

# Finding Your Way

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Preacher: Brad Lovegrove

[ 0 : 00 ] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on the 25th of July 1999.

The preacher is Brad Lovegrove and his sermon is entitled Finding Your Way. Lord, we pray now that you will come to us.

You promise that when two or three are gathered in your name that you are here amongst us. We pray now, Lord, as we gather in your name that your spirit will be present. We ask, Lord, that you'll teach us, that we'll open our hearts, that we'll be willing to hear and to learn and also, Lord, that we'll be willing to go and obey.

We ask all this in the strong name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen. Well, you've already heard some talk and some thinking about what the theme of tonight's service is, what life is like, what it's about, what is the meaning of life, the purpose of life.

I wonder, for example, if I was to give you a sentence to complete, life is like, how you might finish that sentence off. Life is like. I think I heard someone whispering one of the answers I've got down already.

[ 1 : 19 ] Life is like a box of chocolates. That was Forrest Gump's answer from his mother. I can't remember the rest of it. There was some profound point he was making, but I can't remember what it is for the life of me.

Perhaps for those of a younger generation, the new Shooter song that's on the radio at the moment off the Dawson's Creek album, I think it is, Life's a Bitch and Then You Die.

Maybe you think life's like that. I actually think that life is a freeway. Life's like a road, a journey. And most young people, in my opinion, are living life in the fast lane.

Imagine if you are, that you're in a car full of young people, you're driving down the freeway, you're doing 110 kilometres an hour, and the only problem is, though, you've missed the exit. You're charging down the freeway, you've got no idea where you're going.

After another 20 minutes and another 40 kilometres and another 30 insults from your friends in the back seat, you would finally admit that you're lost. And you say, OK, you're right, we're lost.

[ 2 : 19 ] But you've got to admit, we're making really good time, aren't we? OK, think about that for a while. We're lost, but we're making really good time. You're not actually making such good time if you're heading in the wrong direction, are you?

You need to turn around and come back and head the right way. Well, I think if you were lost on the freeway, you could have a couple of different reactions. You could say, OK, we're lost on the freeway, let's drive faster.

That's the answer that was given. We're making really good time. But that's to confuse distance or to confuse speed with direction. It's no good going fast and making good time and heading a long way if you're heading in the wrong direction.

Or a second response might be, OK, OK, we're lost, but let's keep driving until we get back on track. Sooner or later we'll see something that'll tell us where we are. Well, that can work sometimes. But you could keep driving until you run out of petrol or run out of road. It's not necessarily going to work to just keep driving. A third option.

[ 3 : 23 ] We can't be lost. Everyone else is heading this way after all. Which sort of skips the question of whether it's the right way or not. And who wants to be going along with the crowd if they're all heading in the wrong direction?

Or another reaction. You're right. We're lost. We need a drastic solution. I know. Let's buy a new car. Too radical.

Too drastic. Still doesn't solve the problem. If you keep driving the wrong way, you're either going to run out of road or run out of petrol or run out of drive to keep going or run out of passengers who

are willing to travel with you.

There's really only one solution if you're heading the wrong way and that's to pull over and to look at the map and to work out where you are and to work out where it is you want to go and then to work out the tricky bit, the connection between the two, how to get from here back on track.

Well, I'm wondering if your life is like that. Are you living life in the fast lane or are you feeling like you're lost on the freeway? Have you ever stopped to think about where your life's headed?

[ 4 : 33 ] Where are you now? Where do you want to go? If you were to look back in 25 years as you got older or if you were to cast your mind forward in 50 years down the track or in 75 years' time, where would you want to be?

Maybe 100 years' time. Most of us will be dead. Where would you want to be? Imagine towards the end of your life looking back and thinking about what it is you'd like to have seen that you've achieved.

What legacy have you left behind for other people? How will you be remembered? Who'll come to your funeral? What will they say about you? One of the sad things in life is most of the nice things that are ever said about us are said it's too late for us to hear it after we're dead.

But what are people going to be saying about you? Towards the end of your life or after you're gone. I actually think it's very hard to be a young person today. When I look at the social problems that young people are facing, I think it's easy to get a sense for young people that they feel lost. If you look at the problems in the newspapers lately about the heroin issue and it's getting so cheap and so many people are using it and not realising how easy it is to get hooked on it or the issues about family breakdown and young people being homeless, sleeping outdoors, under bridges, unemployment, the difficulty of getting a job, even youth suicide.

[ 6 : 02 ] Some of the commentators who are looking at a range of different social problems that are facing young people are starting to come up with some common answers, some common threats. They're saying that the difficulty for young people today is they don't feel like they belong and secondly, that they don't feel like they've got any purpose or any meaning to their lives and thirdly, that they lack hope.

