

"Writing the truth
as I see it;
trying not to
offend
those who will
disagree."

The truth as I see it™

Idaho Common Sense™



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Finding your way home

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Several years ago, I wanted to find more trails for mountain biking near our cabin because they are scarce in Targhee National Forest. I remembered seeing game trails while riding the few available trails and decided to ride game trails and also cross-country to connect trails, creating longer bike trails. But doing this would require something I had not done before, riding cross-country from one trail to another.

With my normal optimism and my ability to severely underestimate what I was about to undertake, I decided to do it. I didn't worry about getting lost because I had a good sense of direction and a newly purchased GPS mounted on my bike.

I left one afternoon planning on a short ride on an existing trail with no intention to do any cross-country riding. Not surprising to my wife, I got distracted thinking about connecting game trails and took off cross-country. For this connection, I needed to ride cross-country three to four miles, between one existing trail to another.

I didn't pay attention to the GPS because it was new, I had not used one before, and I had a good sense of direction anyway. Riding off trails turned out to be a bit more demanding than I anticipated and finding routes was more difficult than I planned.

I was doing reasonably well that afternoon but noticed the forest floor was darkening, which prompted me to see how far I had to go.

For the first time I checked the GPS and it was obviously defective because it showed I was off course

nearly forty-five degrees with about two miles to the connecting trail. I did not have time to trouble shoot the erring GPS because it was getting dark and I needed to get to the existing trail and back to my vehicle. I continued a bit further in the direction I knew was correct and then glanced at the GPS again. It showed I was still going in the wrong direction. Not good.

I was running out of daylight with no wish to walk a bike out of the forest in the dark. Nor was I enthralled with spending the night there, if for no other reason than I would be in big trouble when I got home.

My sense of direction had never failed me. Even so, why would a brand new GPS be incorrect? I thought about the GPS mapmaker I was not trusting. I thought about the time he spent checking and re-checking the map; making sure it was correct, making sure it led me where I needed to be.

The choice - my direction or the mapmaker's. I wonder if the mapmaker knew people would find themselves in this situation, not knowing if they would trust their own instincts or his map. It must be difficult for him knowing he can only provide the map but cannot force anyone to follow it even though he knows it will lead us home. My choice, not his. Do I trust the unknown mapmaker or my own sense of direction?

For some reason I decided to follow the GPS, trusting the mapmaker rather than my own instincts. This despite my certainty that the GPS map was wrong and I

would end up spending the night in the forest and hear my wife say again, "Little boy, you play too hard."

As I followed the map, I started wondering if someone could have changed the map; adding or deleting parts of it. How would I know? But wouldn't the mapmaker protect his map, maintaining its accuracy, making sure nothing was missing, making sure everything I needed was in that map. After all, his name was on the map and his reputation was on the line. He was the authority, guaranteeing his map would lead me home. I continued with the GPS and surprisingly I got home, just as the mapmaker guaranteed.

That experience made me wonder about the Mapmaker of the universe. I wonder if His map is as accurate as the GPS mapmaker's is, if we can trust it with the same confidence. I wonder if He also protected it from manipulation or corruption, ensuring its accuracy from generation to generation.

Moreover, just like the GPS mapmaker, He can only watch as each of us decide whether to trust His map. And, our choice, not His. He is watching us as the forest floor darkens and the "day" comes to an end; waiting to see those He knows will choose to trust His map.

I think it's worth taking some time to think about it. As the light wanes and we try to find our way home, maybe we need a "Map." Merry Christmas.