



True North and Magnetic North

There is a significant and critical difference between true north and magnetic north. Not knowing this will cause you to think you are going in the right direction but you will miss the destination.

True north will lead you directly to the North Pole. Magnetic north is influenced by a “pulling” effect by the earth’s magnetic core. In 2002, magnetic north was 590 miles away from true north, but that distance also changes from time to time based upon the strength of the pull.

The Word of God is the truth and the Spirit of God is the guide. Our destination in life is to walk the Word of God (true north) but we cannot do that successfully without a qualified guide to keep us from being pulled off course. In life, there is always a pulling on us (magnetic north) that can lead us off the right path. Just before Jesus told us of the coming Holy Spirit as our guide in John 16, He said this to us:

*(John 16:1 ESV) “I have said all these things to you to **keep you from falling away.**”*

We need help to stay in the process and to stay on course. People fall away for many reasons, but I see a predominant pattern similar to a magnetic pull upon people that causes them to think they are going in the right direction - but they are not. Their compass is telling them that they are going north but they are 590 miles off and don’t know it. They become discouraged in the journey because it doesn’t take them where they thought it should, and, they never seem to arrive.

We have a reliable guide.

Here are two things the Bible tells us about our journey.

*(John 16:13–15 ESV) “When the **Spirit of truth** comes, **he will guide you into all the truth**, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”*

*(1 Corinthians 2:11–12 ESV) “For who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also **no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God**. Now **we have received** not the spirit of the world, but **the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.**”*

The Spirit of God is the One infallible and trustworthy guide in our lives. He is the Spirit of truth. The wonder of this is that God put Himself on the inside of us. A human cannot put his spirit inside of another human, but God put His Spirit inside of us. The scripture clearly tells us that God did this so that we might understand the things freely given us by God. If the Spirit must bring us understanding, we cannot gain understanding in another way. The only way then to not understand would be to not listen to the Holy Spirit. This is what happens to so many people, they don’t listen or they quit listening.

Magnetic north.

Magnetic north is a “pull” away from true north - **but it is still north**. Often, people begin in the right direction, but end up giving in to the pull and wind up not following the Holy Spirit any longer. Since the direction is still north, everything looks right.

Paul warned us about the pull away from true north.

*(1 Timothy 4:1 ESV) “Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times **some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons,**”*

*(2 Timothy 4:3–4 ESV) “For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears **they will accumulate for themselves teachers to***

suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

Demons, people, and people working with demons - what a mess. These things are some of the magnetic pull away from the true, all the while still going north. The strongest pull is the will of the people pulling the ministry towards what they want. This is all done in a very subtle way. People simply will not attend a church where they are not hearing what they want to hear. Pastors know this and adjust their messages accordingly to keep things going and to keep the people happy. This is how 2Timothy 4:3-4 is being fulfilled, now, in our day.

The Word of God is a person, not a methodology. It's only in a vibrant relationship with a living Word that we stay on course. Course corrections need to be made along the way to stay going the true direction. Also, the Spirit of God will only lead in relation to the Word of God. Jesus said about the Holy Spirit, our guide:

*(John 16:14 ESV) "He will **glorify me**, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you."*

Jesus will be glorified by the Holy Spirit. To exalt a methodology extracted from the Word of God doesn't put focus on the person of Jesus. Doing that creates a juncture on the road that will eventually lead to the wrong place. The Word of God is to be magnified, but as a way of living in relationship with our Father, and not as a collection of spiritual laws to be worked. In considering true Bible teaching we should always ask, "*Where is the focus and the attention?*" This will always tell us if the Spirit of God is at work or if some deceitful spirit is at work.

Many saints are easily misled and end up following false teaching and are not aware of it because they do not judge the situation Biblically. These days, the spirituality of a ministry is judged by their wealth and their vast exposure. It seems that they think if a ministry has a lot of money and is on television then it must be the hand of God. However, here is how a ministry is to be judged.

*(Matthew 7:15–23 ESV) "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. **You will recognize them by their fruits.** Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and*

*thrown into the fire. Thus **you will recognize them by their fruits.** “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will **I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.**”*

“Fruit” is not a big ministry or money. Fruit speaks about the individual’s life. Remember, God anointed a donkey to prophecy in the old testament. A calling, an anointing and results in ministry do not prove the person is right with God. In the above scripture, Jesus basically said, I used you for the sake of my people but you were not right with Me and I never knew you. Nothing but a donkey!

The qualifications for a person to enter ministry are clearly stated in the Bible but hardly ever utilized.

*(1 Timothy 3:1–7 ESV) “The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. **He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church?** He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.”*

If this were enforced today we would lose half of the ministry, maybe more. The minister’s marriage and family are to be observed in order to qualify for ministry. The proof of stability and steadfastness is Biblical **fruit in the home**. If someone does not know how to manage his own household, he will not know how to manage the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. A house out of order is an indication that somewhere the leader is off track and not pursuing true north. This tells me there is something wrong with his doctrine because he cannot bear the right fruit. Yet, people will blindly follow a minister with money and that is on television simply because it looks like it is the right direction. Jesus said, “**I never knew**” those ministers.

When the independent church movement began, we left off some sound Biblical principles to qualify people for ministry. The Bible tells us to judge the prophecies, try the spirits, examine the fruit of ministers and to rightly divide the word of truth, to name a few. I have attended meetings where there were numerous prophecies that were not Biblical and I am pretty sure no one in the room knew it. This gets scary because it is a deviation that is following magnetic north - 590 miles away from the target.

I ministered in a small church of 150 at one time and I said to them, "We walk by faith and not by sight." Every person emphatically said, "Amen!" I then asked them where that scripture was in the Bible and not one adult could tell me - or even tried to guess. Finally, a twelve year old child raised their hand and told me, "2Corinthians 5:7." She had just had that as a lesson in their children's program. Imagine, 150 adults had unquestionably accepted a doctrine as true but didn't know where it was in the Bible or what it really meant. These are the kind of people that can be easily led astray. A wealthy, big ministry with a lot of exposure can make statements that go unquestioned, unsubstantiated, but received as true, simply because of what they appear to be. You know, most people are not looking for truth these days, they are looking for something that "works."

There are a large number of doctrines that are considered true and indisputable only because of who has promoted them, but they are false doctrines. I have had conversations with pastors that are very uncomfortable even discussing Bible doctrine. They quote what "so and so" minister says but cannot make an intelligent Biblical argument for what they say they believe. Some ministers spend all their time researching what the big name ministers are saying rather than drawing close to Jesus to hear what He is saying. I went into an office of a pastor once that was playing back a recording of a famous minister and he was writing the sermon down word for word so that he could read it to his congregation as his sermon.

We are in the end times. We are not approaching the end times, we are in them. Jesus warned that in the end times there would be many false prophets and teachers.

(Matthew 24:11, 24 ESV) "Matthew 24:11 And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. Matthew 24:24 For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect."

If this is the end times then there are many false prophets among us - now. For something to be false it has to reference the same subject as the true. A false prophet does not preach blatant error. A false prophet uses the Word of God incorrectly. He comes in the name of God but Jesus says, "I never knew you." Just as true north and magnetic north are both going north, yet only one is true.

Let's keep our eyes on the guide, He will never disappoint or lead into error.