

DO YOU TRUST YOUR GPS?

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What do these have in common: Starbucks, bookstores, notebooks, a cabin with a fireplace in the mountains, writing, Jesus, maps, gold coins, and the beach? They are all hard-wired into my DNA to give me a jolt of pleasure just thinking about them. Even the words themselves bring pleasure. Some of these things are obvious, others I can't explain. Like maps. For some reason even the mere *thought* of a map brings a rush of excitement in me. Maps speak of travel, exciting places, treasure, and adventure. They speak of the unknown. My sister gave me a map for Christmas of the Cameron Highlands, Malaysia, where our family vacationed when I was growing up.

I've been thinking about maps over the last few days. Yesterday I was thinking how the Bible is a map. It shows us how to find all sorts of things, from God's love for us to who Jesus is. It maps out the Love Story.

We each have our own dynamic map that God has laid out for us, but generally He's the only one who sees it. It changes as we walk with Him and as we dream God dreams. We aren't meant to see a detailed map to follow, we're meant to live out the Quest that God has for us, for unless life is a Quest it's merely an existence. And God is all about Questing, about living the adventure as you pursue Him. Existing is safe, boring, discouraging, and unfulfilling. Existing is drawing your own map and following it to the detail. We all want maps—ones that show where we're going with our business, our job, our ministry, and our lives. Throughout life we can easily find ourselves lost, and the maps all seem to be in a different language. We want a familiar map where we can see where we are and where we need to go.

Occasionally God shows us part of our map, and we see ahead of time where He wants us to go and what He wants us to do. When my mother was eleven years old she knew that her destiny was to be a missionary, and now my parents are retired after thirty-six years of being missionaries in Thailand, though they are still missionaries to all sorts of internationals out of their home.

However, while there are times in our lives when God lets us see some of His map, for the most part He wants us to live by GPS. And there is a BIG difference between the two.

GPS stands for Global Positioning System. You merely program where you want to go and it will tell you how to get there. It will warn you when a turn is coming up, tell you the names of each street, and which lane to be in.

What makes a GPS so wonderful and how it differs from using a map or MapQuest directions is that in the event you miss your turn, the GPS will "recalculate" and immediately reroute you from where you currently are. No turning around and trying to find your way back in order to resume the given directions. Or, should you find yourself lost and *without* directions, you merely turn on the GPS, enter the info of where you want to be, give it a moment to find where you currently are, and then VOI LA! Follow its directions and you're not lost anymore.

But there is another major difference between a GPS and a map, and that difference drives some people crazy. A GPS only shows you as far as the next turn, instead of the whole picture. It's one thing to look at a map and have your bearings, but it is a very different thing to have to trust a machine to get you somewhere.

Many times God doesn't want to give us a map. With a map we don't need Him, and He wants a relationship with us, not to sit in the heavens while we go running off without Him. He wants us to trust him and use His GPS (God's Positioning System). He wants us to enjoy the journey instead of rushing to the goal, and believe me, if I've got a goal I'm rushing towards it! It's a struggle for me to take my eyes off a goal and enjoy the journey. I'm intense, I have things to accomplish, I want to check things off my list, MY LIFE ISN'T LONG ENOUGH ALREADY AND I HAVE SO MUCH I WANT TO DO! But over the last few years God has been working on me, teaching me to chill and to get more pleasure out of his journey.

Frankly, I don't much like living by GPS. I love it in the car, and I have no problem not knowing the whole picture, except occasionally on a long trip when I want an overall view to begin with. And I'll be the first to admit that the GPS can make a mistake. But so can MapQuest. Once, Terry and I got terribly lost trying to find a business in Tampa, Florida. It was raining so hard we couldn't read the street signs to follow our MapQuest directions. Another time I had a U.S. census poll taker

come to my house and ask where she was. We carefully studied the map they had given her until I was confused myself. I eventually saw where it went wrong and had to redraw it for her.

God wants us to live by GPS, but it can be scary and insecure, especially for those who like to be in control (like me). It's walking into the unknown without knowing what's there. I generally don't like surprises. I like to know the script ahead of time. Living by GPS takes a lot of trust, but I've learned that my GPS is trustworthy. He has my best interests in mind, even when the path ahead doesn't look like one I'd normally choose (and it is amazing how often that's the case!).

But we also have to remember to USE the GPS. Once, as I was on my way to meet Terry, I was forced by an accident to take a detour. It took me far into the hills of backwoods Kentucky, and before long I was utterly lost. And, as life often goes, my phone battery had died as soon as I called Terry and told him I was on my way. I worried that Terry would be worried about me as it took me more than an hour longer to find my way. When I asked, he said, "I wasn't worried, I knew you had the GPS." WHAT? That whole time it had never entered my mind to pull out the GPS and turn it on and let it lead me quickly and easily where I wanted to go.

We often get lost and forget that God is there waiting to lead us out, but it takes more than asking, we have to actually listen. And we often ask, listen, and then take off running, never waiting to hear the rest of what he's saying, so soon we're lost again. You'll soon find that if you don't keep following the GPS you'll never get where you're going, because it's a *series* of directions, one at a time. You only get the next step after you complete the one you're on.

There was one point where Terry and I were going through a rough time with our business and I was begging God for directions, for a map. We couldn't see any path in front of us, we felt totally and utterly lost, wandering around in the dark amidst what felt like a ferocious storm.

One night, as I again cried out in fear, God asked me, "Is that what you want? To go back to the familiar? Do you want to exchange your GPS for the map, the known?" I thought about it, and frankly, I was tempted.

"But when will daylight come to light our path instead of the storm?" I asked. "I'm so tired of seeing ahead only when the lightning flashes. It's dark and stormy in our

lives right now and we appear to be crashing and burning. I know that once the storm blows over and daybreak comes we'll be able to see the path again, but we need hope that we'll survive the storm!"

Using God's GPS it is easy to panic when we can't see ahead except to the next turn, and there are times when we can't even see that. We have to get our eyes off of ourselves and our cold, dark, death-fearing panic and sit out the storm, only moving when God lights up a path and says "Step now." Dawn will come eventually. We don't know what world or path it will show, what animals or terrain or fears or beauty and peace lay ahead—but it's still better than the old, known map.

"No God, I take it back," I said, "we don't want to go back to the known. I'm sorry. We don't want to leave your GPS for our own map." And we hunkered down and waited out the storm, only taking a step as God told us where to put our foot.

We need to develop a Quester mentality. Questers wonder what's out there. They're discontent to sit and enjoy the roses, they're looking around, sniffing out the new, the exciting, the God-stuff going on. Their eyes are scanning the path ahead looking for God's next step. They're willing to suffer long trails and hard beds and cold and stormy days if He'll let them join Him in the adventure. Because in the end the Quest is worth it. In the end that's the only life worth living. Questing, not existence. Questing is the journey of running and dancing over the mountains with Jesus, together as we impact the world.

We must keep the Questing perspective and not let ourselves begin to draw our own map. We need a huge sense of humor, and a continually listening ear. Put down the map, lock your eyes on the GPS, and take the first step. You will feel the adrenaline start to rise. You will begin to feel alive and that life has purpose. Your spiritual antenna will begin to tingle, and you'll do more than hear God speaking to you, you will begin to sense what God wants before He speaks. Because you and He will be walking together, every minute, whatever the path ahead looks like. And it's an exhilarating, minute-by-minute walk.

I love maps, but I'd rather live by GPS.