

Understanding God's Will – Lesson 7

The Detour Sign: Providential Circumstances

I. Introduction

a. The Prevalence of Detours

1. Everyone has encountered detours in life; literally and metaphorically.
2. We have all traveled down a direction we felt was best only to discover our path has been prevented.
3. Detours we all face or know of...
 - Unexpected job layoff
 - Divorce or broken relationship
 - Rejection letter from desired college
 - Sudden death of a loved one.
4. What should our response be to detours?



- Disbelief? – We read the detour sign but continue creeping up a little closer to see if there is still a possibility to continue on our original path.
- Anger? – When the detour is mandated we often become irate and want to curse the reason for the detour.
- Blame? – Assigning blame to something or someone is a natural reaction to dealing with detours.

b. Providence of Detours

1. God is sovereign; therefore He rules over even detours.
2. He can use the detour sign to accomplish His will in our lives.
3. God is infinitely, immutable. Time and circumstances are in constant flux but God remains constantly consistent.

- David's wonderful declaration in Psalm 37:25 illustrates this point:

"I have been young, and now am old: yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread."

- i. He changed
 - a. He went from being a young strong and vibrant man to an old and sickly state.
 - b. Youthful zeal and recklessness, has now been tempered by wisdom and carefulness.
 - c. He transformed from a military warrior to the commander in chief.
- ii. His surroundings changed
 - a. Politics had changed – David is now king, and Saul is gone
 - b. Family structure changed – David went from being the young runt in a household led well by Jesse to being the patriarch over an unruly cadre of children.
 - c. The kingdom had expanded to encompass more land and wealth.
- iii. Throughout all these changes God remained consistent in His care for Israel.

II. Divine Design of Detours

- a. His Wants
 1. God wants to provide for you by offering you the full counsel of His will.
 2. God wants to protect you by preventing you from going down the wrong path.
 3. God wants to preserve you by keeping you on His path.
- b. Paul's Prison Detour (Philippians 1:12-14)
 1. Paul wrote some of his greatest letters while imprisoned.
 2. Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon & 2 Timothy were all written during Paul's imprisonment periods.
- c. Persecution of the Church
 1. Christ declared the Apostles would be his witnesses throughout all the world. However, their focus continued to be directed internally to Jews only.

2. The persecution initiated in Acts 7 and furthered in Acts 8 shows how detours can be used for the benefit of spreading the Gospel.
 - Just think, if Stephen had not died Paul might not have been converted.

III. What Detours Look Like

a. Detours Appear as Roadblocks

1. Detours appear to be road blocks but can become opportunities.
2. God often uses detours to help give us new growth opportunities.
3. 1 Corinthians 16:8-9 – Paul wanted to be in Corinth; however, God had established an opportunity in Ephesus.
4. Acts 16:6-10 Paul was prevented from going into Phrygian and the Galatian region because he was needed in Macedonia.

b. Detours Look Like Signs

1. Sometimes God speaks through closed doors.
2. The main point that the detour signposts teach us is God in His sovereignty may give us detours to get us on the right road.

IV. Barriers to Obeying This Sign

a. Wrong Doors

1. Satan also opens doors, but they are the wrong ones in relation to God's will for our lives.
2. Satan opened a door for power and prestige for Jesus. (Matthew 4)

b. Other pressing needs can take precedence over an open door

1. Paul was prevented from going to Troas because there was a greater need in Macedonia? (2 Corinthians 2:12-13)
2. Every open door must be confirmed through prayer and by balancing it against the principles of God's word.

c. Feelings and emotions can cloud our judgement (2 Corinthians 5:7)

1. "For we walk by faith, not by sight".

2. If we are not careful we may allow our fleshly desires to cloud our thinking.
3. Our quest for fortune and fame can prompt us to make ill advised decisions.
4. God can use even bad times to accomplish His will.

V. Sovereignty and Circumstances

a. Joseph's story

1. Detour 1- His brothers sold him into slavery, and he eventually ends up a stranger in Egypt. (Genesis 37:12-36)
2. Detour 2 - Potiphar's wife unsuccessfully attempts to seduce him, and eventually causes him to be imprisoned. (Genesis 39)
3. Detour 3 - He met a butler and a baker. The butler ultimately introduced him to Pharaoh.
 - After interpreting Pharaoh's dream he is made Prime Minister of Egypt. (Genesis 41:37-57)
4. Detour 4 – He refused to bow to bitterness, anger, resentment, and jealousy; instead he sees the detour that was imposed on him as a blessing. (Genesis 50:20).

b. Romans 8:28 viewpoint

1. And we know all things work together for good.
2. Don't bow to bitterness. Use every detour as a learning experience that presents new insights and understanding.