

I. Journey

A journey is an act of traveling from one place to another.

Sometimes we think of journeys geographically—moving from one city to another, taking a road trip, hiking a trail, traveling across the country.

But sometimes journeys never involve packing a suitcase.

There are educational journeys. The first day of kindergarten. Learning to read. High school graduation. College or trade school. Discovering who you are and what gifts you have to offer the world.

There are healing journeys. An injury, a surgery, months of rehabilitation, and the slow work of returning to strength.

Or healing from heartbreak, where some days you feel like yourself again, and other days a memory catches you off guard and the grief comes rushing back. Because healing is rarely a straight line.

There are journeys of parenthood. Journeys of aging. Journeys of recovery. Journeys of faith. Journeys of becoming.

A journey implies that something has changed. Maybe the calendar has changed. Maybe your address has changed. Maybe your circumstances have changed. Or maybe you have changed.

In some sense everyone is on a journey.

Some of us know exactly what journey we're on.

Some of us are trying to figure out what this next chapter of life looks like.

And some of us are simply putting one foot in front of the other and trying to make it through the week.

But whether we think about it often or not, life is moving. Time is passing. Experiences are shaping us. We are becoming someone.

The question isn't whether we're on a journey.

The question is whether we're paying attention to it.

And who we are becoming along the way?

The other thing about journeys is that they imply a destination.

If you're hiking, there's a summit.

If you're driving, there's an address.

If you're in school, there's a graduation.

Most journeys have some destination in mind. And many of us spend our lives focused on the next destination:

When I graduate...

When I get married...

When I get the promotion...

When the kids are grown...

When I retire...

When things finally settle down...

But life has a funny way of revealing that every destination becomes another beginning.

Graduation becomes a career.

Marriage becomes the work of learning how to love another person.

Retirement becomes its own season of questions and possibilities.

Every arrival opens into another journey

And yet, despite all the evidence to the contrary, we keep believing in what I want to call the myth of arrival.

The idea that somewhere out there is a future version of ourselves who is finally complete.

Finally successful enough.

Finally healed enough.

Finally secure enough.

Finally wise enough.

Finally happy enough.

Faithful enough

That seems to be the myth that our culture is focused on...so many books, podcasts, influencers, gurus, and even some religious traditions propose the perfect steps to get you to success.

Just follow this formula, Read these books, Build these habits, Optimize your life. Believe the right things. And eventually you'll arrive. You can secure your seat in the heavens, call 1-800-for truth.

We laugh, but I think there is something deeply human underneath all of this.

We want to know we're heading in the right direction.

We want clear steps WITH certainty that we will be successful, that this journey will lead us to a particular destination. We'd like to avoid detours, or really low valleys.

We want confidence that we aren't wasting our one precious journey.

But what if the goal isn't arrival?

What if there isn't some future version of ourselves waiting at the finish line who is finally complete. Finally secure enough.

Over the years, Andrew and I have occasionally talked about places we would want to live.

And sometimes I think, if I had multiple lives, I would probably live them very differently.

In one life, I'd live in a bigger city. I'd walk to coffee shops and restaurants. I'd experience the energy and diversity and creativity that comes with being surrounded by lots of people.

In another life, I'd live on a farm somewhere. I'd have a big garden, chickens, maybe some goats. I'd spend my days outside, paying attention to the seasons and the rhythms of the land.

Sometimes I think about the differences between jobs or careers, deciding between is a high salary more important, or is more time off more important. Should I work longer hours and rest later? Or should I go rest and play along the way?

In another life, I'd live somewhere in East Africa. There is something about the rhythms, the colors, the music, the sense of community that makes me feel alive. The smells of outdoor cooking, the slower pace. The way people often seem to understand that life is about more about community than productivity and possessions. There is a richness of humanity there that speaks to something deep within me.

And yet I can't live all those lives.

None of us can.

Which reminds me that there isn't just one correct destination.

There isn't one perfect career, one perfect city, one perfect lifestyle, one perfect path.

Many of those lives could be good lives.

Many of them could be meaningful lives.

Many of them could be worthwhile journeys.

