

Walking The Path: Avoiding Dangerous Detours

by Chris Famisaran

Man, how many of you can identify with Douglas? Do I need to preach today because he basically just said what I was gonna say.

Let's pray. God, we thank you for the opportunity again to gather together as a family, be with us as we explore avoiding dangerous potholes and detours, Lord in Jesus name, amen.

It was July for 1952. It was a cloudy, cool morning, off the coast of California specifically, actually on Catalina Island. There was a young woman, world renowned swimmer, Florence Chadwick, who entered the waters of the Pacific Ocean, her destination, the California coast. It was her goal, to be able to swim across the channel from Catalina to the coast, I believe it was just off of San Pedro because it's only 19 miles. So she started to swim and swim and swim. The first hour goes by, she's feeling good. It's a little chilly, but it's okay. The second hour goes by third, our fourth, fifth, sixth seventh. And she keeps chugging along. Despite the fact that it was cold, she sometimes felt numb, and there were actually sharks swimming about checking her out. She then began to start to doubt herself because the fog had not lifted, and she could not see the coastline. Because she had no bearing. She couldn't see where she was going, she began to doubt herself. And then the doubts began to grow and grow and grow. And she suffered what we consider a roadblock in her mind. And despite her coaches urging to continue, she was doing great. She quit after 15 I believe was 15 hours and only one mile away. She swam 18 miles but the last mile, she couldn't do it because she couldn't see land. After she got out, she basically said, What did she say? She said, "I'm not excusing myself. But if I could have seen the land, I might have made it It wasn't the cold or fear or exhaustion. It was the fog."

Many times we sometimes fail, not because we're afraid or peer pressure, but because of anything other than the fact that we sometimes lose sight of the goal. Where are we heading the vision and direction? In fact even Paul states I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God, Christ Jesus. Now, fortunately enough, she entered the waters of the Pacific Ocean Two months later, and was able to set a new record, thus completing the journey. Can you imagine swimming from Catalina Island to the coast of California? 19 miles? Huh? I've swam a mile and a half or so that took a long time. And I was exhausted, but to do 19 miles. Crazy. But it's a good question.

Now ask, Where are we headed in the destination? We have to have a reason. Vision to see where we're going. Otherwise, what's the point? We're just bumbling along going about? Vision gives us perspective. A landing point head towards to know how to get there. As we look through Proverbs, there are many scriptures that pertain to avoiding folly and causing you to think about making good and bad decisions, vices and temptation unfortunately, can get in the way and lead us astray is a sampling of verses that

will just kind of go through real quick Proverbs 6:27 and 28 says, Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes and not be burned? Or can one walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched? Technically, most of you've probably seen somebody walking on, on coals, but when you look at their feet, oh, not a pretty sight, right? When we deal with something that's firing dangerous and can harm us, we're gonna get affected by it. Also, Proverbs 14:30 says a tranquil heart is life to the body, but passion is rottenness to the bones. Also, Proverbs 25, verse 16, if you find honey, eat just enough too much of it, you'll vomit. Even something that could potentially be good for you or taste good, too much of a good thing can also be harmful. For instance, maybe when you were younger, and you could eat anything and do anything. You would look at the menu and order the biggest thing, maybe a big big sandwich or a big burrito. And then as you start to eat it and you consume it, you know, okay, it's getting a little full, but I'm okay. until you get to the point where you're so stuffed. You feel like you're gonna throw up you ever experienced that? Or is that just me? Even something that's so good, could be detrimental?

Unfortunately, we're also human. And therefore we're not perfect. As I've said before, something that we've studied about for all have sinned and fallen short of what glory of God we're all sinners, we're all imperfect. Sorry, there's a saying if you scratch the itch, you're gonna want to scratch even more your hands ever gets, you know, itchy or especially like your legs and you just you cannot stop. Sometimes when we touch something that could potentially hurt us, you start to scratch that itch, and then it's harder and harder and harder to stop. one small thing can lead to a big issue, something as simple as even pride.

So in Daniel, chapter three, okay, Daniel, chapter three, those of you if you if you brought your Bibles, or if you want to look on your phone, it's a huge passage. So we didn't throw it up on the screen this time. Okay, but if you want to go to your phone or your tablet, or you brought your Bible, Daniel three, I'm just gonna kind of skim through and point things out. But there is a story of a man named King Nebuchadnezzar. Most of us are probably familiar with who he was, he was the king of Babylon. All right. And so let's go ahead and do a deep dive on King Nebuchadnezzar. So Daniel three, King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold 60 cubits high and six cubits wide. Some of you are thinking, well, how much is a cubit? Well, roughly 60 cubits is 98 feet, six cubits wide, that's nine feet. So that's a really, really tall statue, and it was all made of gold. He sets it up in the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. So he summons the satraps, the prefects, Governor's advisors, treasurer's magistrates, judges and all the other provincial officials to come to the dedication of the image he had set up. And so everyone, they come to and assemble to the dedication of this, this statue.

