

THE WAY

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The King James Version of the Bible contains the word "way" over 420 times. The Oxford dictionary defines the word 'way' as a road, track, path, or route to travel on in order to reach a particular place. Interestingly, in a few scriptures, the word 'Way' is capitalized which implies it is the **only Way** or, the only method by which one must go to reach a particular destination. Let us read a few scriptures where the word, the **Way**, is used as such from the New King James Version.

Acts 9:1-2, "Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of **the Way**, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem."

Acts 19:8-9, "And he (Paul) went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of **the Way** before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus."

Acts 19:22-23, "So he (Paul) sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time. And about that time there arose a great commotion about **the Way**."

Acts 24:14, "But this I confess to you, that according to **the Way** which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets."

Question: What was "the Way" referring to in the context of these scriptures? When we go on a journey it is good to know the way to get to our destination. King David cried to the Lord saying; "Show me Your ways, O Lord; Teach me Your paths" (Psalms 25:4).

Reading through the Book of Acts it appears "the Way" was widely known after the death and resurrection of Jesus. After Paul gave his defense before Felix the

governor, the Scripture records in Acts 24:22, "But when Felix heard these things, having more accurate knowledge of **the Way**, he adjourned the proceedings."

Recently I went on a hike in a park that was a 15-minute drive from our home. I wanted to see the Norvan Falls located in the mountains of North Vancouver. From the entrance gate, there is only one way to arrive at the waterfalls on foot. To reach the falls one must hike 7 km through a forest along the wall of a steep valley. Entering the gate to the park there was a sign which read: "**To reach Norvan Falls, follow the yellow tags posted on the trees.**"

The beginning of the trail to the waterfalls is flat, wide, and well-traveled. There were people walking alone, or in small groups. Some were jogging, and some were taking their dogs along for the exercise.

As the trail narrowed there were fewer and fewer people. After hiking two km, the pathway began ascending up the slope of the valley wall and became a single, narrow, rugged pathway. I had to be careful where I planted my feet as there were many tree roots and rocks to trip or stumble over. Journeying along the pathway there were also other trails leading off in different directions. I thought of the scripture in Matthew 7:13-14 where Jesus said, "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."

About three-quarters of the way to the falls, I came to a Y in the trail. Just then a young man caught up to me and asked if I was going to the falls and I said, "Yes." He immediately said, "It's this way, follow me." I hesitated but took a couple of steps to follow him. However, I did not feel right about the direction he was going. I could not see any yellow tags in the direction he was going. I stopped, turned around, and went back to the Y intersection, and looked for a yellow tag. In the distance, I saw a yellow tag on a tree pointing in the other direction of the Y, and I began walking towards it. Jesus warned of the danger of listening to other voices when He said in Luke 17:23, "And they will say to you, 'Look here!' or 'Look

there! Do not go after them or follow them.” Let us be vigilant to follow only in Christ’s footsteps and to listen and hear only His voice.

From the Y intersection, it became more difficult to find the pathway because a recent heavy rainfall had washed away the footprints of previous hikers. I had to pay very close attention and keep my eyes focused on the yellow tags to know I was going the right way. Also, the path became steeper and steeper. Eventually, I began to hear the roar of the falls. As I carefully worked myself along a narrow ledge of a rock face and around a bend I broke out of the forest and there it was, bathed in brilliant sunlight, the Norvan waterfalls. I stood silently admiring the water gushing over the high cliff above and plummeting down to a pool below. A cool spray of mist from the waterfalls brushed across my face. It was so refreshing. I realized then how worthwhile it was to keep my eyes focused on the yellow tags to find “the way,” the only way to the falls. I thought about what Jesus said in John 14:6, **“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”**

When I began my hike, my goal was to reach the Norvan waterfalls. To reach the waterfalls I had to focus on only one thing; the yellow tags posted on the trees ahead of me. In like manner, in order to receive our inheritance of ruling and reigning with Jesus in His coming kingdom, we must keep our focus on Christ.

We are living in very perilous times. Increasingly we hear of wars, disasters, mass starvation, earthquakes, devastating storms, floods, civil disorder, riots; and we are presently dealing with the Coronavirus pandemic. These events are not surprising when we consider what is recorded in the Bible. Down through the ages, many of God’s spokesmen prophesied that difficult times will fall on mankind preceding the coming of Christ. Daniel wrote: *“There shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation”* (Daniel 12:1). Likewise, Jesus spoke of the great tribulation that will precede His coming in Matthew 24:15-29 and Luke 17:20-37.

