of the way to get to the ranch. I've since looked at a map, and the road actually curves to the northeast -- away from the town -- not to the west. Moral of the story: Without a good reference, a person's spatial map errors can be reinforced by repetition.

Responding to the News

This is a good time to pay some attention to your spiritual journey and think about what would help you to hear God more clearly, and then implement those things.

Prayer (Richard of Chichester, A.D. 1197-1253)

Day by day,
Dear Lord, of thee three things I pray:
To see thee more clearly,
Love thee more dearly,
Follow thee more nearly,
Day by day.
Amen.

Copyright 2024 Communication Resources