

THE E-ZINE OF MASTER'S INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

# Master's Journey

Second Quarter 2009 Volume IV Issue 2



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A Publication of Master's  
International School of Divinity

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Master's Journey is published four times a year for students, alumni and friends of MISD. Master's Journey has a verified circulation of 8,000 each issue.

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## Satan's Only Weapon

The only weapon Satan has to use against true Christians is the occupation of the attention of the mind. This might sound strange or even new to many believers; but it is a primary, New Testament teaching; and one that reveals the purpose of Satan's attacks. There are two Greek words used in this teaching, the noun *merimna* and its verb form *merimnao*. *Merimna* means "to occupy the attention of the mind." Notice that it does not mean to occupy the mind, but to occupy the *attention* of the mind. This concept was first taught by Jesus as recorded in Matthew. The length of His teaching, ten verses, emphasizes the importance of this concept.

### Matthew 6:24-34

24) *No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*

25) *Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?*

Jesus first establishes that human beings are created with the capacity to serve only one master. In the phrase "Ye cannot serve God and mammon," the Greek word translated "cannot" is the word meaning "capacity" or "ability." He is literally saying, "You are not able (do not have the capacity) to serve God and the physical things of life."

Jesus then begins His teaching on the occupation of the attention of the mind (vs. 25). He first commands us to "take no thought for your life." The Greek word translated "thought" is the noun *merimna*. He is saying that we are not to let anything about this earthly life occupy the attention of our minds, whether it be food, drink or clothing, because even the bare necessities of life can distract us from the things of the Lord and occupy the attention of our minds.

26) *Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?*

27) *Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?*

28) *And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:*

29) *And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these*

30) *Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith*

In verses 26 and 28-30, Jesus uses examples from

## As Good as It Gets: The Balanced Life?

We are probably familiar with the often-mentioned human resources axiom: *The response you are getting from employees is exactly what your current message is motivating and rewarding.*

We recognize this law of human performance when it comes to addressing questions of product promotion, compensation or market mix. But many times we fail to see that this truth applies to *everyone in relationship to us.*

Are your sales people missing their goals? The truth is that they are doing exactly what you are motivating them to do. Are your customers wavering or resisting? Your message is motivating this behavior. Are your vendors giving you problems? Your behavior supports these actions. And it's not just about business. The same adage applies at home, at church and in your neighborhood.

The life you have right now is exactly what your current thinking is motivating and rewarding.

If you want to improve your life, something must change in *the way you think*. It won't work to adopt a new behavior technique because the new behaviors will still be based on the old motivators and rewards. Sooner rather than later, the behaviors will return to the old patterns because the underlying thought process didn't change.

We experience examples of this all the time. Want to lose weight? You will never succeed until you change the way you THINK, not just the way you eat. Want to stop smoking? Unless you change your MIND, you won't make it. Want to make more profits, gain greater market share? Business progresses at the speed of THOUGHT, not manufacturing or sales or advertising.

So, look at your life right now. Is this what you want? Is this what *completely* satisfies you? If you can say, "Yes, this is as good as it gets", then STOP right here. You don't need to do anything more. Have a nice day.

But if you aren't able to stand up as shout, "This is everything I ever wanted", then I am suggesting that the next great step forward will be with your MIND, not with your feet. Let's take a deeper look at the mental path ahead.

There are two competing paradigms in business today. The first is the effort-perfection model. The second is the vision-available model.

The first looks and feels like this:

1. If it's going to be, it's up to me
2. If you want to do something right, you have to do it yourself
3. I am the captain of my own fate
4. The goal of life is accumulation
5. Problem-solving skills are essential for success
6. Knowledge is power
7. Power is control
8. Life is a zero-sum game
9. What matters most is self-fulfillment

creation to illustrate that our heavenly Father will supply us with the things we need; and, in verse 27, Jesus asks a question about taking thought to add height to our stature. The Greek word for "taking thought" is the verb form *merimnao* (to have the attention of one's mind occupied). With an understanding of *merimnao*'s definition, it is easy to perceive what the Lord is saying— that having our minds occupied with worldly things, in an attempt to add to our stature, is not going to help us; we will be occupied over our stature; yet, we will not be able to add to it.