Interestingly, Jesus mentions Noah in Matthew 24:36-39. Speaking of His return to this earth Jesus said: *“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.”* This is a warning that we need to always be ready for His return.

In Genesis 6:13, God spoke to Noah and said: *“The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth.”* Because Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, God gave him the plan to build an ark of safety so he would be prepared for God’s coming judgment. Noah was obedient and built the ark according to the pattern God gave him. When Noah completed the ark he took his family and animals into the ark, and the flood destroyed all mankind. It would have been horrific to witness, but in the ark, Noah and his family were safe. Likewise, God has given us a pattern of how to build an ark of safety in this present age of uncertainty, turmoil, and tribulation.

That ark is the church.

Let’s read again what Jesus said in John 14:6, **“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”** When the children of Israel asked Moses what was the name of the God who was sending him to deliver them from Egypt, God told Moses to say, *“tell them, I AM has sent Me to you”* (Genesis 3:14). When Jesus said, *“I am the way,”* He is implying that He, through His Father, is **“the Way”** or, **“The I Am is the Way”** to everlasting life. Therefore, Jesus is the **only means or method by which we can** inherit the promises of God. This **“Way,”** written about in the book of Acts, is found in the ark of the church, the body of Christ.

The church is composed of families with the father, the elder, and the wife, the deacon. Parents teach their children the ways of the Lord and learn obedience. Family members attend a local church which is shepherded by local elders helped by deacons. They minister the truths of God that are revealed to them through the universal traveling elders. Local elders provide an opportunity for individual members to minister according to their spiritual gifts so that the church can be comforted and edified. Local elders receive and faithfully administer tithes received from family members. Two-thirds of the local church tithes are submitted monthly to the country’s central fund. These funds are employed to help the poor,

the fatherless, widows in need, disaster relief, and church administration costs.

Traveling elders and deacons have oversight of the church worldwide. They are responsible to God for the welfare of the universal church. In oneness and unity, they minister the truths that the Holy Spirit has revealed to them, which keeps the kingdom’s message pure. They also provide direction on matters concerning the local church.

As a safety net, the church anatomy as outlined provides security and protection from corruption and immorality through the multiplicity of elders who submit to each other and to Christ. This is overshadowed by the fundamental principles of ‘divine love’ demonstrated by every member of the body of Christ towards each other in “deed and truth” (1 John 4:18).

As members of the body of Christ, *“we are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the **foundation** of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit”* (Ephesians 2:19-22).

O Hallelujah! This is why we must keep our focus on Jesus for **“He is the head of the body, the church”** (Colossians 1:18).

This is God’s pattern, His blueprint, His plan for His church, and God’s coming kingdom. This is the Way.

If we stay under the covering of the church, **in the ark**, we will be safe from the judgments of God which are beginning to come upon the earth.

In conclusion, in order to receive our inheritance and become joint-heirs with Christ in His kingdom, we must keep our focus on Jesus and remain under the umbrella of the church.

On the night before Jesus went to the cross, He met with His disciples and said to them: *“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have **peace**. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of **good cheer**, I have overcome the world”* (John 16:33). Yes, Jesus is our peace. By focusing all our attention on Jesus, He provides peace even though the world is falling apart all around us. Hallelujah.

Let us not be dismayed at what we see happening in the world today. Let us be faithful to our calling and keep our eyes focused on Jesus. Remember that Jesus, being made perfect by what He suffered, *“became the author (way maker or bridge builder), of eternal salvation to all who obey Him”* (Hebrews 5:9). Jesus has gone before us, all we have to do is follow in His footsteps.

Let us read Hebrews 12:1-3, *“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**”*

While I stood looking at the pool of crystal clear water at the bottom of Norvan waterfalls I thought of our promised inheritance spoken of in Revelations 22:1-3, *“And He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.”*

Do you want to partake of the “tree of life?” Though Adam and Eve were forbidden to partake of the “tree of life,” it will be available to those who stay under the covering of the church, and who keep their eyes focused on Jesus, and keep moving along in this Way. For, *“Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the **tree of life**, and may enter through the gates into the city”* (Revelations 22:14).

O Hallelujah, Praise the Lord. ✠

JESUS IS MY FRIEND

STEVEN LEVSON

All Scriptures are in the New King James Version.

