



When Following
God's Path Is
Tough

Acts 1:12-36

Living a Christian life or following the path God has us individually is tough and at times confusing

- You don't have to go very far into Psalms to hear David's frustration
 - **Psalms 10:1 NIV** Why, Lord, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?

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- He sometimes vents in frustration
 - **Psalms 10:15 NIV** Break the arm of the wicked man; call the evildoer to account for his wickedness that would not otherwise be found out

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- **1st Corinthians 10:14 NLT** The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.

Living a Christian life or following the path God has us individually is tough and at times confusing

- Yes we have a new heart, Yes we have the Holy Spirit in and with us, but right now, we are in the messy middle with both the Holy Spirit and our old stony, stubborn, fleshly nature at the same time
- We desire to follow God's path for our lives, but we have this constant struggle in us

There are times in our Christian lives when following God's path tough

- Sometimes it is tough to find it
- Sometimes it is tough to accept it
- Sometimes it is tough to continue in it
- Swindoll in "The Quest for Character"
- It's tough to understand God's will at times

Amy Carmichael in “Though the Mountains Shake”

- Amy Carmichael was an Irish missionary to India. She is known for opening a safe house called Dohnavur Fellowship after rescuing children from being trafficked in the Hindu temples. She served in India for fifty-five years without a furlough, and in the last twenty years of her life, she remained bedridden and wrote several books and poems about her deep love for Christ.

Amy Carmichael in “Though the Mountains Shake”

- First, He brought me here, it is by His will I am in this strait place: in that fact I will rest. Next, He will keep me here in His love, and give me grace to behave as His child. Then, He will make the trial a blessing, teaching me the lessons He intends me to learn, and working in me the grace He means to bestow. Last, In His good time He can bring me out again--how and when He knows.

Amy Carmichael in “Though the Mountains Shake”

- Let me say I am here
 - (1) By God's appointment,
 - (2) In His keeping,
 - (3) Under His training,
 - (4) For His time.
- “When I consider the cross of Christ, how can anything that I do be called sacrifice?”

This is where the disciples of Jesus find themselves in our verses this morning

- These verses are in the messy middle after the resurrection but before Pentecost
 - The messy middle of God's path where things can get confusing
- They know some sort of power is coming by way of the Holy Spirit, but when

This is where the disciples of Jesus find themselves in our verses this morning

- They know they are to stay in Jerusalem, but how long
- They know they are to wait, but we don't do this well for long
- These verses tell us this morning that there will be periods like this in our lives so don't get knocked off track

There will be times when God's path for you will disappoint and confuse you

- **Acts 1:6-8 NIV** 6 Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” 7 He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

There will be times when God's path for you will disappoint and confuse you

- We have here Jesus dashing the current desire of His disciples
- Their desire is found in the phrase, “Are you going to restore the kingdom of Israel like it promises in the Old Testament?”

There will be times when God's path for you will disappoint and confuse you

- What is their assumed response from Jesus?
 - Not only was it a no, but it was a “None of your business”
 - It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority

There will be times when God's path for you will disappoint and confuse you

- God will do or allow some things that will not fit in your life or your expectations at all
- Jesus says, “You think that is great, let me tell you what my Father has in store for you.”
 - The power of the Holy Spirit will come on you
 - You are going to be my witnesses throughout the entire world

There will be times when God's path for you will disappoint and confuse you

- Hear Jesus say, "It will be worth it, just trust me"
- **2nd Corinthians 5:7 NIV** For we live by faith, not by sight.
- So, times of confusion and frustrations are offset with our spiritual eyes

God's primary tool in maturing us is called waiting

- **Acts 1:4-5 NIV** 4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

God's primary tool in maturing us is called waiting

- David once again put a voice to these times
 - **Psalms 13:1 NIRV** Lord, how long must I wait? Will you forget me forever? How long will you turn your face away from me?

God's primary tool in maturing us is called waiting

- God is doing His greatest work when it appears he is absent or unconcerned
 - Abraham became the Abraham we love after waiting 13 years before God's promise of a son came to him
 - Moses would not be the Moses we know if not for 40 years on the back side of a mountain feeling useless with broken dreams

God's primary tool in maturing us is called waiting

- It is during these times when God is working His Word into our faith so we can become what only He sees in us
 - **Psalms 24:14 NLT** Wait patiently for the Lord. Be brave and courageous. Yes, wait patiently for the Lord.
- How you wait is every bit as important as the actual waiting

God's primary tool in maturing us is called waiting

- You can't rush God so just let your faith rope out a little bit more and simply trust His timing and plan
- **2nd Peter 3:8-9 NLT** 8 But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day. 9 The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.