31) *Therefore take no thought saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?*

32) *For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.*

33) *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

34) *Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*

Jesus returns, in verse 31, to the basic principle with which He began. Using the verb form of *merimnao*, He once again commands that we take no thought for (that we not be occupied with) the necessities of life. He emphasizes that the Gentiles (or heathen) seek after these things, but our heavenly Father already knows that we need them. He tells us, His people, to seek the kingdom of God first and affirms that then all the things we need will be provided to us by God. Jesus is teaching in verse 33 what He introduced in verse 24; a human being is created with the capacity to serve only one master; consequently, we are commanded to direct our attention to the kingdom of God, and be occupied with it, while allowing God to provide the things we physically need. Jesus then instructs us to take no thought for tomorrow (again using the verb *merimnao*), because the evil in it is sufficient to tempt our attention away from the kingdom of God. These teachings are reiterated in the letters of both Peter and Paul.

#### 1 Peter 5:6-9

6) *Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:*

7) *casting all your care (merimna) upon him; for he careth for you*

8) *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:*

9) *whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.*

Peter's message to believers is to submit to God's humbling process by casting all of our care upon the Lord. The Greek word used for "care" is *merimna*. He is teaching that we are to cast upon the Lord all those things that would normally occupy the attention of our minds, trusting that our needs will be provided for, because God cares for us.

Peter also commands believers to think soberly and to be watchful, because our adversary is walking around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. We know, from the Book of Job, that

The second looks and feels like this:

1. I am part of something bigger than me
2. I am not alone
3. I do not fully control my own destiny
4. The goal of life is giving myself away
5. My problem-solving skills will never be enough to solve all the problems
6. Power is imprisoning
7. Obedience is freedom
8. Life is possibility unfolded
9. What matters most is significant purpose

The behaviors fostered and rewarded by these two competing models differ dramatically. Unfortunately, many of us attempt to live with one foot in each camp. We have discovered the uncomfortable, frustrating struggle of trying to reconcile these models. Our usual compromise is compartmentalization. We break up our lives into "watertight" boxes, adopting the behaviors of accumulation, competition and individual self-fulfillment in work while we *try* to act from obedience at church and cooperation at home. We are constantly re-drawing the lines and shoring up the bulkheads as the water from one set of behaviors threatens to flood another set of behaviors. We are *leaking at the core*.

Most of us recognize this inconsistent behavior but we seem to be powerless to do anything about it in the long term. Our lives are spent *adjusting*. In order to get off this treadmill, we need to do some seriously deep thinking. We need to answer the question:

*Why am I having so much trouble living a balanced life?*

What this question shows us is so obvious we have overlooked it. We have forgotten to think backwards. We have *accepted* the question as the legitimate goal of living. But this question already contains a paradigm. That paradigm is:

The best life is a perfectly balanced life.

Our question really begs the question. Is life about balance? Once we have accepted this standard, all the rest follows. We are ushered down the aisle of personal performance, individual responsibility, compartmentalization, accumulation and self-determination in an effort to capture that elusive trophy – the balanced life.

But thinking backwards jars my assumptions. *Why do I think life is supposed to be balanced? Where did I get this idea? How come it dominates my experience?*

The balanced life is a cultural ideal presented to the Western mind by the Greeks. Because the Greeks did not believe in a personal God, they viewed life as the constant conflict between the forces that acted on Man and Man's effort to counteract those forces. They lived in an impersonal, random and chaotic universe where the only method of successful survival was to keep things under control. Since life could upset the apple cart at any moment, the best solution for living was to *balance* the good and the bad so that no one event would cause disastrous results. When life was in balance, Man could control his destiny for the moment.

This ideal has a powerful effect on us today. What we fear becomes the focus of our efforts to prepare for. We buy insurance, use hedge

Satan scouts believers. Since he cannot devour us spiritually, he is looking to find the earthly things that will capture the occupation of our minds.

Philippians 4:4-7

- 4) *Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice.*
- 5) *Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.*
- 6) *Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*
- 7) *And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

The teaching of trusting the Lord in lieu of allowing the distractions of this physical life to occupy the attention of our minds is presented and applied by Paul in Philippians 4. He does so as he ministers to two ladies who cannot agree on things in the church at Philippi. Having written, in verse two of this chapter, that the basic truth to be applied to this situation is for them "to be of the same mind in the Lord," Paul then gives, in verses 4-7, several commands that must be followed in order to be of the same mind in the Lord.