They feel despair or desperation. A lack of belonging, a lack of meaning or purpose, a lack of hope instead of a sense of despair or desperation.

Let me quote you some various comments about the heroin issue and what different people have said, both those who are experts looking on from the outside and those who are down on the streets who are experiencing the problem for themselves.

One young addict said this. He said, we have to look at why young people want to escape society and why they want to be numb. A couple of people working in the area treating addicts have said this.

Kids are under pressure and drugs kill the pain. When they're on heroin, they're getting pain relief for their rejection and their fear and the abuse they've suffered. A third comment from a drug worker.

[ 7 : 16 ] It's very hard to give up something if you have nothing to replace it with. One of the experts, Professor Carr-Greek, we need to provide young people with environments where they feel safe, valued and listened to together with a sense of meaning, purpose and belonging.

And Professor Pennington has said this. Understand why young people turn to drugs. It's linked with the problems that have given us our high rate of youth suicide. It's not easy being young today. It's easy perhaps to feel that you're lost, that there's nothing to look forward to or to hope for. It's easy perhaps to wonder where your life's going and perhaps to get caught up on looking for speed or for distance, never realising that you're heading in the wrong direction.

I want to play you a song now that talks about being lost, a song by Fastball called The Way. The Way.

We made up their minds and they started packing. We met before the sun came up that day.

[ 8 : 50 ] And they said to the eternal summer slacking. But where were they going without ever knowing the way?

We drank all the wine and they got to talk. Now that the morning morning things to say.

And when they got to run down they started walking. Now that the morning things to say.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[10:35] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[13:43] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

question like this, a spiritual search like this, we need a spiritual guide and the Bible can give us some clues about that. The Bible has a couple of things to say about the way, about finding the way, if you're lost or if you're going too fast. In fact, the early believers were called followers of the way before they were ever called Christians. That was a later name that developed. In the book of Acts, they were called followers of the way. That probably came about because Jesus spoke about being the way and the truth and the life. We're going to look at that passage where he mentioned that that was read earlier, John chapter 14, looking at verse 1. If you do want to look at it, I think it was page 877 or something like that, but you don't have to. Jesus talked about being the way, the truth and the life. It's interesting to look at the context when he said this. He was actually there with his disciples. It was towards the end and he was teaching them and leaving them with his final words before he was about to be arrested and taken off and killed. He spent some time talking to them in John's Gospel and telling them what it was all about. He'd actually predicted in chapter 13, just before this passage, that he was going to leave. He was going to depart and he was going to leave them. It's interesting because Jesus is going to leave them to face the cross and to face an agonising death. And yet what actually happens in the situation is rather than the disciples comforting him, he ends up comforting them because they're worried about him leaving. He's mentioned his departure and he's freaked them out a bit. I mean, remember after all that these disciples have left everything to follow Jesus. Peter was married. We know that because Jesus healed his mother-in-law and if he had a mother-in-law and he wasn't married, he certainly drew the short straw.

So he must have been married. His wife's not actually mentioned but he had a mother-in-law so he's married. And James and John, you might remember when they were called to follow Jesus, they were there at the boats with their fathers, Zebedee, the sons of Zebedee they're called.

And they left it all and went off to follow Jesus. I've got this mental picture of Zebedee up on a ladder painting out his sign and it says Zebedee and sons and he's sort of crossing it out and just putting Zebedee, crossing out the and sons because they've racked off with Jesus.

I mean, these guys gave up a fair bit to follow Jesus and now he's saying he's going to leave them. He's going to depart. And yet he gives them some comfort because he says, look, if I go, it's for your benefit because I'm going to prepare a place for you, a place in God's presence. So don't worry. Don't be troubled. Trust in me. Trust in God. And he talks about this place that he's going to as being his father's house. And he says, in my father's house, there are many rooms. If it were not so, I would have told you. And I'm going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I'll come back and take you to be with me that you may also be where I am. So Jesus is actually going to his father's house, which is clearly talking about heaven here. And Jesus is assuring them that there's room there for them. He's going to get the place ready for them. There's enough rooms for every follower of his. And when he returns, when he returns a second time, when he comes again, he's going to take them to be in glory with him.

[17:18] Jesus, if you like, when he went to the cross and died, actually blazed a trail for us through the barrier of sin and through the barrier of death. It reminds me a bit of the story of Australia being opened up in the early pioneer days. I don't know if you realise it, but when the country was first settled, the population spread right along the seaboard.

