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## You can't get there from here

In the story of Jesus' birth, I wonder if the Magi ever stopped to ask directions. Although the biblical record says they were guided by a star, the journey was a long one, and stars are not visible during the day.

I don't like to stop and ask for directions. I usually think I can figure it out myself. I am hesitant to take the time to ask for directions because the stop will make me late.

I remember one time I stopped for directions and was told; "well you can't get there from here". The comment was an acknowledgement that I needed to get on the right road before I could get to the desired destination.

I have often reflected on that comment. I wonder if God might say the same to the church.

I remember as a child hearing remarkable stories of faith - where people placed themselves into a place of great risk, and then finding a miraculous encounter with God's grace. I longed to experience similar stories but recognized that I was not willing to embrace the risk necessary for such a story. I wanted the relief of a miraculous intervention without embracing the risky platform of faith. I think God would say to me "you can't get there from here".

I remember as a teen listening to a missionary tell the story of their spouse who was murdered in the service of the church. The remarkable grace displayed by the missionary in retelling the story was striking. The experience opened up many speaking engagements to share the story.

After the message a number of youth wanted to have follow up conversations. One individual expressed a desire to have a similar ministry. The missionary paused and asked; "do you want to experience the pain that developed made the story?"

I recognized myself in that encounter. I too wanted an exciting testimony to share, but I didn't want to experience the sorrow that created such an understanding of God's grace. I think God would say to me: "You can't get there from here".

Now, many life experiences later, I have bruises, scars and memories. They remind me of God's faithfulness. Every time I run my fingers along a bumpy scar on my back I am reminded of God's intervention of grace.

I have come to learn that life doesn't consult you before introducing pain, sorrow or disappointment. Yet it is in these events where the richness of God's presence is experienced.

Wondering what a New Year will bring can be intimidating if we dwell on it for too long. Times of uncertainty and confusion can be fearful. It can make the church question the presence of God. Yet experience tells us, that if our intention is to be where God wants us to be, then no matter how daunting and fearful the journey - we will be able to get there from here.