On a very cold winter morning at the University of Calgary in Alberta, Canada, the Lord spoke to me in a way that changed my heart and soul, and life. He said to me, "I am your friend."

That was particularly touching as I was feeling very alone and lonely on the university campus. I hadn't made any new friends since starting my post-secondary education and my friends from High School were not influencing me in the right direction. The comforting and gentle words of Jesus made me feel overwhelmed by His love. Praise God!

A good, close friend is a wonderful blessing, and we are so blessed to have Jesus as that type of friend. In a recent service in Stratford, Ontario, the local congregation came up with a list of attributes for a good friend. These characteristics include:

- Care about your well-being
- Trustworthy
- Loyal
- Unconditional love and support
- Spend time together
- Kind to you
- Share information with you
- Common interests/values
- Always available and accessible

Does that not sound like Jesus? Jesus has all of these attributes and more! Therefore, Jesus is an excellent friend. A song written by Joseph M. Scriven illustrates our friendship with our Lord and Saviour and is as follows:

*What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!*

*Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged, take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful, who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness, take it to the Lord in prayer.*

*Are we weak and heavy laden, 'cumbered with a load of care? -
Precious Saviour still our refuge - Take it to the Lord in prayer;
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee? Take it to the Lord in prayer;
In His arms He'll take and shield thee, Thou wilt find a solace there.*

*Can we find a friend that's closer? Closer than a brother dear.
Jesus Christ and Holy Spirit, deep within our heart to cheer.
O the blessed peace He offers, to the fainting heart He gives;
Come to Him with calm assurance and know beyond a doubt He lives!*

~ Joseph Scriven, Charles Crozat Converse

Throughout my life, Jesus has been a tremendous friend to me. He has helped me through many different experiences, several of which were extremely difficult. Sometimes I haven't felt like He was there, but I now know that He has been with me every step of the way.

*He's always there, when things go wrong,
He's always there when my hope is gone.
He lifts me up, when I'm in prayer,
He's never gone, when I'm alone, He's always there.*

*He's up in the mountain, He's down in the sea,
He fills all heaven and He lives in me.
He lifts me up when I'm in prayer,
He's never gone, when I'm alone. He's always there.*

Jesus is a friend like no other. He is always there. Amen, praise God! We have such a wonderful friend in Jesus as this song states. Another song with a similar message is,

*Wonderful, wonderful Jesus, He is my friend,
True to the end;
He gave Himself to redeem me;
Jesus, wonderful Lord.*

Through our friendship with Jesus, we have access to God the Father. "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, No man comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

"Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep" (John 10:7-11).

In Jesus, we also see humility, although He was the Son of God, He came to give His life for His sheep, us. As the song by George Crawford Hugg emphasizes;

*There's not a friend like the lowly Jesus
No, not one! No, not one!*

When Jesus walked the earth he was a friend to many people who weren't considered well-off by their society. He was a friend to tax collectors (Matthew & Zachias), a prostitute, adulterers, lepers, Samaritans, children, and others. All of these people were not necessarily easy to be a friend with, but Jesus didn't avoid them, but rather reached out to them in love.

Jesus is a friend to us like He was to these in the Bible.

"Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' So that we may boldly say: 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me'" (Hebrews 13:5-6)?

"...But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24).

"A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity" (Proverbs 17:17).

We just have to consider one of the best-known children's songs by Anna Bartlett Warner to be reminded of this message:

*Jesus loves me this I know,
For the Bible tells me so.
Little ones to Him belong;
They are weak but He is strong.
Yes, Jesus loves me,
Yes, Jesus loves me,
Yes, Jesus loves me,
The Bible tells me so.*

He is a wonderfully loving, faithful, and dependable friend! We can and should develop a close friendship with Him because He first loved us, but also because He made a way for us. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

"Greater love has no man than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you" (John 15:13-15).

The love of Jesus for us is so beautiful. We can see the attributes of love as outlined in 1 Corinthians 13, in how Jesus loves us:

"Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails" (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

In a troubled world, Jesus, who is the Prince of Peace, has given us His peace.

"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

I began with a song and now I end with a song. This last song seems to summarize our friendship with Jesus.

*Jesus is my friend, Jesus is my friend,
Though He is the Son of God, Jesus is my friend.
I asked Him to live in my heart, and forgive my sins,
Jesus is my friend, Jesus is my friend.*

May you be blessed by knowing and experiencing what a wonderful and loving friend we have in Jesus! ✝

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