So to help understand the context of this in the previous chapter, King Nebuchadnezzar has a dream and Daniel is able to interpret the dream and in the dream, there's a statue made up of four different types of metals, right, and Nebuchadnezzar is represented by gold. Now, Nebuchadnezzar is told the interpretation, and he's thankful and he's grateful. He promotes Daniel to a position of influence and authority, as well as Daniel's buddies, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. However, somewhere along the way, Nebuchadnezzar doesn't really jive with the interpretation that Daniel gave him because

he thought, Well, I don't want other kingdoms to come in and take over mine, I want to live forever. So he, he builds this statue, the same statue that was in his dream, but instead of it being four different types of metals, it's just gold signifying I will stand the test of time. Okay. And so many of you probably have also heard of the proverb, Pride goes before The what? The Fall, right? Nebuchadnezzar's ego is getting bigger and bigger and bigger. And especially when you rule over this vast empire people Boom, boom, boom, they listen to everything and do everything you say, because generally, there's usually penalty, you don't want to find out what's going to happen if you don't. And so he has all of this authority.

But let's continue. Now verse four says that the herald loudly proclaim nations and peoples of every language, this is what you're commanded to do. As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, the flute, the zither, the lyre, the harp, the pipe, and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up, whoever doesn't fall down, and worship will immediately be thrown into what? the fiery furnace or blazing furnace in NIV. And so therefore, as everyone hears all of these instruments, in verse seven, all the nations that people language fell down, they worship this image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up, so everybody's expected to just bow down you may not like the king or whatever, but generally, you're gonna want to fall down because you don't want to end up being in the fiery furnace. However, in the crowd, there are three men Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And some of the crowd they come forth and and they tell the king Hey, King, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These guys from a different country, these Jews don't belong here in their heads what they're thinking, huh, they haven't bowed down. Course in a sea of people like that, it's probably not hard to see that they're standing up. And so the astrologers and someone they tell the king, okay, and, and they're buttering them up by saying by the king live forever.

Now, in verse 12, it says, but here are some Jews who we've said over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who paid no attention to Your Majesty, they neither serve your Gods nor worship the image of gold that you've set up. And so, Nebuchadnezzar, he's furious, he's angry, he summons them, he brings them before and he asks, and Hey, is this true that you guys are not serving my gods or worshipping the gold image that I've set up? He's basically says he's going to give them a second chance, I'm going to let them play the music again, you have a choice, you can either bow down to this image, or you can die.

Verse 16, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They reply, we don't need to defend ourselves before you in this matter of we're thrown into the blazing furnace, the God of the God we serve is able to deliver us from it and will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. But even if he does it, we want you to know your majesty that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold that you have set up. So they believe that God could save them. But even if God doesn't, it's okay. And so Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, you know, they stand before the king and a king, he's upset, he orders them to be thrown into the fiery furnace. In fact, the king says, don't just throw them into the fiery furnace, but heat the fiery furnace, how much more? those of you know the story seven times in so much, so seven times. It's so hot, that even the super strong soldiers that are helping to feed this fire, what happens to them?

They die, right? So you would think though, how does that work? If there's a fiery furnace, did they have to throw them off a cliff or something? Because it's so hot? Regardless, they get thrown in, and not only do they not burn, but there's a fourth that appears. Can you imagine this? So they're thrown in King Nebuchadnezzar, he, he stands up, he's amazed. He says, weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire? And they replied, certainly, your majesty and he said, Look, I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed. And the fourth looks like the son of god. Nebuchadnezzar, he reproaches and he calls Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to him servants of the Most High God come out here and so they go forth, and everyone crowds around them, they see the fire and realize that they're okay. There's no smoke, there's no they haven't been burned. And Nebuchadnezzar is humbled and he realizes man, there is a bigger God than I could ever imagine. And he gives praise God to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who sent his angel and rescued servants. He trusted in in and defied the Kings command, and we're willing to give up their lives rather than serve a worship any god except their own God.

