

Chapter Six



It's About the Destination

"Obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes off the goal."

- Henry Ford

Key Thought: Instead of focusing on the storms, set your heart on your destination. Jonah made it to Nineveh; the disciples made it to the other side; and Paul made it to Rome. Fasten your gaze and direct your attention to your goals and destiny, not the storms and obstacles.

Even though this book deals with overcoming and moving beyond storms, we must realize that life involves much more than dealing with problems and surviving storms. Life is not merely about survival, and it's about more than success. Life is about finding significance. Survival is getting what I need. Success (at least as the world defines it) is getting what I want. Significance, though, is giving what I can give; significance is measured by the difference I make in the lives of others.

Jonah's Destination

God's ultimate purpose for Jonah was not just to get him out of the storm or out of the fish; it was to get him to Nineveh so that the city could receive God's forgiveness. Jonah 3:5 says, "The people of Nineveh believed God's message, and from the greatest to the least, they declared a fast and put on burlap to show their sorrow" (NLT). Even the king and his nobles declared, "...everyone must pray earnestly to God. They must turn from their evil ways and stop all their violence" (Jonah 3:8, NLT). The people were spared through repentance and faith in God, and that's what Jonah's assignment was all about.

The Destination of Jesus and the Disciples

Likewise, the purpose of the journey to the other side of the Sea of Galilee was not to simply get Jesus and the disciples through a storm, but to liberate and minister deliverance to a desperate man who had lived a life of torment and anguish.

And when He had come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him, not even with chains, because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones.

Mark 5:2-5

After Jesus ministered healing and deliverance to this man we read that the man "was sitting there fully clothed and perfectly sane"

(Mark 5:15, NLT). Instead of living a miserably tragic life as he had before, this man was given an assignment by Jesus—to go home to his family and to tell them everything the Lord had done for him and how merciful the Lord had been (Mark 5:19, NLT).

This is what the journey to the other side of the Sea of Galilee was about. It wasn't just about getting through a storm for the sake of getting through a storm. Certainly the disciples learned a lesson on faith when Jesus spoke to the storm, but there was an even greater purpose. This was not just about giving the disciples comfortable passage across the sea; it was about Jesus' compassion toward a desperately hurting individual, and the glory that God received as a result.

Paul's Destination

Similarly, Paul's ultimate purpose wasn't simply to outlast the storm. Even before his arrest and appealing his case to Caesar, Paul sensed that God wanted him to go to Rome. In Acts 19:21, we read, "Paul purposed in the Spirit...to go to Jerusalem, saying, 'After I have been there, I must also see Rome.'" As Paul continued his trek to Jerusalem, it is clear that he realized that other storms (figuratively speaking) were ahead of him. Paul's goal was not to have a trouble-free, comfortable life, but to do the will of God.

Now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

Acts 20:22-24

Paul was arrested and nearly killed while in Jerusalem, but the Lord did not correct Paul for having gone there. Instead, while Paul was confined in Jerusalem, Jesus said to him, "Be encouraged, Paul. Just as you have been a witness to me here in Jerusalem, you must preach the Good News in Rome as well" (Acts 23:11, NLT). One thing is clear about Paul's life and ministry: caution and personal comfort were not his top priorities. Doing the will of God mattered most to him.

Paul was not foolish or presumptuous, but he had counted the cost and was willing to do whatever it took to fulfill God's will for his life. He knew that Jesus had referred to him as "my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel" (Acts 9:15, NLT). Paul made it to Rome, bore witness of the Gospel, wrote epistles, stood trial, impacted history, and eventually stepped into Glory!

The Traits of Achievers

Those who achieve goals—those who fulfill great destinies—exhibit certain common traits such as focus and perseverance. Consider these observations and remarks:

- "You must keep your mind on the objective, not the obstacle."

- William Randolph Hearst

- "You will never reach your destination if you stop and throw stones at every dog that barks."

- Winston Churchill

- "By prevailing over all obstacles and distractions, one may unfailingly arrive at his chosen goal or destination."

- Christopher Columbus

- “Achievers are resolute in their goals and driven by determination. Discouragement is temporary, obstacles are overcome, and doubt is defeated, yielding to personal victory. You need to overcome the tug of people against you as you reach for high goals. Accept the challenges, so that you may feel the exhilaration of victory.”

- General George S. Patton

Do these quotes strike a chord in you? Do they reference the traits that you already exhibit in your life, or that you want to exhibit?

‘But I’m Not Called to Nineveh, the Gerasenes, or Rome!’

Just because you’re not an apostle or prophet doesn’t mean that you don’t have an assignment from God or purpose for your life. Your calling may not have anything to do with a distant geographical location, but consider all the things God is calling you to in life:

- God has called you to growth, maturity, and Christlikeness.
- God has called you to fruitfulness, faithfulness, and productivity.
- God has called you to be a godly student, spouse, parent, church member, employee, neighbor, leader, and so forth.

These destinies are just as valid as geographical destinations to which missionaries are called, and you may face storms as you seek to become who God has called you to be and to do what God has called you to. Your purpose is bigger than any storm you will ever face! It’s important that we have goals, especially when those goals reflect God’s purpose for our lives. Our goals should be connected to hope, and hope for tomorrow brings

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strength for today. That strength helps us to push through the storms and move toward victory in our lives.

