

A Saturday Evening Post: What's Next? A Question Every Man Asks

Four Answers Straight from the Mouth of God

In this ministry, I am blessed to engage with men from all walks of life—homeless, dealing with addictions/related issues, in prison, *successful* businessmen, and church men. One thing we have in common is, at some point in life, each of us has asked the question, “*What’s next?*” By that we mean, what is next in my life? Some may follow that with, “Is this all there is?”

The answer, of course, is it depends—on where you are, to some extent, where you have been, and, most importantly, to whom and where you are turning for answers. If you sought answers to quadratic equation problems, you would not look in an English Lit book. Neither would you find help balancing a chemical equation using a calculus book. There is useful information in all those books. But as stated, you would NEVER find the right answers to those questions because you are looking in the wrong place—going to the wrong source.

My task is clear—point men in the right direction and to the right Source. To get started, I want to offer great words of encouragement straight from the mouth of God.

“So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.” (Isaiah 55: 11)

That is what I want (and so should you)—to have God’s words accomplish in and thru me *all He desires*, i.e., be successful in His purpose. Lord, give me all of that!

With even a modest amount of time in the Word of God, men can find the answers to some of life's most important and bewildering questions. Purpose? God's will? Plan for my life? Simple stuff like that! Following are just four, of many, clear instructions straight from the mouth of God (His Word) that read, understood, and applied can lead you where He wants you to go. **Notice I did not say *will* because that part depends on you.** If you don't ask, He won't tell you. If you don't follow His instructions, you will never get where you want to go He wants you to go.

#1. Enter into a "Right" relationship with Me.

The answers to *What's Next?* begin here. To make that point clear as crystal, you need only read these two verses that speak to both sides of the need and take Jesus at His words.

"Apart from Me you can do nothing." (John 15:5)

"All things are possible to him who believes." (Mark 9: 23)

First let's ask and answer ***Why Jesus?*** Then we can examine ***How we get there?*** I could write for hours on these questions, but here is the highly condensed version.

- God is perfect and holy and demands that we are also. Matthew 5: 48; 1 Peter 1: 16
- That is a problem because, as you may have noticed, none of us are perfect. The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 3:23, "***we have all sinned and fallen short of God's glory***". He went on to say (as God said to the Israelites in the OT), "***the wages of sin is death***" (6:23). How can we enter into a right relationship with God if we are guilty of sin that is punishable by death? God provided the Answer.
- God's **love** and **mercy** poured out from His throne of **grace** and sent Jesus to save us from our sins. John 3: 16; Romans 5: 8
- Jesus explained His singular purpose this way, "***I came***

to call sinners to repentance." (Luke 5: 32)

- Jesus, the Son of God, the Lamb Who was slain is **the ONLY Way – John 14: 6** That gives many people heartburn and leads to Christians being labeled as narrow-minded bigots and haters among other lies. Jesus said it would be that way, then and now.
- **The Cross of Christ is the pivot point of eternity.** On it lay the balance of salvation and damnation (condemnation) – Heaven and Hell.

So the question is this? Are you willing to enter into a "right" relationship with God made available only through Jesus the Christ – Messiah? If you have not yet done so, you need to deal with that first or the rest of this lesson will not matter.

God's next instruction is very often overlooked—especially by Christian men.

#2. Get (not just seek) the HELP and HEALING you need.

This instruction is for Christian men who find themselves in a hard or bad place. ***Honest men admit we have all been there at some point in our personal, professional, and spiritual lives.***

I call them desperate places God takes us to or allows us to go so He can get our full attention. We cannot go forward and accomplish all God has for us until we confront and address this essential instruction. Making the decision to get help is a huge first step in the process. It means you have come to a place where you know you need help and ***get it.***

Let me encourage you further with acts of healing by Jesus on desperate men and women who had needs of every kind—like you and me. They sought Him out. So should you!

- **Jesus healed *physical illness.*** Lame men walked. Blind men received their sight.

*"Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and **healing every disease and sickness.**" (Matthew 9: 35; 4: 23)*

- **Jesus healed men with *mental illness***—cast out demon and restored right minds.

"...a man came up to Jesus, falling on his knees and saying, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic...he often falls into the fire and into the water...Jesus rebuked (the demon) and he came out of the boy, and he was cured at once." (from Matthew 17: 14-20)

- **Jesus healed *spiritual illness (sin)***. We call it forgiveness.