And so, after this Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego because of their faith and their integrity, and their commitment to stand true, they were actually given even more responsibility. Sometimes when you stand for principles, you're going to get people perhaps, who maybe feel threatened by that. Maybe they're going to try to subvert you Try to get rid of you, when you try to do the right thing. People also realize that they if you if you stick to your principles, they can also trust you. Doing the right thing sometimes is uncomfortable. And Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego their predicament was they were facing life and death potentially. Now, like every choice is not necessarily, you know, you're not going to be potentially thrown into a fiery furnace. But yet, we have to make decisions every day. Sometimes there are things that happen. And it's sometimes easy to be tempted to just bow down to peer pressure and just fall down and go along with the crowd. Or even there are days where we have to make decisions when nobody is around, and yet to do the right thing. Sometimes it's not easy get when you look through proverbs that talks about things that we should be wary of that can potentially detour us in our journey with God as we, as we journey forth, ok. And when I when I say journey, it's our walk with God. Our vision of is ultimately to be with who to be with God. And in this journey as we're walking along. Or maybe if you're driving, there are cracks and crevices and potholes that sometimes try to pop up and to try to derail us. potholes and cracks have pride of power of being reckless or anger, peer pressure, pride. Even proverbs actually talks about giving the half half hearted efforts slander and falsehoods. These are just sampling of things that we need to be aware of, and to be reminded to, hey, don't fall into that trap, don't get derailed and detoured and take a side path because we want to stay straight to get to the path of Jesus.

And so as we journey forth, one of the things that we have to be realistic is we have to be sorry, we all have different types of inclinations that we we deal with. Yet, we have to be honest with ourselves. That's the hardest thing is because we don't want to admit that sometimes we have challenges and things that we're tempted by. But if we can admit it, then we can deal with it. And as we do so, have a plan. If you know there's an area in your life where you're struggling, don't just think okay, we'll all eventually get to it. And then nothing ever happens. Have a plan. You have to be intentional.

Any journey that you go on, you have to know where you're going have a roadmap, a guidebook that will help show you So for instance, if I wanted to go from here, we're in Downey and I wanted to go to just name a place somebody. Carmel. Oh, good choice. All right. You know, you could reasonably get there pretty easily, because all you have to do is either take the 5 or the 101, especially the 101. If you know where the 101 is, you'll get there easily. Well, let's just say I'm gonna pick up some random city that I heard this week Dalton, Georgia, I think it's just in the northern part of Georgia. And just below. It's about Georgia, South Carolina, we're actually potentially no, Tennessee. I know if I take the 40 or the 10. I'm going to get closer. But how do I get exactly to Dalton, Georgia? Well, I could either look up a map, the old fashioned way. Where you actually pulled out your Thomas guide, some of you who are probably under 20 have no idea what I'm talking about. When I first started pastoring 15 years ago,

By the way, I've been pastoring here for two years, as of Tuesday. So bless you, thank you. I realized, wait a minute. And what a time some of you are wondering, Pastor, this is the worst time for you to come in as your pastor is like, no, this has been an awesome time. Thank you, you have made this transition. And this joy for both my wife and I. It's been an awesome experience. And you're not getting rid of me anytime soon.

Alright, so in your journey, okay. before when I started pastoring you would have these maps and you'd have to look in the back to kind of try to find yourself in orient, orient yourself now. You just take a phone or even this tablet, and you punch in an address in it literally as long as it's powered. And there's satellite or or cellular data you can get to your destination before you have to be intentional. Especially if you're out in the wilderness. You have to use a mapping compass right? There was no gps 100 years ago, have a plan.

Set guidelines prepare Deepak Chopra, he actually states "every time you're tempted to react in the same old way, ask yourself if you want to be a prisoner of the past, or a pioneer of the future."

Whether dealing with our personal life or anything that we do if we want to change and progress, we can't just keep on doing it the same old way, especially if it's leading us in a different direction than where we want to go. We have to change. As we talked about last week, seek wisdom there's a benefit in being able to ask questions from others who have been in the journey, who are a little wiser, more mature. And believe it or not, especially for those of you who are younger, guess what? You know, your your aunt's your uncle's your grandparents, and even I know this in the the older members of this church, they want to share their life and advice for you because they only want to see you grow and exceed, and your potential because they love you. They want to help you grow. So seek wisdom. seek wisdom when making decisions.

You know, when it comes to making decisions and avoiding bad decisions? When it comes to our thought process? Can you make really good decisions when you haven't slept in three days? No, right.

And if you haven't been drinking water, if you're not eating healthy, if you're not getting the rest, you're gonna not make the best decisions at times, you're not going to make them as quick as you want them. Something as simple as maintaining a healthy diet, or just eating good food, drinking enough water, not just drinking enough water, but drinking a lot of good water and getting great rest. And then taking it actually another step further in that you should also exercise. Even as we get older, to exercise and stay mobile's stretch, man, I'm getting older and stretching is becoming harder.

About maybe, I think it was in November, I was stretching up to maybe 30 or 45 minutes a day, every day. And I felt really great. And I did that from November to December. And then I think somewhere around January, I just stopped. And then I tried to stretch earlier this week, and I realized Whoa, I can barely like stretch. What happened? And that was only uh, only over a couple of months, maybe a little more than a couple months. Being flexible is something that we have to be intentional about growing, to take care of your body in order to be able to help you make great decisions to avoid making decisions that could cause us to go on a detour. Also, look out for the potholes. Intentionally avoid the potholes. You know, if you have a car that you don't care about, and you want to ruin the transmission or the the support system, okay, great. But if you want to live a healthy and balanced life in this journey, avoid those potholes. be intentional about avoiding them.