And it couldn't spread inland because of the mountains. They didn't know how to get across the Blue Mountains. And they were stuck in Sydney and they spread further and further down the coast and even got as far as Melbourne, I think, before they actually got beyond the Blue Mountains. And then there was a rumour that some Aborigines knew a way across. And then another story that some escaped convict had found a way across. But it wasn't finally until Blackland, Wentworth and Lawson charted a way through the mountains that the inland was opened up and Bathurst and all the inland were settled. And the way they did it was this.

Instead of following the easy walking routes along the valleys and coming at the end to a sheer cliff face, they actually followed the spurs and climbed slowly up the ridges like a stairway until they got

to the top of the mountain range. And that way they were able to make a way across. And in fact, if you're in Sydney these days and you drive through the Blue Mountains, at Mount Victoria, there's still an old stump in a cage with markings on it where Blackland, Wentworth and Lawson blazed a trail. There's still a mark in that tree.

It's called a blaze. It's one of the very trees that they marked to show the route because the road virtually follows the exact route that they pioneered. They blazed a trail to open up the inland of our country. Jesus did a more important thing. He charted a route for us through the barrier of death and the barrier of sin. He laid down his own life as a way for us to come back to God. Well, the disciples are wondering what he's on about. They're tossing that up in their minds. They're not quite sure what he's on about. Jesus actually says in verse 4, you know the way to the place where I'm going. But in verse 5, Thomas says, Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way? Thomas, if he's anything, is honest. He's actually saying, I've got no idea what he's talking about. I'm going to put my hand up and speak up. I'm not going to be embarrassed in front of the whole class.

I'm going to say, hey, I've got no idea what you're saying. But Jesus is making an important point. He's actually saying to them, if you know me, then you know the way because I am the way. To know me is to know the way because the way is going to be by me laying down my very body, giving up my very life to chart a trail. Jesus is the way to God. He's the truth about God and he's the life, the life giver. He, like God, was there at creation. It says that when creation was put together that Jesus was there and everything was made through him.

[20:10] But even more than that, he himself physically is the way because he gave his life. The Bible says that he was the lamb of God. He put himself there on the altar where the sacrifices were made and he let himself be killed on our behalf. He's the only way, the only truth, to believe, the only way to follow and the only possibility of having everlasting life.

Jesus in himself is the answer to the question, if you're lost, were you wondering how to go? Well, the disciples are still a bit puzzled. It goes on to say that they're still wondering about who he is and Jesus has to teach them again. He says, if you knew me, you'd know the Father. If you've seen me, you've seen the Father. And then Philip's the next one to put his hand up and he says, Lord, show us the Father and that'll be enough for us. And Jesus has to answer her disciple again, this time Philip. Don't you know me, Philip? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, show us the Father? Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? You see, God revealed himself most fully in his Son, Jesus. That's how God has shown himself and revealed himself to us. Knowing Jesus will actually lead to knowing God. Jesus spoke God's words. He showed God's miraculous power in his actions by healing and casting out demons and doing all sorts of miracles.

He was God as a man amongst us. And the disciples probably took a while to start to figure it out and they may not have even got it at this point. They probably started wondering if Jesus was just an average guy like they were. After a while, I guess they heard pretty quickly from what he taught that he was a wise sort of person. And then he started teaching things that no one had ever taught before. Even the teachers of the law didn't know what Jesus was on about. Maybe he was a rabbi like they were, a teacher of the law. Maybe he was like a professor at university. But then he started actually saying things that were directly quoting from God. He kept saying, my father says, and I tell you this, and you know that Moses said this, but let me change that and correct that. It's now this. And they realised that he must be at least a prophet, because only a prophet could have that authority to speak from God like that and to change what God had previously said through Moses and update it, change it round. I think after a while they realised that even that explanation didn't fit the facts. And they were forced, despite themselves, to actually come to understand Jesus as being the Son of God. Now that wasn't an easy conclusion to come to if you were a Jew. Because think about it. If you were a Jew, you got up every morning and you said, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. There is only one God. And you knew that if you said anything apart from that, if you said there was any other God, or more than one God, you get stoned and not on grass. You get put up against a wall and they throw rocks at you.

This is a serious business. The Jews didn't muck around with their beliefs about God. To get up every day and say there's only one God, to know that if you said anything different you'd be killed for it, but then to be forced by the evidence of the man in front of you to actually say, well, I know there's only one God, but Jesus is God too, somehow. Oh, did I say that? Look around, make sure

no one's listening. Did I speak out loud? Was I thinking that or was I saying that? It was a hard thing to come to. And yet that was the conclusion they were forced to because of the miracles that Jesus did, because of the teaching he gave with power. You see, the Bible makes it very clear, and this passage says it very clearly as well. Jesus is the Father's unique Son, and he is completely one with the Father. He is united with the Father. He actually says in chapter 10 a bit earlier, I and the Father are one. So he says it very clearly. But soon the disciples were going to be convinced, because when Jesus died on the cross and then rose again, God's character was seen most clearly.