There are many ways to "do" life.

And honestly, I find that comforting.

Because it means we don't have to spend our lives searching for the one perfect path, terrified that we might miss it.

Now that doesn't mean every path leads to places we want to go.

There are multiple paths that can lead toward wholeness.

Multiple paths that can lead toward love.

Multiple paths that can lead toward a meaningful life.

But not every journey does.

There is the myth of arrival, that we can arrive if we just find the right steps, there is also the myth that "success" equals wholeness.

People can spend years climbing a ladder only to discover it was leaning against the wrong wall.

Have you ever spent a time heading in - what you later realized - was the wrong direction?

What made you realize it was the wrong direction?

Did you see the WRONG WAY sign on the one way street? Or the dead end sign?
When I was a kid my dad would drive us to school in the mornings and for several years we lived about 20 mins away from where we went to school and my dad worked... one morning on the way to school my dad went straight to his office and forgot to drop us

off. It wasn't until he pulled in and parked and we started giggling in the backseat that he realized he hadn't taken us to school.

——> ASK Have you ever spent a time heading in - what you later realized - was the wrong direction?

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I was talking the other day with Justice, who is a teenager, and has the task ahead of her of breaking out of the generational cycle of addiction. And were talking about vaping and I bring up drugs she does the eye roll and ugh - I know drugs are bad, I'm not going to do them.

I know, but I also told her I don't think anyone wakes up one morning and says:

"I think today I'll begin a journey toward addiction."

Nobody decides:

"I'd like to end up estranged from my family."

"I'd like to lose the trust of everyone I love."

"I'd like to become bitter."

I don't think people wake up and decide I want to be the road block, the person that try to prevent things from changing, the one that constantly points out the reasons creative new ideas won't work.

I don't think people intentionally choose to end up in these places.

ASK —>

Do you agree or disagree?

Which is why paying attention to the journey matters. Because life isn't only taking us somewhere. Life is making something of us.

It's possible to move through years of life without ever pausing to ask:

What is this path doing to me?

What is shaping me?

What kind of person am I becoming?

Spirituality begins when we start paying attention to what that something is.

Paying attention to our lives.

Paying attention to what is shaping us.

Paying attention to what brings us alive.

Paying attention to what diminishes us.

Paying attention to the stories we are living inside of.

Paying attention to who we are becoming.

And perhaps the deepest question of faith is not whether we are successful.

Not whether we are productive.

Not whether we are right.

Not even whether we are certain.

Perhaps the deepest question of faith is whether we are becoming people more capable of love?

More capable of loving ourselves.

More capable of loving our neighbors.

More capable of loving those who are different from us.

More capable of loving this beautiful and broken world.

Because the goal of life may not be to master it.

The goal may be to become more fully human.

More compassionate.

More courageous.

More capable of love.

And perhaps that's why people have always told stories.

Why they have gathered wisdom.

Why they have learned from fellow travelers.

The Christian tradition is, among other things, a collection of stories from people who have wrestled with what it means to live well.

Abraham leaving home.

Ruth migrating to a new land.

The Israelites wandering in the wilderness.

Pilgrims singing their way to Jerusalem.

Jesus walking dusty roads with his disciples.

The early church trying to learn how to live together.

They weren't asking questions all that different from ours.

What matters?

How do we respond to suffering?

How do we treat one another?

What leads toward life?

The Christian tradition offers one long, imperfect, centuries-old conversation about what leads toward love, compassion, justice, mercy, and wholeness.

That is one reason I keep returning to it.

Not because it gives me certainty about everything.

But because it keeps inviting me to ask deeper questions.

Questions about what kind of person I am becoming.

Questions about what leads toward life.

People often look for absolute certainty.

But the Christian tradition has often offered something different.

Not a perfectly detailed map.

But trustworthy guideposts.

Wisdom from fellow travelers who have walked the road before us.

And so this summer, we're going to spend some time exploring those guideposts together.

Not because they can walk the journey for us.

Not because they remove all uncertainty.

But because they might help us pay attention.

To the path we are walking.

To the life we are building.

And to who we are becoming along the way.

ASK —>