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KNOW WHERE YOU'RE GOING

“In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight” (Prov. 3:6).

When I was younger, my father was in the military and, for most of my childhood, he was stationed at Castle Air Force Base in Atwater, California. Base housing was not on the base but in town and separated into two groups. There was Old Base Housing and a newer group of homes, creatively called New Base Housing. A large field separated the two housing areas. During the day, cutting through the field was not a big deal, but it was another story at night. The field had no lighting, and it was completely undeveloped. On any given night, we avoided the field, but that was especially true on the creepiest night of the year, Halloween, or so one would think.

While I was perfectly content passing out candy and taking a share of my parent's purchase, my sister Leslie continued trick-or-treating well into her teens. She used Halloween as an opportunity to stay out late with her friends, which was exceptionally exciting when October 31st fell on a school night.

One warm Halloween evening, Leslie and her friends were enjoying their door-to-door festivities in New Base Housing. None of them stuck with the tradition of wearing costumes, but they did make sure they had their proper Halloween buckets; everyone, that is, except Naomi because her candy collector was a ‘chitlin bucket.’ As the night became darker, Leslie wanted to call it quits and head home to go through her stash, but Naomi wasn’t quite ready to stop. She pointed towards the blackened field and yelled to the others, “Hey, let’s go to Old Base Housing!”

“Nope! We aren’t going in there. No way.” Leslie replied.

Naomi tried to convince them to cross the dark field separating the neighborhoods, but they all refused. Finally, she said, “Ok, fine! I’ll go by myself. Bye suckas!”

Naomi ran into the dark field with nothing more than a dim flashlight to assist her vision. Shortly after she disappeared, my sister heard a scream. Then, with the light of the full moon reflecting off its surface, Leslie and the others spied the ‘chitlin bucket’ flying end-over-end as it dispensed candy through the air. They later discovered that Naomi had tripped over a water hose and, as a result of the fall, she lost most of her candy. She tried to scoop up as many of her treats as she could from the ground in the dark, but it proved to be an exercise in futility. At that point, Naomi agreed with the others and decided to call it a night.

Leslie, Naomi, and the rest of their friends came to our house to go through the night’s haul. I hadn’t yet been told of Naomi’s trip, so without knowing what happened when I looked into her bucket, I scratched my head and asked, “Who gave you dirt?”

Naomi learned that night what Leslie already knew; running through a dark, vacant field in the middle of the night, alone, even if you think you know the way, isn’t a good idea.



It was Christmas 2015, and my husband and I were somewhat at a loss for what gift to get my parents. We, ultimately, decided on a gift card to Outback Steakhouse. We even personalized the gift card with a picture of them that was taken at our wedding. A few weeks after Christmas, I called my mother to ask her if they had used the gift card yet.

My mother said, “Baby, let me tell you what happened.” Whenever my mother started a story with those words, I knew she was about to give me a good one.

“Your daddy and I were really looking forward to getting out and having a good time and enjoying our meal,” she said with a slight giggle in her voice. “I got dressed up. You know the girl was lookin’ cute, right? So, on our way there, I was telling your daddy how I was going to get a Bloomin’ Onion, and he said he was going to get a steak. So, we get there, right. We ate our meal, and your daddy had his steak. It was good, baby!”

“Mama,” I interrupted, “did you forget to bring the card with you?”

“No baby, we had the card. We made sure we had it before we left the house,” she answered before continuing her story. “So, the waiter gave your daddy the check, and your daddy handed him the gift card. Then the waiter said, ‘I’m sorry, sir, but I can’t take this.’ Your daddy said, ‘Why not? It’s an Outback card.’ And the waiter said, ‘I know sir, but this is Olive Garden.’”

I didn’t know whether to laugh or cry. My first thought was how expensive it would be to care for them if they both went senile at the same time. Then I heard my mother explode in laughter, so I followed her lead and decided to laugh with her. After we finished

laughing, I asked her to put Daddy on the phone. I asked, “Dad, with all of the talk about the Bloomin’ Onion, didn’t you think anything was weird when mom didn’t get one?”

He replied, “No. I didn’t think it was weird at all. It wasn’t on the menu.”

“Dad, how – just how – how did you end up at the wrong restaurant?”

“Baby, from the minute we got the gift card, I had in my mind *this* restaurant. I just thought this was the right restaurant, and I didn’t even read. I was that convinced we were in the right place.”

Christmas 2016, we gave them another gift card for Outback Steakhouse, but this time with a printout of Outback’s location circled on a map!

THE LESSON

Running off unprepared into the dark or having an idea so fixed in our minds that we cannot see the signs letting us know we are in the wrong place have something in common. In both cases, we don’t end up where we planned to be.

Ending up where we don’t want to be can happen in our Christian walk. Sometimes we end up falling on our faces in the dark or at the wrong destination because we either didn’t study God’s word or blindly followed tradition. Each of us is supposed to know why we worship the way we worship and why we believe what we believe. Striving to gain that knowledge brings us into a relationship with God. He desires us to draw closer to Him. He wants a relationship with us, and He clears our way. We only need to seek Him and choose to do His will earnestly. He will light the darkness and clear the path for us. We don’t have to run off on our own. He urges us to follow Him and wants us to do so willfully.

He never forces our decision to follow. If we keep our gaze focused upwards and on Him, we don't have to worry about tripping over anything that may lie ahead.

A CALL TO ACTION

Challenge yourself to know why you are on your path. You must know and understand why you believe what you believe. If asked, would you be able to support and defend your views using scripture? Can you confirm your stance using multiple scriptures? Using one of the following blank pages, write a belief you have that you have had to defend. It can be a belief about baptism, tithing, forgiveness, etc. Next, write every scripture you can find to support why you believe what you believe. Be sure to read the scripture in its entire context. Pray, study, seek and let Him light your path to the answer. Be open-minded, should the answer lead you in a direction that is different from your current beliefs.

SCRIPTURES

- ❖ Psalm 119:105
- ❖ Mark 7:5-13
- ❖ John 8:12
- ❖ 2 Timothy 2:15
- ❖ 1 Peter 3:15

PRAYER

Father, thank You for the confidence we have in You! Thank You for the reassurance we have in knowing that we do not need to worry when we give ourselves to You because You lead the way.