First, in verse 4, Paul commands that our joy be in the Lord always rather than in getting our own way. His next command fits closely with the first: Our moderation should be known to all men, because the Lord is near. Any Christian who is demanding his or her own way in the church is one who is not moderate regarding the things of the world. A moderate person is not attached to the things of the world, so as to be able to let go of anything that might interfere with the unity of fellowship. When it comes to differences of opinion, believers are to be prepared to give up what we want in order for the Lord's will to be done.

Paul's next command is found in verse 6. He says, "Be careful for nothing." The word "careful" is the verb *merimnao*. The word translated "nothing" more literally means, "not one thing." Therefore, we believers are not to allow any one thing to occupy the attention of our minds. When he writes the last command of this series, "...but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God," Paul is presenting the same principle that Peter did in I Peter 5:7—we are not to allow anything to occupy the attention of our minds; instead, we are to pray and request that God take care of each thing. The result of doing this, Paul reveals, is that the peace of God guards our hearts and minds.

This teaching regarding Satan's only weapon against believers is important for all true Christians and students of the Word of God to understand. We must comprehend the methods of Satan, so that we recognize them and understand the reason for them. Only then will we be able to make the decisions necessary to keep our lives on the path of the Lord's calling.

Many Master's Divinity students are experiencing financial hardship because of the present economic crisis. The Lord's teaching in Matthew 6, as well as subsequent teachings by Peter and Paul, address the very times in which we live. Jesus teaches that Satan will use even the necessities of life as a means to occupy the minds of believers, attempting to keep us from focusing on the Lord and His Word. Be prepared, therefore, you who are drawn by the Lord to the intense study of God's Word. Expect Satan to make an all-out effort

and create retirement funds because we want protection against uncontrollable forces. We live in a universe of risk and control is our balancing tool. Unfortunately, we often discover that in spite of all our efforts, control evades us. Life tips us over and we fall off the teeter-totter.

Have you ever noticed that just when you got control over one part of your life, another part seemed to slip into chaos? Why didn't that constant theme ever make you question whether balance was the right objective? You probably didn't question it because you just assumed that was the way life should be. The cultural pattern blinded you to reality. But God has a way of pushing reality through our best-laid plans. He wants us to see that there is another way to look at life – a way that He put in place long before the Greeks arrived on the scene.

The balanced life is immensely complicated. How do you determine how much effort is needed to keep work, home, family, church and social relationship all functioning perfectly? If you have the formula, let me know and we'll write a book. For most people, balance is a trial and error process – and it turns out to be mostly error. Others constantly remind us, "you don't take enough time for me". No day is long enough to meet all the expectations. Behaviorally, the balanced life is a myth! It just can't be done because human living is far too demanding for real balance. Add time with God to the equation and we all come up inadequate.

But God already knew this. That's why He doesn't expect or demand balance. In fact, God's answer is the simplifying principle of living. God doesn't want your balanced life. He wants your totally committed, absolutely focused, myopic concentration of Him. "Seek ye first". "Love God with all". The theme is the same over and over. There is only *one* relationship that I am to manage completely – my relationship to Him. God's view of living is not the teeter-totter. It's the bull's-eye. In the very center is my perfect score – a relationship in perfect harmony with Him. Every concentric ring expending out from the center is a relationship with less of my control. That design is intentional. God wants me to see that I *cannot control all the aspects of living*. God wants me to see that *dependence* is the answer to life. I will never achieve balance because balance is based on the false theology of independent living. In God's world, I *need* Him because I cannot control any relationship except my direct relationship with Him. He, on the other hand, is perfectly able to take care of every one of my other relationships on my behalf as long as I give Him complete authority to do so. In other words, when I stop trying to manage the consequences of life and put all of my energy into managing my vertical relationship with the Father, He will order my steps so that I will accomplish His will. And that is real living.

Which paradigm determines your picture of living? Are you caught in the false theology of independence, trying unsuccessfully to bring control to all of your relationships in order to achieve balance? Or have you sold out to God, yielding the consequences of your life to Him while you put all your eggs in the Father's basket? Which paradigm presents the greater risk? The one that says "do it on your own" or the one that says, "give it all to Me"? Don't let your past cultural mythology dictate your emotional reaction. Unless you want to play god, you better seriously consider if balance is as good as it gets.

