

## Alignment

I was on the road the other day. My destination was quite a few hours away, so I had plenty of time to think and meditate. The road was open with mostly just the dotted line to keep me company. The little car I rented was similar in color to the apple I ate while driving. It was a swell little thing, with all the bells and whistles. The rental company lady picked it out for me, and as far as comfort, I could not have done better choosing a car myself. Like most modern cars now-a-days, it was complete with lane-assist and self-dimming headlights.

While on the road, I began thinking about the topic of alignment. We get our cars wheels aligned so our car drives straight and keeps our tires from wearing out. Of course, safety is also a large concern. A car with poorly aligned wheels can be difficult to drive and may cause you to have an accident, if not taken care of.

Also, I have been thinking about how while driving we must align our car with the roadway. The best method is to focus our eyes on a place a fair distance in front of our car and aim ourselves for that spot. In this way, we will naturally drive straighter, and safer. By doing this we also are able to see anything in our path between our car and that point. If we only look at the road directly in front of our vehicle, we are liable to fail to see the slow or stopped truck ahead and miss the road signs which will direct us to our destination. By looking ahead, we will be more aware of danger and what is going on around us. It also helps us see the beauty of the landscape.

All of us align ourselves with something or someone; very few of us are original thinkers. People are influenced by their friends and those they admire. This is normal and can be a healthy motivator to keep us moving in the right direction. They also align themselves with social and political parties that tend to match their ways of thinking and lifestyles. Unfortunately, many people focus on the short-term view of things, instead of long-term consequences. They look at what here and now have to offer, without considering that tomorrow's here and now may not be the same. Too many have a view that does not reach beyond this life to eternity.

My journey had a destination which I expected to arrive at. To do so, I had to keep my route in focus. If I wanted to arrive on time, I needed to limit my stops along the way to those things which were essential to me getting there. It was necessary for me to not get side-tracked along the way, which would waste my precious time. I had to keep my destination in mind.

Like I already said, people align their lives with many different things. However, we must align ourselves by the word of God if we expect to reach Heaven someday. This means we will need to lay aside some of the things that people around us align their lives with, such as the latest team score, what is happening in our favorite political party, or what our financial advisor thinks is a good investment. We will need to lay aside those things that detract and distract us from living for God. Here is a passage of scripture that deals with that very thing: *Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:1-2)*

The apostles patterned their lives after Jesus. The early church fathers aligned their lives by the word of God. What are we aligning our lives by?

We may not need to study the Bible for every detail in life because we know what it says about many things. However, it is important that we are keen to the Holy Spirit. He is like the lane-assist on this car. When we get too close to the outside or center line, it gently nudges the wheel away from it. This does not mean we cannot override it, but it is a gentle reminder that we are drifting to one side of the road or another, and potentially in danger.

If I decided to change lanes, and turned my blinker on, it paused the lane-assist, allowing me to change lanes without any resistance to the wheel. This makes me think of when we override the Holy Spirit and make deliberate choices and sin. By making deliberate choices, we will lose his guiding power. The Holy Spirit is faithful to remind us of the Bible way. We may slip up and speak an unkind word or think thoughts we should not think. Almost immediately, there is a little something inside that lets me know I am in danger. He may nudge me to say I am sorry or to ask for help to deal with the thoughts in my mind. However, if we continue to ignore that nudge, it will become less noticeable. We may fail to notice that little light on the dashboard with an alarm which asks if we need a coffee break. Soon we may take deliberate action and turn our blinker on, which renders the Holy Spirit almost useless, as we take our own way. Thankfully, he does not just abandon us right away, but the further we go down that road, the less control he will have over our lives, and finally he will leave us altogether. This is the result of aligning our life by our own desires and intellect.

We must align ourselves by the biblical standard of truth if we want to be successful. This is the only secure way to happiness. This must transcend any preconceived ideas, religious persuasion, or family ties. Here are Jesus's words about it: *He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. (Matthew 10:37-38)*

The word of God teaches me many things. It tells me to love my enemies, and to treat others like I would like to be treated. It teaches me about judgment on sin, about heaven and hell. It teaches me about truth and the consequences of untruth; about forgiving others and being forgiven. It teaches me that I am a sinner because all humanity are sinners, and that Jesus died for everyone of us. Most of all, it points me to a hope at the end of life where I can live in perfect peace forever and ever. God's word is alive and real, to those who use it daily for their road map of life.

The road of life will not always be straight; it will have hills to climb and valleys to navigate, but we can rest assured if we align ourselves, by the word of God, we will never walk the path alone. He may not straighten every curve, or remove every burden, but he will be there to walk beside us through whatever we may face. He has the big picture, the long view in mind. Even at the best, we as humans remain shortsighted, and prone to grow weary and fail, but Jesus, he never fails.

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