

# Finding Directions

In 1997, the Central American city of Managua, Nicaragua, adopted a program that most cities take for granted: The city named its streets and numbered its buildings. Driving directions in Managua are still not typical; in fact, they are often regarded as unique and confusing.

Larry Rohter wrote in the *New York Times* that for 25 years Managua, with a population of 1.5 million, had been without that basic necessity following a devastating 1972 earthquake, which relocated most residents. During that time, people learned to make do, wandering down the wrong streets, asking strangers where to go, and making one wrong turn after another until they hopefully found their destination.

Illogical is a good word to describe the system, if it can be called that. “Formal addresses have come to be defined neither by numbers nor street names,” said Rohter, “but in relation to the nearest landmark, as in: ‘From El Carmen Church, a block toward the National Stadium,’ or ‘Across from Los Ranchos Restaurant.’

“That, in turn, has made it necessary to name the points of the compass in giving directions or addressing a letter, an issue that has been resolved in an equally baffling fashion. ‘Toward the lake’ has come to mean north, ‘toward the mountain’ means south, ‘up’ means east and ‘down’ means west.

“Furthermore,” Rohter added, “though some of the original guideposts still exist, many others have vanished, leaving all but the pre-quake residents confused. A leading economic research institute, for instance, offers visitors the following address: ‘From where the gate of El Retiro Hospital used to be, two blocks toward the lake, one block down.’

Finding one’s way in Managua sounds difficult – like trying to live without the clear guidance of God’s Word. You may be depending on directions from others, who may not know the right way. You may live by trial and error. You may wander and feel lost.

How much better it is to have a map. It’s called the Holy Bible.

– Beecher Hunter