Skip Moen, D. Phil., Academic Dean, MISD



to occupy the attention of your minds in an attempt to deter you from continuing the study of God's Word; but, remain steadfast in God's calling, while submitting your requests to Him in prayer. Jesus has revealed that your heavenly Father will supply what you need.

Bill Klein, Distinguished Professor of Biblical Greek, MISD.

All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version of the Bible.



## “I know the plans I have for you.” A Look at Jeremiah 29:11

Most of us are quite familiar with this verse, perhaps too much so. We skip over it, thinking that there isn't a lot to mine here. We're wrong. A close examination of the verse reveals a very different and complex understanding.

It all starts with “**know**”. The Hebrew word is *yada*. This word occurs nearly 1000 times. It signifies the many contexts of gaining information through the senses. It is used of God's understanding of men as well as our understanding of God. It describes the context of being acquainted with other persons, of distinguishing between good and evil, of moral insight and judgment and of the prophetic revelation directly to men of God's will. It is also used euphemistically to describe sexual contact and sexual perversions.

The Bible uses this word to proclaim God's complete knowledge of creation. Nothing can be hidden from His understanding. God's perception and recognition extend to every act and circumstance. God's knowledge extends to our relationships, tendencies, behavior, talents and emotions. God talks about knowing us before we are even born. Someone with that kind of knowledge would certainly know what is best for us and exactly how we should fit into His world

The word “**plans**” is from the Hebrew root *hashab*. In this case it is the noun *mahashaba*. The verb form “make plans, reckon, account or think” is used 121 times. There are several different meanings but they all within the context of creating a new idea. The most interesting use of this word is found in Genesis 15:6 where the meaning is “impute” or “account”. In that verse, God *counts* Abraham righteous – He *imputes* righteousness to Abraham.

In the noun form *mahashaba*, the word means “thought, plan or invention”. It is used in Genesis 6:5 about the evil thoughts of all mankind, in Jeremiah about the plans that men follow and in 2 Chronicles about creating an invention. Again, the context is about new ideas.

I know the *new ideas* I have for you. God's plans are never cast in concrete. They are flexible, adjusting to our lives as our circumstances change. It is easy to think that God has only one perfect plan for your life and that if you make a mistake or sin, the plan will be forever destroyed. Then you will have to live with second best, then third best and so on each time you fail to meet expectations. But God does not have one perfect plan for you. He has one purpose – one goal – that you become all that you were meant to be through conformity to the image of Christ. The goal never changes. But the plans are new ideas every day. God is full of surprises. An eternal inventor.



## God's Economy

The Bible tells us that God's economy is not the world's economy, they are different! During this global economic crisis, what can we learn from God's word that will help us to correct our mistakes, repent from our sin and align ourselves with His plans and purposes so we can receive His provision and blessing in our lives?

Let's look at some biblical examples of business owners who experienced a severe, nationwide recession in their industry, and how they prospered in spite of it. What, you don't think the Bible talks about this stuff? Of course it does. But before we get into God's word, let's conduct a quick review of some foundational issues.

When it comes to economics, Christians have some real problems to overcome. There are forces at work which prevent Christians from operating in God's economy, the kingdom of more than enough, and hold them prisoner in the world's system, the land of never enough.

One of the forces we battle is our own worldview. Our worldview is essentially the lens through which we view and interpret life. We all have one, and it is formed in us without our knowledge through our families, religious and formal education, training and experiences. Unfortunately, for western evangelical Christians, our worldview is predominantly Greek. This is problematic for us because God revealed Himself and communicated truth to the world through His chosen people, the nation of Israel, and they were not Greek. They were Hebrew!

One of the by-products of this Greek worldview we inherited is dualism. We have separated our lives between the sacred and the secular; believing somehow that God and His word are relevant for dealing with sin and personal relationships, but not relevant when addressing economics, business, finance, investing and many other life and community issues. God never intended it to be this way, but the impact on our thinking and behavior has been significant.