And when we mess up, admit it, just admit it own it. I found especially when we mess up, if we we hurt somebody's feelings or we harm somebody else. admit it. People are far more forgiving. If we admit it and own it. And then especially if we've hurt someone, seek forgiveness, especially with God. Confess seek forgiveness, to close with Oh, sorry, the last thing in your journey not only seeking wisdom, finding somebody to help you in the journey to keep you accountable. Whether let's just say for instance, you know, you're trying to lose weight, having somebody to check in with every day, or even for some of our brothers and sisters for where addiction is a challenge. I know for some of you, as I've talked to you you've indicated having somebody there to not only to go to but also to be accountable has helped you in making good decisions in your life. In this journey, especially as a church, we're not called to go it alone. That's why we're here. Right? We're here because of the community. And in this community, we can find friendships and relationships. You know, just just, just before we got started today, even one of our dear members wanted to make sure that everyone feels comfortable and wanted to make sure that this new individual coming in, would, would have somebody to sit with, because they're not alone. I mean, isn't that amazing. And that's why we, as a church, we're not called just to go out and worship by ourselves. But we're here because we want to worship together, but also in this community. We do life together. And in the struggles and the challenges, we can help support and pray for one another, and listen to one another.

And then also, having somebody you know, if you if you want to lose weight, and then I have to admit I ate 20 cookies. That's only half of what Douglas ate, okay? Don't judge me. Man, that would be a bad stomachache. knowing I got to be accountable to my best friend who's you know, checking up on me, helps, you know, to make better decisions. But when we talk about accountability to it's not accountable, and accountability of wanting to be fearful, you know, the people who want us to seek

succeed the most, who loves us the most will ask those questions that will help us in this journey to stay on the right path.

You know, in John 8, there's a beautiful story of a woman who was caught. Let's just put it out, she was caught in adultery. It's early in the morning, Jesus had been out praying. And when he gets back, to worship and to, and to speak with the crowd that met him, they're the leaders of, can't even think that the temple leaders and the Pharisees and Sadducees they bring this woman who somehow they knew was doing something that shouldn't have been done. And by the way, where was the guy in all this to Okay, I kind of realized, you know, what, when it comes to adultery, and everything, we always place blame on Who? The women, but let's just be real, it's not just the women who are being naughty. It's guys, too. So we, this woman is brought in and she's placed before Jesus. And the leaders here asked Jesus what they should do, you know, the, the act that she was in deserves What? death by stoning. And Jesus, God bless them, in a moment of insight and wisdom, then responds with what? Who of you has not sinned? can throw the first stone. And beginning with it's interesting, as you read the story, beginning with the ones who were oldest and then to the youngest, they start to walk away and disappear. And till suddenly, it's just Jesus and the woman. And he asks the woman, woman, and when he says, woman, it's not like woman, it was a, it was a term of endearment. He says, woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you? And she responded with no one, sir. And then Jesus says, neither do I. Go now, and leave your life of sin.

In this life, man, it's so easy to get caught and trapped in something that is so unhealthy for us. But know that this is not who you have to be. You don't have to live that life. Just like the woman who was shown grace and not just grace, but was actually I would even say restored as a life that now can be lived with Christ. As even when we talked about in the last couple of months, when we're talking about the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit is there to help us to shape us to mold us into a new, a new life. God desires to work on our heart to shape and mold us. And much like this woman who was granted exceeding grace. We don't know exactly what happened to her. But yet, I would I have in mind that she changed her life and lived for Christ. We all can live and be renewed, restored through Jesus who grants us eternal life.

I pray that you will accept one who loves you and ultimately died for you. And live a life that while not not, it doesn't it doesn't excuse us from challenges. But yet, when you do life together, what an amazing difference and know that here in Downey church, you have a community that wants to walk with you.

Let us pray. Father in heaven, Thank You, Lord for all that you do. Sometimes we can't even see it and sometimes it's blatant. Regardless, Lord, be with us. keep us safe, Lord, when there are challenges when pride and and ego or thoughts that we shouldn't be thinking or wanting to fall into Help us, Lord, to have the strength to say, no me or Holy Spirit, reside in us that we don't get taken off the path but are heading straight in to You. Lord, be with our church. Help us to be the emissaries, the ambassadors that you've called us to be that others may know who you are, and that you are present. And Lord, others

may be able to find and accept you and also to go out and share you with others. Thank you for your goodness, be with our church until we meet again next time in Jesus name. Amen.

Grace and peace everybody. Have a great week. Take care.