Hard questions during the time of waiting will drive us deeper into His Word for answers

- **Acts 1:15-17 NIV** 15 In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) 16 and said, “Brothers and sisters, the Scripture had to be fulfilled in which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus. 17 He was one of our number and shared in our ministry.”

Hard questions during the time of waiting will drive us deeper into His Word for answers

- Once again David speak to us during these times
 - **Psalms 13:2 NIV** How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?

Hard questions during the time of waiting will drive us deeper into His Word for answers

- One of the questions no one wanted to raise with Jesus here was, “What about Judas?”
- What questions would have come to your mind about Judas if you had been there?

Hard questions during the time of waiting will drive us deeper into His Word for answers

- What questions would have come to our mind about Judas if you had been there?
 - Did Jesus make a mistake in choosing him?
 - Did Jesus know what Judas would do?
 - How could Judas do this in spite of everything he experienced?

Hard questions during the time of waiting will drive us deeper into His Word for answers

- What questions would have come to our mind about Judas if you had been there?
 - What do we do about Judas' absence now?
 - Is it possible for me to do this as well?

Hard questions during the time of waiting will drive us deeper into His Word for answers

- To find his answers, Peter went deep into God's Word with the Holy Spirit's guidance
 - **Psalms 69:25 NIV** May their place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in their tents.
 - **Psalms 109:8 NIV** May his days be few; may another take his place of leadership.

Hard questions during the time of waiting will drive us deeper into His Word for answers

- Peter wrestled with these questions along with the others and they were in constant prayer – It was always on their minds seeking answers
 - Peter found his answer in the scriptures, “the Scripture had to be fulfilled”

Hard questions during the time of waiting will drive us deeper into His Word for answers

- Some questions take a long time for the answer to be revealed to us
- Some questions will never be answered this side of heaven
- So once again - For we live by faith, not by sight or understanding

It is hard to follow God's path when the way may not be clear

- **Acts 1:21-26 NIV** 21 Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, 22 beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection." 23 So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias.

It is hard to follow God's path when the way may not be clear

- **Acts 1:21-26 NIV** 24 Then they prayed, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen 25 to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs." 26 Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.

It is hard to follow God's path when the way may not be clear

- Now the question is, "Who will take Judas' place?"
- It was extremely important to the Jews that there be 12 apostles

It is hard to follow God's path when the way may not be clear

- For the new apostle to be accepted he had to have the similar experiences as the others
 - Been with Jesus from the first – so no missing teaching
 - Must have seen with their eyes the risen Lord and His ascension to be a true and acceptable witness

It is hard to follow God's path when the way may not be clear

- There were two acceptable candidates
 - I imagine all knew these two intimately and had worked closely with them
- Their question is, “Which one Jesus do you select?”

It is hard to follow God's path when the way may not be clear

- Don't let the casting of lots throw you
 - This was a common practice in the Old Testament to discern God's will
- All great people in the Bible experienced times like this

It is hard to follow God's path when the way may not be clear

- **Acts 16:6-8 NIV** 6 Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. 7 When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. 8 So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas.

It is hard to follow God's path when the way may not be clear

- Paul really wanted to go to Asia, but the Holy Spirit said no by way of the circumstance they encountered
- Paul then decided to go north but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow it
- So, he went west to Troas and waited for further instructions

In, The Horse Whisperer, Tom Booker, has a gift when it comes to what he calls "gentling" horses.

- Tom Booker is a talented trainer with a remarkable gift for understanding horses, who is hired to help an injured teenager and her horse back to health following a tragic accident.

In, The Horse Whisperer, Tom Booker, has a gift when it comes to what he calls "gentling" horses.

- In one scene, a traumatized horse, frightened by a ringing cell phone, gallops off into the far end of a large pasture. Booker walks into the pasture and sits down, where he waits for what appears to be hours. Drawn by curiosity the horse inches closer and closer finally allowing itself to be touched by the "whisperer" who leads it back to the safety of its stall.

In, The Horse Whisperer, Tom Booker, has a gift when it comes to what he calls "gentling" horses.

- Like that horse, there are a lot of people who need a gentle touch and voice.
- God whispers to us in the same way and with the same results when we let Him touch us and lead us back to safety