We must recognize that the world's system has intentionally built its economic theories upon a foundation without God. “Economists were the first scholars who set about self-consciously to separate the content and categories of their technical discussions from all appeals to religion and morality. This separation began in the seventeenth century, and it has never been healed. Seventeenth-century economists believed that while religious and moral debates can never be settled by appeals to reason, technical economic debates can be. This faith is still integral to modern economics. It is still just as utopian; the economists are legendary for their inability to agree on anything.” (Baptized Inflation, 1986, P. 17 by Ian Hodge) Next, when considering the world's economy, let me ask you a question. Would you embrace the economic theories of men who were anti-God and also known homosexual perverts? Certainly not! For what truth could these deprived minds offer the Christian who is seeking to obey a holy and just God? None! Yet, that is exactly who we have believed. John Maynard Keynes, a self proclaimed immoralist and a homosexual with a penchant for Tunisian boys, promulgated the ideology of government intervention in the economy through fiscal stimulus and budget deficits when the economy was underperforming and fiscal restraint when the economy was over performing. Of course, publicly elected officials are incapable of financial restraint and enacting policies that cut spending and benefits and raise taxes since their jobs are dependent upon the favor of their constituents

### ***I know the new plans I have for you***

This word is really not “have”. We translate it this way because it makes sense in English, but in Hebrew the verse really says “I know the plans that I plan for you” or “I know the purposes that I purpose for you”. So, the word for “plans” that we looked at is really used twice, first as a noun and then as a verb. In the second case, the verb has a little different sense. The noun is *mahashaba*. It means “new ideas”. The verb is *hashab*. The verb means “make plans, reckon, account or think”. We already saw that it is the verb used to describe God’s decision to see Abraham as righteous. Perhaps there is more to this verse than simply that God has purposes for our lives. Could it be that God’s purpose includes being counted as righteous? That sense of the verb is certainly in God’s purpose for each of us. In fact, without that sense of the verse, none of God’s plans will ever meet His purpose.

### ***I know the plans I have for you. Plans to prosper you and not to harm you.***

Prosper is the word *shalom*. It primarily means “peace”. But it also has the meanings “perfect, whole, complete, prosperity, well, health and safety”. It is far more than just the absence of conflict and strife. It encompasses the entire range of well-being. Therefore, it includes spiritual and physical completeness, harmony and fulfillment. But *shalom* comes from a Hebrew culture, not a Greek culture. The word is couched in relationship, not possessions. Ultimately, *shalom* is about our relationship to the One who can provide all of the other aspects of completeness. Without the primary relationship as the fundamental purpose of life, all of the other aspects of living are unsteady. They will lack a solid foundation. In this verse, the active agent is God. We do not find prosperity, peace and wholeness on our own. God’s direct activity in our lives is the basis of *shalom*. The intention of God’s purposes for us is *shalom*.

### ***I know the plans I have for you. Plans to prosper you and not to harm you.***

Literally, this should say “and not for evil”. First, it means that God’s new ideas for you are for your good. His purposes are to bring you *shalom*, not evil. He is not a vengeful or malicious God. He is a God of holy grace, compassion and care. God has no plan to do you evil. In fact, His plan is just the opposite.

The word for “evil” is *ra*. The root behind *ra* is a noun that means “rotten, spoiled or good for nothing”. It is most often used in conjunction with the word *tob* which means “good”. The first instance of this word is in the Garden of Eden in the expression “tree of the knowledge of good and evil”. The Bible recognizes that men often have varying idea about what is evil. We acknowledge this fact about cultural differences every day. Sometimes it surprises us when we see what other cultures consider morally correct. However, even though the Bible recognizes this fact, the final verdict on good and evil is always in God’s hands. Since He is the Judge of the world, His determination about what is evil is the last word on the subject. If God says that some act or event is evil, there is no negotiation on the matter. The essence of evil is disobedience to God’s will. It is progressive. Evil begins with a lack of acknowledgement – we do not recognize God as God, we refuse to give Him honor as the Creator. From this lack of acknowledgement, we proceed to an attitude of ingratitude. We are not thankful for what God has done. Refusal and ingratitude become ingrained as habit, then compulsion. The result is that we do injury to others and to ourselves.

In this verse, God tells us not only that He has no plans to harm us,

which is easily won by spending more money on them. The result has been a continuous escalating national debt in good times and bad, which requires the government to print more money, stimulating inflation and robbing the nation’s citizens of purchasing power. Now, under Obama, the Keynesian style economic policies are expanding even further and the stage has been set for record budget deficits in the trillions of dollars for years to come in order to finance his socialistic policies to correct the current economic crisis. The debt burden our nation will have to service in the future will be crippling. Contrast this scene with what God told Israel. If they were obedient, they would be blessed and they would not borrow from other nations, but they would lend to them.

