

Critters at the Crossroads

Finding Rest for our Souls

The purpose of this study is to better understand how we can find rest for our souls as we navigate life's challenges and the chaos of the world we live in.

- Specifically, we want to examine ourselves according to God's word and identify our "default" responses for decision making to see if we are in alignment with God's instructions.

Jeremiah 6:16-17

¹⁶ *This is what the LORD says:*

"Stand at the crossroads and look;

ask for the ancient paths,

ask where the good way is, and walk in it,

and you will find rest for your souls.

But you said, 'We will not walk in it.'

¹⁷ *I appointed watchmen over you and said,*

'Listen to the sound of the trumpet!'

But you said, 'We will not listen.'

- God warned Israel they were standing at a critical crossroads.
 - Their decision would affect the course of their future .
 - Conflict existed because of their rebellion over a prolonged period of time.
 - Israel did not understand what their rebellion had already cost them and the magnitude of this particular crossroads.
- God gave clear instructions to His people with five clear imperatives about what they must do. (Stop-Look-Listen illustration)

1. Stand at the crossroads

Questions:

How many times have we been at a critical crossroads in our lives and just charged on through without considering the consequences?

Do past decisions immediately come to mind?

- Israel had chosen to ignore the signs so that they could continue to live life at their own pace and in their own way. They just "kept going" without considering WHERE they were going and WHERE they would end up.
- God does not do things according to our timetable. (Discipleship (learning how to follow Christ) is a time-consuming process.
- God's FIRST INSTRUCTION is to **STOP---(to) HALT----STAND STILL** at this crossroads.

2. LOOK at the mess we are in.

- Most of the time we don't want to do this.
- We don't want to stand still, much less look at the mess.
- God knew that we must face the truth that sin, and rebellion destroy lives.
- Why is the world in such a mess? One 3-letter word answers this question: SIN
- Look closely. How have we contributed to this mess?
- God's SECOND INSTRUCTION is to **LOOK** at the mess we are in (as individuals, families, and as a nation).

3. ASK for the ancient paths and for the good way.

Note: Why would God's chosen people need to ASK these questions?

- They had forsaken God's ways for their own.
 - They still went to the temple to worship.
 - They still gave the necessary gifts.
 - They were blessed and prosperous.

BUT, they had rejected the truths preach by those God had appointed as "watchmen" like Jeremiah. They wanted a watered-down version that condoned their wickedness and didn't interfere with their way.

- They had set up idols in the temple.
- Their entire families were involved in these pagan practices. (Jeremiah 7: 17-18)
- THE GOOD WAY NEVER CHANGES. Nor do the consequences of refusing God's way.
- The gospel of the Jesus Christ is the only way and demands repentance from sin, denial of self and asking for forgiveness and a changed life by His power.

God's THIRD INSTRUCTION is to **ASK** for the ancient paths and good way.

4. WALK the ancient path and LIVE the good way.

Note: It is WALKING....NOT RUNNING.

- Slow down. Let the world go by and learn God's ways.
- It takes time as you walk the narrow path by faith. Our minds must be reprogrammed by feeding on God's truth. Only HIS truth will tear down the lies of the enemy and the world.
- What IS the ancient path...the good way?
 - It refers to the old, tried, and true way.
 - The Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ never changes. One way, one truth, one life.

God's FOURTH INSTRUCTION is to WALK the ancient path and LIVE the good way.

5. You will FIND rest for your souls.

- There are only two options for us at this crossroads, just as there were only two choices for Israel.
 1. Listen to God's instructions and follow His ways.
 - Sin sucks the life from us little by little until we are trapped in bondage and darkness.

- When the Holy Spirit shines the light of God's truth within us, we find hope and freedom through Jesus Christ.
- When we step onto that ancient path and good way, and we remove ourselves from the rat race of the world, our value system changes, our direction is clearer, and our souls find rest in the peace that comes from knowing and trusting Christ.

2. If we don't listen and obey God at the crossroads, there will be no rest for our souls.

Note: The Israelites said, "We will not listen to God, and we will not walk in His ancient ways!" As a result, they paid the price in full for their rebellion.

"Stupid is as stupid does, my mama always said." (Forest Gump)

- When we refuse God's ancient paths we buy into the lie that His way robs us of our freedom.
- As we go deeper into sin even the good news of freedom in Christ begins to sound like bondage instead.
 - Man's idea of freedom always leads to bondage and destruction.
 - The depraved mind views things upside down. Truths look like lies. Freedom looks like bondage. Right looks wrong and wrong looks right. God's agape love looks like hate.

Note: There is a great crisis at the crossroads for America. It is not political. It is not financial, racist, psychological, or sexist. IT IS SPIRITUAL.

Jehovah God is calling us into account. STOP.....LOOK.....ASK.....WALK in obedience. Only the ancient paths and good way of God will lead to rest for our souls.

"The choices we make today will determine the consequences we face tomorrow." (Family Matters Sermon Series)