

How Did I Get Here? Not Being Where You Expected

Did you ever have one of those surreal moments when it seems like something snaps in your head and suddenly you see everything like you never saw it before? A lot of things can trigger these moments . . . an argument, a child leaving the home, a death, a job loss, a divorce, a birthday, unexpected contact from a long-lost friend or any number of similar events. In the middle of whatever this is, you're suddenly able to see the reality of your life with a stunning, nearly razor-sharp clarity that you've never had before. It's kind of like you were blind and you didn't know it and in the briefest nanosecond, for the briefest nanosecond you were granted stunningly perfect vision.

Suddenly, what we now see is familiar but strangely unfamiliar at the same time. We intimately know everything that we see around us but it's entirely alien just the same. It looks different or not quite right. It's my life but it's not my life, or at least what I wanted my life to be. And we stand there rubbing our eyes because what we see is not stuff we saw before, or at least what we saw with the clarity that we see it now. In the emotional turmoil these rare moments create we're often left asking "who am I and where am I?" And in the briefest nanosecond, in exactly the same way it came, this vision is gone. However, the memory of what those few incredible moments revealed is not.

What times like this most often reveal is the paralyzing reality that we are not where we intended to be. This was not the destination that we had mapped out as pimply-faced teens or adventurous young adults or giddy newlyweds. The line that we had drawn from those younger years forward in time didn't go here, or weren't supposed to go here; to this place that we now realize we are.

What hits us really hard is that we didn't fully realize the deviation from the path that our dreams had laid out so long ago. We got here and we didn't even realize that we got here. But now we know it. And we're standing deflated, attempting to figure out where we got so terribly off course, all the while madly calculating how many years and how many responsibilities we have in order to determine if we have the time and freedom to ever get back on course.

Worse yet, some of us don't even remember what the course was in order to retrace it. Others of us never set a course for ourselves in the first place; having allowed the winds of life and the currents of circumstance to bring us here. Whatever the case, there is this chilling, haunting sense that we are not where we wanted to be, and that the path intended to take us there may now be forever forfeited. We fear a life squandered. And the question wildly reverberates in a near panic, "how did I get here?"

I Am Where I Am

At these times we can certainly pull out our tattered life map, grab whatever compass we've used over the years, or review the saved settings on our personal or relational or spiritual GPS. We can then hunker down over the topography of our past trying to scrawl out the line that brought us here. We can do all of that. And in doing that there may be value.

However, we are where we are. Like it or not, we're "here," wherever "here" is. First, the task is really about determining exactly where we're at in order to get some sort of bearing on our life. After that, we need to determine where we want to go. Then we need to determine do we have the resources to get there. It's not about bemoaning where we are. Certainly we can make room to do that for a bit if that gets it off our chests. It's really more about grabbing hold of our lives and planning a strategy to take us where we want to go.

Where Am I?

So where am I anyway? Not where I think I am or necessarily perceive myself to be or have deluded myself into believing I am. But where am I . . . really? It may be a tough or even painful thing to think about. It may be harder to accept and embrace. It's likely that not thinking about it was a major contributor to getting you here in the first place. So look around and be chillingly honest.

Where Do I Want to Go?

Where I want to go is not about running from where I am. Sometimes our destination in life is determined by our desire to get away from where we are. If fleeing our present place in life is what drives us, we're likely to make poor choices about where we want to go simply because the motivation is not entirely adequate. Second, where we want to go does not necessarily have to be a radical resurrection or reconstitution of our old hopes or dreams. We're in a different place under different circumstances with different realities and different responsibilities than we had way back then. It's more about re-evaluating life and asking fresh and new questions about where we want to go. Third, we may find that we really shouldn't go anywhere at all. It may be that we should commit to build upon and expand where we are. Investment and renovation in the very place we're at may result in the exact life we're looking for.

Do I Have the Resources?

Some resources we have less of, like time. Other resources we have more of, like maturity and knowledge and experience. It's about assessing our resources and realizing that we likely have more resources at our disposal than we did in the earlier years; we just don't realize it. Then it's about pooling and maximizing those resources into whatever endeavor we feel directed toward.

Have You Considered . . . ?

In reality, most of us end up someplace other than what we intended. Life is not so smooth or manageable as to chart direct courses on tidy timelines. It's more about recalibrating and making course corrections along the way, believing that life is a journey that takes us off course at times, but provides us resources to likewise alter those courses. Not where you want to be? Think about it.