As Israel prepared to enter the Promised Land, Moses retold the Law of God to a generation that had grown up in the desert with a slave mentality (their ancestors were generations of slaves in Egypt). Moses told them,

**4** "However, there will be no poor among you, since the LORD will surely bless you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, **5 if only you listen obediently to the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all this commandment which I am commanding you today.** **6** "For the LORD your God will bless you as He has promised you, and you will lend to many nations, but you will not borrow; and you will rule over many nations, but they will not rule over you. (Deuteronomy 15:4-6)

Next, we must embrace the fact that our definition and measurements of success are not consistent with God’s either. He is much more interested in your relationship to Him and to others within the community of faith, as well as your personal character development, than He is with your accumulation of wealth.

Finally, God uses difficult times and will intentionally lead us into them, for the purposes of developing our character and preparing us for the future. If the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert to be tempted by the devil, we can expect to be led into some difficult times as well. (Mathew 4:1)

So, with that brief foundation, what does our King say about His kingdom’s economics and how can it help you and your business today in our global economic crisis?

In ancient agrarian societies, the business owners were farmers. These farmers were dependent upon the land to produce crops and for their herds to multiply in size in order to accumulate wealth for their families. So, our current economic recession can be compared to an agrarian economy that experienced a famine.

The first famine mentioned in the Bible occurred shortly after God promised to bless Abram (before God changed his name to Abraham). In Genesis 12 God told Abram to “Leave your country, your people, and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you.” Abram obeyed God and at the age of 75 left the land of Canaan. God appears to Abram in Canaan and promises that his offspring will be given the land. Shortly after this happens though, there was a famine so severe in the land that Abram had to leave. What! How could this happen? Abram was obedient, experienced the presence of God, received such tremendous promises and then he has to leave it all behind because of a terrible famine! Clearly, God’s ways are not our ways. Abram left and went down to Egypt.

Now, I think this famine really shook Abram up. For anyone facing economic disaster, tremendous business losses or even failure, it is a

but His plans and purposes will keep us from self-inflicted harm. God's plan is for harmony, unity, peace and life. Ignoring His plans for us will lead to strife, hostility, injury and death.

***I know the plans I have for you. Plans to prosper you and not to harm you. Plans to give you a future with hope.***

The last part of the verse reiterates the intention of God's plans. God has two goals in mind. The first is "a future". The word is *aharit*.

What is unusual about this word is that it literally means "afterward, backwards or after part". So, how can it be about the future? H. W. Wolff says that the Hebrew concept of time is like a man rowing a boat. He sees where he has been, but the future is toward his back. He *backs* into the future. It is entirely unknown to him because it is behind him!

This picture has some very powerful theology in it. First, God must set our course since only He can see "behind" us. But secondly, we have as our guide what we see, the course we have been following. We see the past because we are facing it. The past is in "front" of us. No wonder our history with God is so important. It is not just about where we came from. It is the visible guide for our course into the future. Finally, there is a great connection with the idea that we must trust God's direction and not fear. If we are "backing" into the future, we must trust the guide. We cannot see where we are going, but He can.

There is a tremendous example of this word in a story from Genesis. When Lot and his wife ran from the destruction of Sodom, they were told not to look back. Lot's wife did look back and she saw her future. She died there. Looking back was a choice not to obey the guide who was taking her out of harm's way.

So much of our lives seems to be consumed with plans for our future. We all want to "look ahead" as though we will be able to guide and protect ourselves from what may come. But God says that the real direction of our life should be to the past. The course of our life was set in the past. The victory over the future happened in the past. It is our history with God that gives us peace and confidence.

Skip Moen, D. Phil., Academic Dean, MISD



**CAUTION: CARGO MAY SHIFT!**

## **Right Wing - Left Wing and the Bird in the Middle**

There's lots of talk these days about right wing and left wing stuff. Right wingers claim the traditional values high ground, while left wingers claim the progressive no-values high ground. Listen to each side profess their moral mandates, and brother it's hard to know who to believe. Everybody sounds right!

scary and stressful time. Abram is human, and in his uncertainty and fear regarding his circumstances, he fails. As he enters Egypt, Abram plots to deceive the Egyptians by having his gorgeous wife Sarai tell everyone that she is his sister, and not his wife. He does this thinking it will protect his own life and bring prosperity to his business. Well, it worked - but at what cost? Abram uses his own wife to placate Pharaoh and in return he acquires tremendous assets for his business. This displeases God, as you could imagine, and so the Lord inflicts serious diseases on Pharaoh and his entire household. When the Pharaoh realizes what has happened, he kicks them out of Egypt.