[ 24 : 27 ] God's love for us was seen most clearly in that he gave his own Son to die for us, so that anyone who believes in him will not perish, but can have eternal life. God's character is seen most clearly in that he gave his own Son to die for us, so that he gave his own Son.

And he said, well, finally in this passage, it says, believe me, but if you can't believe what I'm saying, at least believe on the evidence of the miracles in verse 11. The greatest miracle that Jesus did, he did many. He even raised a friend of his from death, Lazarus. But the greatest miracle that Jesus did was he rose up again from the dead. And that was God's proof, God's endorsement, that everything he'd said was true, that this really was his Son. All those miracles pointed to Jesus as being God himself. They were all signposts. When he raised someone from the dead, he said, I am the resurrection and the life. When he fed the crowds, he said, I am the bread of life. When he talked to the woman at the well about drawing water, he said, I can give you living water. Every miracle was designed to point people to him and to realise the inescapable truth that he was very God. He was God's own Son, that he'd come to save us. Well, to finish up with, I want you to reflect on some of these things tonight. What's the purpose of your life? What's the meaning of your life? Where are you headed? Are you lost?

Or are you living on speed or relying on distance instead of the right direction in your life? Because if you're not sure that you're headed the right way, Jesus has got this to say to you tonight. He says, don't be troubled. Trust in me. I laid down my life for unforgivable sinners like us, like you, like I. I've paid the price for your mistakes through my death on the cross. He says, I am the way. Follow me. I am the truth. Believe in me. I am the life.

You can enjoy eternal life through me. I want to finish with a story before we pray. There's a story in the Bible called The Lost Son, but I want to tell you a more modern version.

I have a friend who works with drug addicts in King's Cross, and he told me the story once of a girl he met there. This girl had run away from home. She was quite young. She'd got hooked on heroin, and to support her drug habit. She'd got into prostitution. He was talking to her and ministering to her, sharing with her, as he did with a lot of people on the streets. And one day after she'd been bashed up by a client, she actually said to him, look, I want to get out of this life.

[ 27 : 34 ] I know it's heading nowhere. I know I'm going the wrong way. And she said, in a little while, when I've got a bit more money together, I'm going to go back home. And he asked her what her parents would think of that, about the life she'd been living. And she said, when I left home, my parents said this to me. My father said, I know you're going to leave us, and I can't do anything to stop you, but I want you to know that there'll always be a light on at the front door, and the front door will always be unlocked if you ever need to come home.

And she was hanging on to that promise. And she said, I know when I get home that I'm going to be able to walk in there, and the door will be open. And this worker offered to give her a lift home because she lived way up in the mountains. He offered to give her a lift home back to Lithgow, where she lived. Anyhow, we saw her a few weeks later, and she said, I'm ready. I want to go home. And what had actually made her come to a decision was once again she'd had a bit of trouble with one of the clients and been bashed. And she said, this is enough. I've got to get out. So he put her in the car at 2am in the morning and set off from Kings Cross to drive her to Lithgow, which is about two hours away. And they drove through the night, and as they got close, he said, where do you want me to drop you? Do you want me to drop you down the street, or do you need to go to a phone and ring someone? And she said, no, no, just take me straight to the door, because I know the light will be on, and the door will be unlocked. And he was sitting there thinking, oh yeah, I bet. And he was really quite worried. Anyhow, he got to Lithgow, and he drove down her street, and sure enough, at the end of the street where her house was, there was a light on at the front door. And he pulled up and let her out, and he watched while she went up to the front door, half expecting that she wouldn't be able to get in. And she tried the front door, and it opened, and she went

through the door. And he shook his head in amazement and just drove off back to town. He actually heard from the family a couple of weeks later, and it was quite a sad end to the story, because she'd actually been injured by being bashed and didn't realise it. But she had some internal bleeding, and she actually died a few weeks later, and the family contacted him. But the parents said they were just so grateful that he'd driven her home, and they had a last couple of weeks to spend with her. That story tells you about a father's love, a parent's love for their child. But I want to say to you tonight that God loves you even more than that. If you're a lost child of his, I want to say to you that God is there. The light is on. The door is open. It's a matter of turning around and saying, I'm ready to go home.