

JACK'S CORNER

QUESTION: Our son is in his first year of college and is really struggling with what he should do for a career, whom he should marry, and general questions about God's will for his life. Can you give us some suggestions about talking with him?

ANSWER: First, rejoice and thank God that he is asking good questions and is even interested in God's will! I'll be doing back flips if my kids are in this position when they are in college!

Of course it's hard to watch our children struggle, but I am convinced that it is through struggle that God presents opportunities for us to grow into the image of Christ. **Don't be too quick to help him get out of this situation.** Don't let **your** need to feel comfortable rob him of this opportunity to mature. **This search is important for him.** The opportunity to work through this time of struggle is transformational (RM 5:3-5). Pray hard that God will use you to guide him in godly directions.

1. Be willing to enter into your son's struggle—not to cure, but to walk beside him **through** it. You will all emerge transformed.
2. Be certain you know what **you** believe about how God works, how he uses struggles, how he transforms everything into good for those who love him, how he makes his will known, what freedoms he gives us, how we find him etc. **Your** godly convictions must be clearly lived out and experienced by your son. (He is not the only one who needs to ask hard questions and seek God's will for his life.)
3. Be available and seize opportunities to have intense, thoughtful conversations and prayer time with your son. Ask him questions that foster awareness of godly truths and that challenge him to solidify his Christian beliefs.

There are those who believe God has a narrow, exact, and carefully planned out path for each person's life. If a person "misses" a fork on the path, he has stepped "out of the will" of God. The God of that theology is weak, vindictive and mean. Certainly God's will for salvation, eternal life, and morality is narrow. There is only one way to the Father, God desires all men to be saved and be with him for eternity, and his moral law is clear. However, the decisions we often believe are so critical and important in life (e.g. career, marriage partner, college, where to live, etc.) are not that clearly laid out for us. God is often conspicuously silent or vague in these areas even when we seek him. I believe this is because these decisions are just not that critical in God's **eternal purposes** for us. Are they important? Yes! They just may not be critical to God's eternal purposes—our salvation and sanctification. If specific decisions are critical to God, he will make his will known (e.g. Noah, Moses, Jonah, Paul).

God is far more powerful, creative, flexible, and involved than we give him credit. He is not thrown into a tizzy if we choose Marketing over Nursing. Eternity is not thrown out of wack because we marry Susie instead of Sally. He

does not throw his hands up in despair when we choose C.U. over C.S.U. We humans fret and worry about such things. God, on the other hand, calmly reworks any situation creating opportunities for good and growth. Moment by moment, every possible outcome is known to Him. Because of this supernatural awareness, **specifics aren't as important to God as the journey, and how that journey of faith might transform us. He values the search more than the specifics.**

God can use a person in any career ("Whatever you do, work heartily as if serving the Lord."). Any believer could be the person you should marry. When the commitment is made before God, the other person "becomes" the right one. Circumstances and relationships that might have happened at C.U. can be replicated by God at C.S.U. God is not easily thwarted.

God honors us by giving us a tremendous amount of freedom to choose the specifics of life. He wants us to consult him, trust him, and be faithful to him. He wants to know that we will do whatever he asks. When we are in this position, he often (not always) leaves the specifics up to us. We don't have to overload our brains or become emotional wrecks trying to figure out the specifics of choices that may not be very important to God's eternal purposes.

Sometimes, when God is silent, he is saying: "You pick. What I really care about is that you trust me, do what I ask, and turn to me first. **Now that you're willing to do these things, step out on faith.** If a specific life decision is critical, I will let you know. Otherwise, trust that I can and will use any and every decision to transform you into the image of my Son."

The journey of faith, reliance and trust in God does not come easily. It requires both the head and the heart. It demands movement and trust even when the path is not clearly seen. "For we walk by faith not by sight."

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