

Equipped to overcome lack of direction

Have you ever been driving and missed your turning? Sometimes when we do this we end up going round in circles looking for a signpost or something familiar. This can also happen as we seek to live as followers of Jesus Christ. Somewhere along the journey we lose our way and find ourselves aimlessly going nowhere. The disciples of Jesus lacked direction for a time after His death, and even after His resurrection from the dead. Their experience can help us as we seek to overcome lack of direction in our lives.

1. Lack of direction results from living apart from Jesus. The disciples had experienced all the terrible trauma of losing Jesus. But then He had amazingly shown Himself to be alive on a number of different occasions. Then things went quiet. They didn't see Him for a while. They drifted back to Galilee where it had all begun and just hung around. No Jesus. What would they do now? What was the way forward? Seven of them were there, unsure of what to do next. Are you lacking direction in your life just now? Perhaps it's because you're living at a distance from Jesus. Have you been neglecting your daily habit of Bible reading and prayer? Lack of direction will be the result.

2. When we lack direction we often go back to old habits and lifestyle. Simon Peter, always the leader, suggested some direction to the other disciples. *"I'm going fishing,"* he said. *"We'll come too"* all the others said.¹ It was direction of a sort, but it was direction that took them back to what they had been doing before they met Jesus. He had called them to leave their fishing and to follow Him and serve Him. But when they lacked direction they drifted back to their old ways. It's a principle of Christian living that if we're not going forwards, we're going backwards.

3. Going backwards is a frustrating experience. So, the disciples returned to their fishing. After three and a half years of itinerant ministry I suppose they must have thought they could just go back to being successful commercial fishermen. They did what they had always done, worked hard all night on the sea they were so familiar with, but caught nothing. Casting the net and hauling it in again. Not a single fish. Not even a minnow. How frustrating that must have been - and so is a return to the old life for a Christian. If we lose direction and go backwards, we'll find it an intensely frustrating and unsatisfying experience.

4. Overcoming lack of direction begins with a fresh encounter with Jesus. He appeared to them on the shore of the Sea of Galilee in the half light of dawn. But they didn't recognise Him at first. Only when they had a miraculous catch of fish at His command did they know who He was.² This is what we need to counter lack of direction. Sometimes we may only see Him dimly at first, but as we meditate on His word and pray, we will experience more and more of His soul-refreshing, supernatural power and presence.

5. Overcoming lack of direction requires renewed commitment. Simon Peter was the one who suggested going back to fishing. He was the ringleader of the directionless, backward-looking disciples. But before he could begin to go forward in the path mapped out for him, Jesus had to challenge Peter's love three times, and his willingness to follow Him twice.³ In many ways, this is the key to overcoming lack of direction in our lives - a renewed expression of our love for Christ evidenced by a willingness to follow Him wherever He leads. Perhaps we all need to regularly assess our progress as Christians. If we feel we have lost our way, we need to renew our commitment to love and follow Him, and go in the direction He leads.

¹ John 21:3 (NLT)

² John 21:4-7

³ John 21:15-22