God has destinations in mind for every believer. He has goals and objectives for our marriages, our finances, our emotions, and our health.

- The goal in overcoming a storm of controversy in a marriage is not simply to get a couple to stop arguing, but to bring peace and unity into the marriage so that it becomes a witness, reflecting and testifying of the relationship between Jesus and His Church.
- The goal in overcoming emotional turmoil is not simply so people can sit around and be happy, but so that they can minister peace, comfort, and encouragement to others.
- The goal in overcoming financial adversity is not simply to alleviate financial pressure, but to enable a person to become financially generous toward others and for the Kingdom of God.
- The goal in overcoming a health challenge is not so a person can sit pain-free and watch television all day long, but to enable that person to actively serve God.

Just as Jonah, the disciples, and Paul had destinations prescribed for them by God, all of us have destinations as well. We're called to be all that we can be spiritually, emotionally, physically, relationally, and financially—to maximize our potential for His service and for His glory! In the process of becoming and doing all that God desires, we'll no doubt face storms that will endeavor to hinder and distract us. Our responsibility is to stay focused on our destination and to continue to move forward with God.

Enjoy the Journey?

We're often told to "enjoy the journey," and I agree completely. It's easier to enjoy a journey, however, if we have at least somewhat of an idea of where we're headed. Yogi Berra, who was known for making zany, paradoxical statements said, "You've got to be very careful if you don't know where you're going, because you might not get there." Author Lewis Carroll said, "If you don't know where you're going, any road will get you there."

None of us know everything. Even Paul acknowledged that now we only know and see in part (1 Corinthians 13:9-12). But that's okay; only God is omniscient. We should be growing in the knowledge of His will, and our lives will be enriched as we obtain a clearer vision of who God has called us to be and what God has called us to do. We'll travel more effectively if we have insight from God as to where we're heading.

The road we travel won't always be smooth, but when we know our destination and we know that God is always with us, we can continue the journey with confidence. Like all of us, David was on a journey through life and part of that journey involved a stormy season that he referred to as "the valley of the shadow of death."

**Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil;
For You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.**

Psalm 23:4

Notice that David had a certain perspective on passing through that dark season. He said, "Yea, though I walk through...." David was not settling down or setting up camp in the valley of the shadow of death; he was passing *through*. The negative aspect of the journey was temporary, but

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David was persuaded that goodness and mercy would follow him all the days of his life and that he would dwell in the house of the Lord forever (Psalm 23:6).

Yes, enjoy the journey as much as you can, but never lose sight of your goal! The heroes of faith described in Hebrews chapter 11 all received a good testimony from Heaven because of their unwavering commitment to God and His plan.

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

Hebrews 11:13-16

Each of these believers ran their assigned course in a great relay race, but the complete fulfillment of God's larger plan was many generations away from them. Still, they envisioned and anticipated a great future where God's plan would be fully realized.

Earthly and Eternal Destinations

We must realize that when it comes to this life on earth, we're all just passing through. Speaking of our journey, Peter said that we are "sojourners and pilgrims" (1 Peter 2:11). The NLT says that we are "temporary residents and foreigners." At the end of his earthly journey, Paul said, "Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the

righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:8). This temporal life isn't the end; eternity with Christ awaits us.

In First Corinthians 15:19, Paul said, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (KJV). The Message Version renders this, "If all we get out of Christ is a little inspiration for a few short years, we're a pretty sorry lot." Keep Heaven in mind! Heaven is not a cop-out for people who don't want to be responsible in this life. It is the abode of God, and it is where the righteous will go when this life is over.

Fulfill your destiny here on earth. Enjoy the journey as you seek to become and do all that God has for you. Don't let the storms of life distract you from your purpose. Remember the words made famous in John Newton's timeless hymn "Amazing Grace":

**Through many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.**

Let God's grace lead you through the storms of life—through the dangers, toils, and snares—and into your earthly and eternal destinations.

Concluding Thought: Instead of focusing on the storms, set your heart on your destination. Jonah made it to Nineveh; the disciples made it to the other side; and Paul made it to Rome. Fasten your gaze and direct your attention to your goals and destiny, not the storms and obstacles.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What is your most frequent mindset—survival, success, or significance? If your mindset is not where you'd like it to be, what do you need to do to help move it in the right direction?
2. Having a clear picture of one's destination seems to be a key factor in being able to persevere through storms. How clear are your goals for yourself, and are you confident that your goals are consistent with God's plan for your life?
3. Do you tend to get preoccupied by the storms you encounter? Do the storms get you disoriented, so to speak, causing you to lose sight of your purpose and goals? What do you do to get refocused? How do you keep the storm from completely distracting you?
4. Which of the four quotes from the "Traits of Achievers" section was the most meaningful to you? Why was this quote especially meaningful?
5. How are you doing when it comes to enjoying your journey? Have you been able to keep your joy as you navigate through the storms of life?
6. Consider the words of John Newton's hymn, "Amazing Grace." To what extent has God's grace been involved in leading you through the storms of life? How have you experienced God's grace and what does His grace mean to you?