So, Abram leaves Egypt with his wife and everything he had. The Bible tells us that Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold. But, was it worth the deceit? Was it worth the damage to his relationship with his wife? How much better off could they have been if Abram had trusted God with their circumstances in Egypt and not lied to the Egyptians?

The next economic recession in Scripture is with Abraham's son Isaac. Abraham has died and Isaac has taken over the family business. In Genesis 26, Isaac is confronted with a nationwide famine that threatens his survival, just like his father, so he is forced to relocate too. Now, the conventional wisdom was to respond to a famine by going down to Egypt; it worked before for Abraham. But, God appeared to Isaac and said "Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live." So, Isaac obeys God and goes north to Gerar. God told Isaac, "Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham." (Genesis 26:3)

The Bible tells us that "Isaac planted crops in that land and the same year reaped a hundredfold, because the LORD blessed him. The man became rich, and his wealth continued to grow until he became very wealthy. He had so many flocks and herds and servants that the Philistines envied him." (Gen. 26 12-14)

However, Isaac's story of wealth accumulation in Gerar during an economic crisis back home is not complete. You see, Isaac suffered from the same weaknesses and fears of his father. Out of fear for his own life, Isaac told the Philistines that his wife Rebekah was his sister! Isaac repeats the deceitful practices of his father Abraham, for fear of his own life because he is a foreigner with a beautiful wife. When King Abimelech discovers the truth, he is angry with Isaac because one of his people could have slept with her and brought guilt upon all the Philistines. So Abimelech orders that "anyone who molests this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.

Isaac's deceit sets the stage for distrust, jealousy, retribution and conflict. The Philistines were jealous of Isaac's wealth, so they plugged up his wells. Since Gerar was on the edge of a desert, the water was as precious as gold and digging a well was staking a claim to the land. Also, stopping up someone's well was an act of war; it was one of the most serious crimes in the land. King Abimelech tells Isaac that he has become too powerful and orders him to move away.

Once again Isaac is forced to relocate, but now he faces repeated problems as his employees quarrel with the herdsmen of Gerar over more wells. On three separate occasions Isaac and his men had to dig new wells, because the first two wells yielded disputes and conflict, forcing Isaac to move repeatedly. Finally, the third well was dug and there was room enough for everyone.



I have always thought of myself as a right winger, and a few years ago joined the hallelujah chorus when one major news network seemed to take up the cause. Boy, they hired conservative commentators, interviewed conservative talk-show hosts, and almost

immediately became the darling of us right wingers. Then I started to notice something...something troubling. Such as? Well such as a smart-alecky attitude expressed by too many of their program favorites; cursing coming from the mouths the lovely blond-headed female conservative babes...not to mention their borderline method of dressing up for the camera (do they all have to be blond and have nice legs?); a general coarseness that for some reason niggled at my sense of Christian refinement; and, then there is the business of the revelations of moral inconsistencies in the personal lives of too many of the so-called spokesmen.

Am I being picky? Yep! I am, and it's about time. I for one have decided that I do not want to be represented by formerly elected officials who after their um-teenth failed marriage decide to run for president so they can tell us all how to live, or mega-church moguls who after sucking us all into their publication stream suddenly decide to apologize for what we all thought was right in the first place, or so-called Christian artists who we find out really were in it only for the money. And speaking of the money, that news media giant who I thought was in it for the "cause" may in the end prove (like so many others) to have been only following the money root.

See, I feel like the bird in the middle. The bird that has been flying around in circles, trying to balance myself between a pair of wings that never were able to help me fly straight! So what am I going to do about it? Just this, I am going to go back to the only thing that has ever proven 100% trustworthy. This bird is fed up with being disappointed by the right wing and sickened by the left wing. I hate this term "hunker down" but that's exactly what I am going to do, and I am going to do it BIBLICALLY! if anybody is interested, here is the formula (a formula for real peace):

*"Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in Thee; yea, in the shadow of Thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast" (Psalm 57:1 KJV).*

I am no longer a right winger (never was a left winger)...I am a HIS winger! Hey, there's lots of room under here.



