

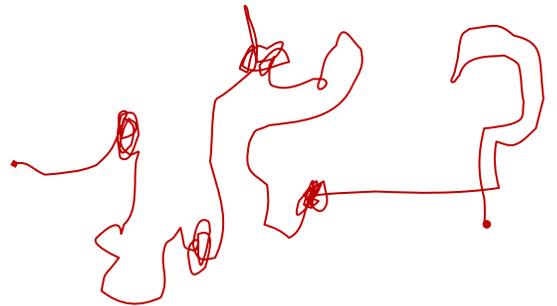
When You're Frantic, It Doesn't Matter Which Way You Run ...



Just How Fast!!!

(Or Does It?)

When you're in a panic and the "Fight or Flight" response says, "Flight," there's no time to think, or plan, or plot an escape course, or evaluate options. The operative word is "RUN!!!" The only thing that matters is as much speed and distance as possible, regardless of direction. In this hectic world, our lives may be so full of poorly thought out decisions that we often wonder how we got to the spot where we are at now. Yet, we seldom have time to think it through and plot a course of actions that would put us in a better spot.



Often it takes a larger crisis before we realize the futility of our random moves with no clear direction. In a small way this became apparent to me on a late September day on a forest road in Superior National Forest in northern Minnesota. My family and I had stopped to walk in a maple forest filled with a gorgeous carpet of recently fallen orange and red leaves. After we had walked and run for a half hour or more, I looked around and realized that I had no idea which direction was out. I reached into my pocket for my compass - no luck. I suddenly felt an overwhelming weight of responsibility for our lives. This was before the time of cell phones. Worse, other than our car by the road, there was no indication that anyone might be in trouble in the woods. Help was not on the way!

I remember how foolish I felt that I had allowed the thrill of the moment to divert my attention from what really mattered and to get us in this life threatening fix. I remember praying really hard that

Losing the way can happen to individuals, families, and even nations.

God would lead us out of this mess. God did provide a way out and we escaped with nothing worse than my bruised ego.

Losing the way can happen to individuals, families, and even nations. This was clear in a spiritual sense with the people of the Northern Kingdom of Israel almost 3,000 years ago.

In this case, the people were frantically running after other gods, yet they were totally apathetic towards the Lord God.

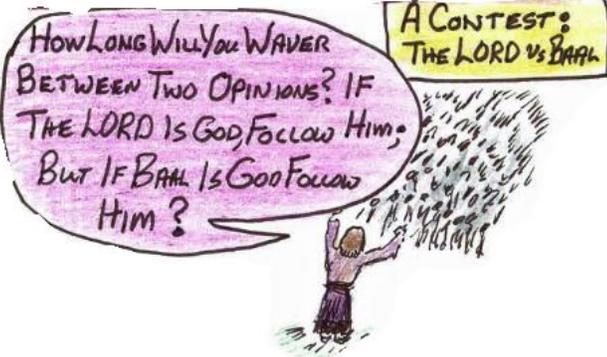
They were frantically running after other gods, yet they were totally apathetic towards the Lord God.

King Solomon built the temple at Jerusalem, but through multiple marriages he had allowed wives to bring in the worship of false gods. After King Solomon died, Israel split into two kingdoms. The Northern Kingdom was still called Israel, and the Southern Kingdom was called Judah. Jerusalem and the temple were in Judah. The king of Israel was afraid that his subjects would go to the Temple in Jerusalem and, thus, change loyalty. So he established his own places of worship, each with its own Golden Calf idol. The false gods Baal and Asherah were also worshiped. The people were certainly hearing mixed



messages about who was the true God. They may have wondered if it really mattered at all. To make matters worse, King Ahab allowed his wife, Jezebel, to hunt down and kill the true prophets of the Lord God.

"Now Elijah ... said to Ahab, 'As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word.'" 1 Kings 17:1 NIV



Three and one half years later, Elijah told Ahab to call all of Israel to Mount Carmel and to bring the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah who ate with Jezebel.

"Elijah went before the people and said, 'How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.'

But the people said nothing." 1Kings 18:21 NIV

After three years and six months of drought prophesied by the prophet Elijah, the people still would not make a decision. So Elijah proposed a contest: Make two altars and sacrifice two bulls, one for Baal, and one for the Lord God.

Let the prophets pray to their god, and the god who answers by lighting the fire of the sacrifice would prove to be the true God.

The 450 prophets of Baal prayed all day long to no avail. Elijah taunted them and they frantically prophesied and cut themselves until their blood flowed, but no one answered.



Finally, Elijah asked the people to gather around him while he made an altar from 12 stones (one for each tribe from Jacob/Israel). After placing the wood and sacrifice on the altar, he had 12 jars of water poured on it. The water soaked the wood and the sacrifice and ran off and filled a trench. Elijah prayed: "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today



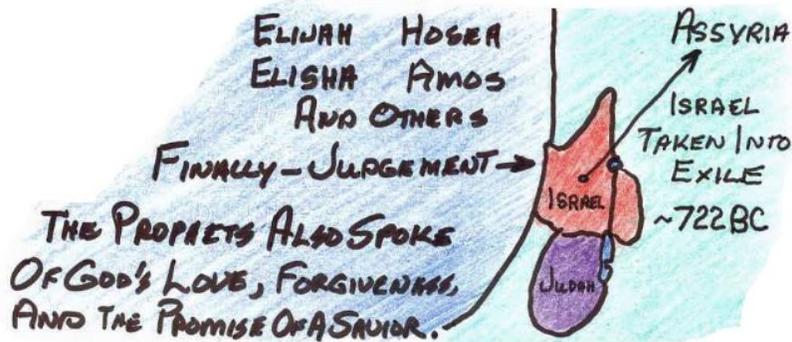
that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. *“Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.”*

Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench.

When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The LORD -he is God! The LORD -he is God!"

1 Kings 18:36b-39 NIV

This was a powerful victory for the Lord God, but the spiritual battle went on. Later, the people again turned away from the Lord. He warned them repeatedly by his prophets to turn back to him. Finally, judgment came in 722 BC. Israel was defeated and was taken out of the land into exile in Assyria.



Compare ancient Israel with the USA. We are on the same path.

If you haven't already made the connection, go back and compare ancient Israel with the USA of today. We are on the same path. We have turned away from our spiritual roots and are running to all manner of opinions and pursuits. Much of organized Christianity is full of accommodations with the culture and outright denials of the truth, making it powerless and almost godless.

How about you? What are you building your life on?

Turn back to the only true God, the one who can answer with fire. Turn to the one who loved you so much that he sent his only son, Jesus, to die on the cross for you. Believe in Jesus as your personal Savior and follow him.

Spiritually, it makes all the difference which way you run. Run to the Lord!

Turn back to the only true God, the one who can answer with fire. Turn to Jesus.

The Lord says, "Seek me and live. ... Seek the LORD and live." Amos 5:4b, 6a NIV

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6 NIV

Jesus said "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest ... and you will find rest for your souls." Matthew 11:28, 29b NIV