

This past weekend while we were camping at Big South Fork, we did quite a bit of hiking, and I started thinking about how in Psalms the image of “a path” appears again and again. On the trails in BSF how do you keep from getting lost? Do you just set out and hope that you’ll find your way back? No! You either stay on the path and trust the signs, you use a map, or you follow someone that you trust who already knows the way.

When staying on the path and following the signs, sometimes when the path is covered with leaves or snow or it is not heavily used, it can be hard to find the path. Also, the trail signs can be damaged, faded, or missing altogether. We saw one sign this weekend that had two arrows, one pointing forward and one pointing to the right, directly over a cliff. It turns out that the arrow that was pointing over the cliff was supposed to be pointing behind us, but one of the nails had fallen out and so the sign had rotated 90 degrees pointing straight over the cliff.

When using a map, if you do not have the latest map, you can also get lost. I’ve used older maps because I didn’t want to purchase a new one, only to find out that the trail that used to follow the river had been moved further up the hill due to a flood several years ago.

The third way, and best way, is to follow someone you trust who knows the way. Jenny and Mary can tell you about a time when they followed someone on an unmarked trail who had never walked it. He had no map; only directions from the internet. Let’s just say they got lost, but only briefly.

Throughout the Psalms, the image of a *path* appears again and again. Life is pictured not as a fixed place but as a journey — a road where every step shapes our soul. The psalmists knew what it meant to walk through uncertainty, danger, and joy, and they discovered that the most important question was not *where* they were going, or how they were getting there, but **who** they were following.

Psalms 16:11 (ESV) declares, *“You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”* This verse captures the heart of every believer’s journey. The “path of life” is not simply about moral choices; it’s about intimacy with God. Joy and fulfillment aren’t found at the end of the road — they are found along the way, in His presence.

Psalms 23 also speaks of these paths: *“He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.”* The Shepherd doesn’t just point out the direction; He walks beside us. Sometimes His paths lead through green pastures and still waters — seasons of peace and blessing. Other times, they pass through “the valley of the shadow of death.” Yet even there, the Shepherd’s rod and staff bring comfort. The promise is not that every path will be easy, but that every step is guided by the Good Shepherd.

Psalms 25:4-5 prays, *“Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation.”* That prayer reminds us that the right path isn’t always obvious. We need God to *teach* us how to walk, to shape our hearts so we choose His way instead of our own. Each day offers many paths — the easy one, the selfish one, the fearful one, and the faithful one. The Psalms teach us to pause and ask God which direction leads closer to His truth.

Psalms 119:105 says, *“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”* Lamps in ancient times illuminated only a few steps ahead. God’s Word often works the same way. He rarely shows us the entire journey; He gives just enough light for the next faithful step. That teaches us dependence — to walk not by sight, but by trust.

When we follow God’s path, we walk toward peace. We may stumble or lose our footing, but the Shepherd restores our soul and sets us back on the way of life. The Psalms remind us that every path with God leads to purpose, and every step taken in faith draws us nearer to Him.

Prayer

Lord, You are the Maker of every good path. Teach us to walk in Your ways and trust Your leading. When the road is smooth, help us stay humble. When it is dark, help us keep our eyes on You. Light our path with Your Word, guide our heart by Your Spirit, and lead us always toward life in Your presence. In Jesus’ name, amen.