"Then (Jesus) said to her (the sinful woman who fell at His feet and began kissing them and wiping them with her tears of repentance), "Your sins have been forgiven." (Luke 7: 48)

There is no shame in admitting you have issues. We all do! There is pride in not admitting them. We are not alone! Great men of the Bible suffered physical, mental, and spiritual illness. Abraham, Moses, David, Peter, Paul, among others. God had answers for all of them. AND He does for you as well.

Getting the right help. Sometimes our healing is best facilitated by those trained in the specific area of our needs. God expects us to call on His name first. He also expects us to be wise and use resources He ordained for such purposes. Don't be afraid to use them. Be more afraid not to! Your help and healing await so you can keep moving through God's process.

#3. "I have a plan for your life. I'd love to share it with you." (God's words)

Most Christians know or at least have heard this verse,

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for calamity, to give you a future and a hope.” Jeremiah 29: 11

We must keep Scripture in context (what it meant when written and surrounding verses). Then we can find its application to us today. In this passage, the last remnant of Israel (the southern part of the nation— Judah) was about to be exiled to Babylon with the rest of their brothers. Generations of disobedience led to a point when God finally had enough of their sins and allowed His chosen people to be completely overrun by two different world powers. The last one even destroyed Solomon’s most holy and sacred temple.

But God does not forsake or give up on His people even though He disciplines them “as a good father does his children”. Through the prophet Jeremiah, God told His people their season of captivity would end, and, when it did, He had plans for them. That is the origin of this verse. God had plans for His captive children then, and He has plans for you and me now. But we have to find them. To help us do that, God gave them instructions on how to know His plans—they apply to us today.

“Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to me and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all of your heart. And I will be found by you”, declares the Lord. (Jeremiah 29: 12-14a)

God did not make this process “rocket science” or some complex mathematical formula. But it requires work on our parts. ***It begins by seeking the Lord and asking Him.*** He promises we can find Him if we do.

The problem is most men don’t bother to ask.

We think we can figure it out ourselves, or it is not “manly”

to ask for help or direction. (Kind of like men who will not stop and ask for directions or trust the GPS even when it takes us the wrong or a longer route.)

One final word regarding God's instructions. ***God's plans for our lives are written on a scroll not a road map.*** They are revealed over time as we get and accomplish the first part and then move forward. You cannot "google map" God's plan for your life or plug the destination into your GPS—and that drives most men mad! Most of us are, after all, a little (or a lot) on the control freak side of the line.

* Note: The ***will of God*** is not the same as God's plan for your life. We will investigate and uncover the will of God another time.

#4. "Go in peace, live for My Sake (not yours), and enjoy all I have for you!

For you shall go out with joy, and be led out with peace..." (Isaiah 55: 12a)

One of my prayers is that I leave nothing on the table that God planned for me to **be, have, and do** while I am here until Christ returns or calls me Home. I am good with either! And the order in which they happen does not matter either!

This instruction reads like it should be the easiest of all.

But the truth of the matter is when things get hard, what seemed clear becomes engulfed in fog, or the way/plan gets blown up by circumstances and people who do not have our interest at all, we tend to lose heart and get discouraged. I know I do. How do we fight these battles and get back on track?

Let's wrap this final instruction from God with a few great verses. These words of encouragement, written nearly two thousand years ago, were also meant for us because their messages are TIMELESS.

The Key to Success? MEMORIZE THEM! If you know the names of the key players on your favorite college and professional teams and memorized many things in school from K through college, you can surely learn a few verses God had written down to remind and encourage you in such times. The Holy Spirit is then faithful to “call them to our remembrance.”

- *“And we know that God causes **all things to work together for good** to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”* Romans 8: 28
- *“If **God is for us**, who can be against us?”* Romans 8: 31(b)
- *“**fixing our eyes on Jesus**, the author and perfecter of faith..”* Hebrews 12: 2a

My dear brothers, these four instructions were given to us by our infinitely wise, unconditionally loving Father. The best news of all (apart from our salvation in Christ) is this. No matter how much we mess things up along the way, He always love us and is willing to help get us back on the right path—His path!

Your desperate brother in Christ,

Walter