Views expressed in the Ark Rocker are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the position of Master's Journey or the Divinity School. MJ



## ANNUAL EVANSVILLE ON-SITE GRADUATION WEEKEND INFORMATION!

**2009 Graduation Weekend is July 31st (Friday) and August 1st (Saturday).**

**SPECIAL NOTE: This year's graduation week will also**

What wasted effort, time and resources not to mention stress and sleepless nights! I'm sure most businesses today could not survive the magnitude of these interruptions, including lawsuits and fights with the competition, supply chain interruptions, and repeatedly relocating.

Like many business people today, Isaac was the owner of the family business who faced economic recession. However, he prospered and became wealthy in spite of it. The answer was found in obeying God and taking action, just like his father had done. It meant radical and drastic changes. Both of them had to move; they had to take their businesses into a totally different place in order to prosper.

What about you and your business? What has God told you to do or where has He told you to go? Have you even asked Him for direction or a new strategy for your business in light of your famine or are you simply following conventional wisdom and your own instincts? Let me challenge you to seek God first, obey His leading, and then make all the necessary and sometimes even drastic changes that God requires to ensure your survival. Obedience is the key, and through your obedience God can prosper you in the middle of any economic crisis. But, don't sin in your fear and don't be deceitful in an attempt to control your own destiny. Trust and obey, there's no other way!  
John C. Thorman

John C. Thorman works with the owners and executive management teams of small and medium sized companies to solve their problems and improve their results. As a management and marketing consultant, he is uniquely gifted to grasp the big picture and then execute winning strategies that bring about significant and profitable changes to an organization.

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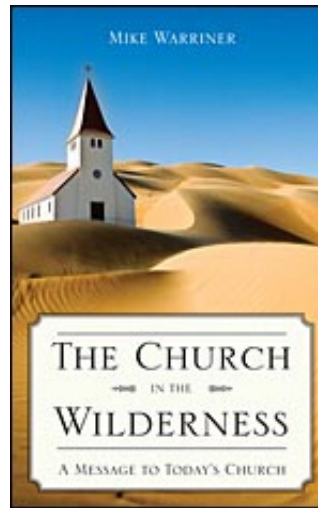


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Books by Master's Graduates or Faculty

**feature three days  
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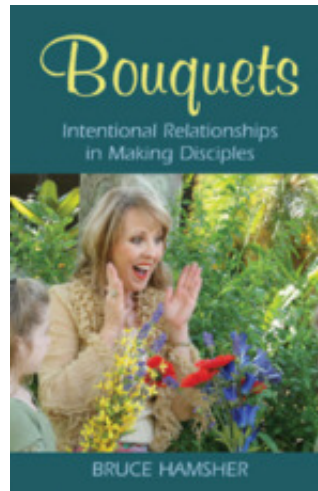
**The Church in the  
Wilderness:  
A Message to Today's  
Church**

by Mike Warriner ISBN  
9871604629484

"The church today has lost its way and is wandering in the wilderness. Rather than mirroring the glory of God, the church has become a mirror of the world. In *The Church in the Wilderness* author Mike Warriner relates a vision from God to the church and identifies some of the ways we have begun to mirror the

world. It is an exhortation to come out of this wilderness and show God's Glory. In *The Church in the Wilderness* you will find answers that will help your church rekindle the fire in its bones. Don't wait. The time is short, and the signs are all around you. The world is searching for hope, while the church is languishing in the dust cloud of the wilderness. Come out. Let us be the hope the world so desperately needs."

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**Bouquets: Intentional  
Relationships in Making  
Disciples**

by Bruce Hamsher ISBN  
9780836194074

Bruce Hamsher puts everyday evangelism and daily discipleship into easily readable and understandable terms. By choosing to develop intentional relationships with those outside our personal circles, we can bring people to Christ and help turn lost souls into believers. By patiently cultivating relationships in the world around us, we can live out the scriptural call to be "the aroma of

Christ among those who are being saved" (2 Corinthians 2:15).

An online study guide is available for this title.

Quotes:

"Bouquets is a beautiful biblical metaphor made contemporary. Daily relationships are the aroma people sense in every encounter. Is the aroma surrounding Christians that of the presence of God?" —August H. Konkel, Providence College and Seminary

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