

Follow the Directions

May 1996

Canada, of course, was unfamiliar territory for us, so we often had to rely on the directions of others. This worked fine, except for one enlightening incident.

We were to meet John and Lisa Haines one evening for dinner at the home of Nancy and Vic Lianga. As they were giving directions, John and Lisa did not realize that each of them was guiding us from a different direction. Thus John had said the Lianga home was on the left while Lisa had said it was on the right. Further, we did not have an address for the Lianga's; we only had a general description of the house.

You can probably guess what happened next. We pulled up at a house that fit both the directions and the description and I went to the front door. It was opened by an unfamiliar woman, and I said, "Unless you have dinner ready, I think I'm at the wrong house." Fortunately, she knew the Liangas and directed us on to their house.

Some morals of this story:

1) Knowing how to get somewhere and telling others how to get there are two different things. We become so familiar with our own environment that we take landmarks and directions for granted. We use certain terminology and operate on principles which make sense to us but sound like foreign language to our neighbors. As a Christian, can I direct others to where the spiritual dinner is?

2) Having a house number is much more precise than "I think it's about the third house on the right and tan over brick." Unfortunately, many people who might be genuinely seeking God are getting vague and contradictory directions rather than a clear "this is what the Bible says; read it for yourself."

3) We did manage to get to the dinner in the end, but we had to stop and ask for more accurate directions. We had to make an effort. Suppose we had said, "Well, we were directed to the wrong house; let's just quit looking altogether." Or, "The first directions were wrong so I guess we can't trust the other directions either." That would be silly, wouldn't it? It might sound like we really weren't all that interested in going to dinner.

Yet that's exactly what many do who get caught up in religious error. Instead of building on what they've learned and pressing ahead, they just give up. Sometimes they become cynical or bitter. But heaven's banquet is too good to miss (Lk 14:15-24). Bad directions are no excuse when we have the map.