

Finding Freedom in Christ



Turning Point – A Change in Leadership

Turning Point – Everything looks good on the outside and suddenly our world crashes. In a matter of minutes, hours, or days our life takes on a totally different look. Whether immediately or progressive over time, it doesn't really matter, our life is in ruins and is taking on a different turn from this point forward. Many people are here tonight for this very reason.

If you can relate to this and have seen your life in ruins, hopefully we have acknowledged the mess we've made, and reached this turning point in life where we begin to turn and head in a different direction.

Every aspect of our lives has turning points, whether big or small, crossroads and decisions at every corner. If we are leaving on a trip one of our first decisions is which way to turn at an intersection. That decision alone can make a huge difference on our destination.

If you can picture yourself on a major interstate and approach one of those long sweeping exits that are multi lanes in either direction and you have to choose one. Once you commit you are changing directions quickly, moving farther away from the other direction. There can be turning back if you realize it was the wrong choice but time and energy is usually lost. In some cases it is miles down the road before you can get turned around. It's no different in life.

Decision making at our turning points are not easy. We make decisions daily that affect the direction of our life and there's often the urge to turn back or to waiver. Relapse, discouragement or giving up is greatest at this point, most of the time, because we are so close to the source of the change in our direction. In other words if I am one day clean on drugs or alcohol it may seem I will never see two, three, and on and on because it was just yesterday or the day before that I was doing this or that and the source of my struggle is more than likely still close by; my stash, dealers, computer, abuser, and so on. If I choose to stay close to my struggle, comforting it, then this is really not a true turning point for me and it will become harder and harder to make the right turns or to even get moving. **But** as in the example of driving the farther we travel, the less our sights are set on where we have been and shift to where we are going.

Turning points create different scenery in our life. The change in direction will cause things to look different around us. This can be scary or create fear, as this is uncharted territory for us.

If we're sincere there will be some new revelation, or some marker, stone of remembrance, where we know we've made a decision and are on a different path, heading a new direction.

Who's leading? – Most of our issues are related to wrong decisions we have made, using our own reasoning. At this turn maybe it's time to consider letting someone else in on the decisions.

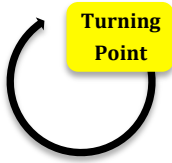
Every project needs a leader, someone in charge, calling the shots, setting the direction, and coordinating the work. Most of us have proved from our past that we have been anything but a success at directing our own life and to think we can do this on our own or our way would be in denial at best.

Many Christians say that God is their co-pilot. It's a great concept that we want God in the cockpit but the truth is, we have been pilot for long enough and have not allowed God to be pilot or Lord of our life. In most cases our turning point can and should be a realization that we need a new leader and we're now turning to God for that answer.

This struggle with letting God lead and be in charge of our life has been around from the beginning. You recall the story of Adam and Eve; they had the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They chose the latter, which put them in charge of their life in lieu of God. We've been doing it ever since. We think we know best and that's a lot of the reason behind why we're here seeking help.

In the Old Testament, Israel had gone under the rule of an evil King (Ahab). Much like us the people were still wavering in their belief and had begun to follow and worship other gods (Baal and Asherah) abandoning their worship and following of the one true God that had delivered them from Egypt. You recall the people in Jesus day having seen miracles and still wanting something more. Same scenario here, they had seen all the miracles of being led out of Egypt and it still wasn't enough.

So Elijah, who was a great prophet of God, confronted the people in an effort to bring them to a turning point. Take a look:



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

This is it in a nutshell for us as well; what God are we following?

Just like us they were at a turning point faced with a decision. They had lost their direction, following other ways and were now confronted with making a choice. Notice their response...they said nothing.

Do you realize that no decision is a decision? Many people will leave here tonight after hearing this teaching, saying nothing. But in your heart you will have made a decision.

Elijah knew what choice was best and basically called for something equivalent to an old-fashioned showdown saying he was the only one left to represent God and set out to prove his God was up for the challenge. He challenged them to bring 450 representatives or prophets from Baal and 400 from Asherah and meet him on Mt. Carmel. The challenge was to prepare an animal for sacrifice and place it upon the wood and then each of them to call on their God to light the fire for the sacrifice and the one true God would prevail. The difference was that Elijah directed the people to pour 12 large jars of water on his wood to the point it was saturated and then the challenge began. The prophets cried to their gods, danced around with Elijah egging it on and taunting them saying their god may be a sleep and on an on they went (v.27) but the fire didn't light. At this point it got really gory for them as they began to cut themselves and who knows what else trying to get their gods to answer them (v.28) but still no fire. Now it was Elijah's turn and look what happened:

At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and 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. 37 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." 38 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. 39 When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The LORD--he is God! The LORD--he is God!"
1Kings 18:36

Elijah's God came through to prove that there was only one true God who can answer the call and all the rest are false gods and cannot. Notice Elijah's prayer about turning their hearts back again and how in the end they did recognize "The LORD--he is God".

New Testament followers struggled with this as well.

"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? Luke 6:46 NIV

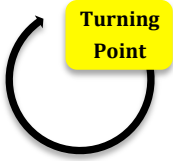
Lord¹: he to whom a person or thing belongs, about which he has power of deciding; master, lord the possessor and disposer of a thing; the owner; one who has control of the person, the master

When a company is struggling or on the verge of bankruptcy there generally has to be drastic measures to turn it around. A lot of times there is a change of leadership, and most times the company will have to be restructured. Some things have to go, and some people feel harmed in the process, but some things are harmful to the survival of the company. It's no different with us as we change direction. God will direct us on these things, what should go, what should stay, and He will begin re-directing our life if we put him in charge. It's our decision to allow him to be Lord and direct us and for us to choose respond to his direction.

If you have given your life to Christ and yet do not consider him Lord, then you have missed it. You have somehow rationalized that he can offer salvation but have **rejected** him as leader or Lord of your life. This so minimizes the power of God and maximizes the power of me running my life. It mirrors eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil (I know best) vs. the tree of life that is Christ.

We have tendencies to waiver between God's headship and our own, which is sort of silly if you think about it because most of us have proven we are not good at managing our own affairs. Yet somehow we don't want to relinquish all authority over to God. Herein lies the problem.

¹ <http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/kurios.html>



"So then, you will know them by their fruits. 21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Matthew 7:20-21 NASB

It's much more than words. Just saying it doesn't make it true. You and God are the only one that knows the truth. Many people at CF introduce their self as "A believer in Jesus Christ". Is he Lord of your life or are you still Lord of your life?

You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. James 2:19 NASB

Jesus gives further insight – *"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? 47 I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. 48 He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. 49 But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete." Luke 6:46-49 NIV*

Without the proper foundation we will fail at some point. Christ is the only solid foundation for our new life.

A proven leader – Throughout time something about God has gained the attention of people and caused them to choose to follow him in the most radical of ways, in many instances. He didn't force them, he came to them, talked with them, and they chose to follow his direction.

Noah Abraham Joseph Moses David Paul

Jesus walked with people of all backgrounds of life and there was something that caused them to buy into the life he was offering them in Him. He will do the same for us if we are willing. He is builder of the universe, a God who knows us individually and desires to dwell within us and direct our paths.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. Colossians 1:15-17 NIV

Direction for life – There is a place in us where we make decisions (our will). God offers His word to us, **in its variety of forms**, to show us truth, to help us in with direction and guidance in the decisions we make in our life. It's up to us to choose truth.

*For **the word of God is living and active** and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, **and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.** 13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. Hebrews 4:12-13 NASB*

*Your ears will hear a word behind you, **"This is the way, walk in it," whenever you turn to the right or to the left.** Isaiah 30:21 NASB*

We look at the Bible as a rulebook – Do and don't do this or that. Give me an answer of what I should and shouldn't do. It's not about that, it's about the story of God and Christ living in us, alive and wanting to direct and teach us how to live life in Christ.

Our primary turning point is to allow Christ to be Lord of our life, leaving the guidance to him. Is Jesus Lord and leader of your life?

"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

Here's where the tension comes, the fear of being asked to pray a prayer, to raise your hand, to make a commitment. If God has been dealing with you it's your choice to make whatever decision He is asking you to do. Will you make it?