

Journey
Wk 2
Reading the Signs...

Last week we began to look at this whole concept of looking at life as a journey and the different aspects of life as paths rather than chapters or events that we start and finish. I'm not sure if you remember or not, but we looked at the physical trips we take in life and said that if we are only concerned about the starting point and the finish line one of two things can happen. We either will go so fast that we put ourselves and those around us at risk or we go so slow that we miss out. There is something to be said about pacing ourselves along the path of life we are currently on.

What we really centered on last week though was the type of path we are on. There are two types of paths. There are paths that are straight and level and there are paths which are crooked and unlevel. We looked at several passages and said that one thing that both types of paths have in common is that they are made. They are by one of two things. They are either made by us or they are made for us by the decisions we make and the God/god's we follow. We don't just happen to fall on a path, we make the choice or decision to get on a straight path or a crooked one. We get on crooked paths by making the decision not to guard our heart and allowing others things and people to become more important to us than God. We make straight paths by being people of integrity, people who live the same type of life they claim to, and repentance, turning away from the crooked and unlevel roads that we tend to walk on. We asked the question, "What type or road are we walking on?"

You know what really drives me nuts sometimes, GPS. Not the GPS unit but the voice. You can download all these cool voices now, but most of them aren't really personal and if I'm honest with myself, in fact if most of us are honest with ourselves we really don't like to hear that we have to turn around. "Please make u-turn in 300 ft". I can't stand it, because sometimes I know where I'm going better than the GPS does. A few years ago Becky and I didn't even have a GPS yet and we went to Myrtle Beach for our anniversary. We're driving and I had been there before so I knew the way I usually go. So I go that way. Well we borrowed Skip and Gena's GPS and let's just say we didn't really see eye to eye. Now I had never used one before and I was sort of like, what do I do with this thing? So I'm going my own way and before I know it the GPS is telling me. "Please make U turn in 300", and I'm thinking to myself. Yea whatever, so I just keep going. Pass 300 ft, "Please make U turn @ next right". I'm thinking to myself well eventually this thing will just quit. Nope, I passed the next right, sure enough "Please make u turn and next intersection". This went on for like 15 minutes; I didn't know I could mute it. Well, if you get far enough away from those u turns, it goes into recalculation mode. I think I confused it, because about 50% through its recalculation stage, the screen goes completely black. A minute or two goes by and a few words scroll out. "Internal error" Beck's like, "you broke it". I'm going "I broke it?" if it had just figured out that I knew

a different way it wouldn't have broke itself. An hour went by or so, I realized I didn't know where I was anymore so I went ahead plugged the thing back in and it was ok.

The thing is for a lot of us if not most of us, we have those types of conversations with God. We're getting on a crooked path and we're like this isn't too bad. Maybe it's just a bump in the road. Meanwhile God's word is telling us, "Make immediate U turn". It's not until we truly have no idea where we are or where we are going that we want the GPS on and we don't care what it sounds like. We become desperate. Not only does God's word show us where we are heading, but it give us clues, road signs if you will to tell us what's ahead. We are going to look at three types of these signs tonight.

The first type is a person, think about a car wreck. Whenever there is a wreck there is either a cop or a person directing traffic. They are telling you which direction to go in. Sometimes in a construction zone you'll see a guy with a sign, "slow" or "stop". These people are giving you direction based on your current path and the upcoming path. If you're on an unlevel or crooked road there is usually someone telling you to "slow down", "be cautious", "stop" and even "turn around". God uses people as signs to tell us of the current and upcoming path or road that we're on. It wasn't too long ago that we celebrated Christmas. A number of years before Jesus came; the promise of him coming was made. Isaiah tells us that...

Isa 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

As Christians who do we know to be the sign? (Mary). You see the sign spoken here is a person. Like the cop or the construction worker who directs traffic. Mary was the sign that showed us that Jesus came.

Who in your life does God use to point out where you're at and where you're headed? Is it your Parents, coaches, teachers, youth leaders, or your friend's, who know the real you the best? What are they saying, "Good job keep going toward Christ, you're on a straight road", or are they saying "Hey wait a second, this path is going to lead you away from God, is that what you want? Look at this thing, its crooked path and the terrain unstable. You're going to get hurt and so is someone else".

The second type of sign is God's word; it's pretty clear on the difference between crooked paths and straight path. Check out all the signs in this passage in Proverbs (7:6-26)...

At the window of my house I looked out through the lattice. I saw among the simple, I noticed among the young men, a youth who lacked judgment. He was going down the street near her corner, walking along in the direction of her house at twilight, as the day was fading, as the dark of night set in. Then out came a woman to meet him, dressed like a prostitute and with crafty intent. She took hold of him and kissed him... My husband is not at home; he has gone on a long journey. He took his purse filled with money and will not be home till full moon." With persuasive words she led him astray; she seduced him with her smooth talk. All at once he followed her like an ox going to the slaughter, like a deer stepping into a noose till an arrow pierces his liver, like a bird darting into a snare, little knowing it will cost him his life. Now then, my sons, listen to me; pay attention to what I say. Do not let your heart turn to her ways or stray into her paths. Many are the victims she has brought down; her slain are a mighty throng Her house is a highway to the grave, leading down to the chambers of death.

Can you imagine this, "Hey Big boy over here, I want kill you" or your GPS stating "getting on Gravestone Highway", "exiting onto chambers of death exit and go down". Hello!!!! The bible is full of these types of signs and yet it's not very often we actually look at them. If you're not sure what type of road you are on, I would really challenge you to begin to read the book of Proverbs. It gives a lot of practical road signs to follow and to discern what type of road you are on.

The last type of sign we are going to look at tonight is the event sign. We said last week that the decisions we make, the things we choose to do are not events but rather they are paths. On the other hand many times we have the opportunity to be spectators as others journey down the type of path they've chosen to go down. We see a person go down a path and we watch whether they draw closer to God or walk further away. We watch people thrive on their paths or barely survive, and by watching others walk down these types of paths we can decide whether or not we want to walk down them or not. I'm not sure if you know any alcoholics or not, but alcoholics are addicted to alcohol. Duh right, not quite. When you are addicted to something you give up control to that substance or activity, whatever it may be. So if your addicted to watching TV that means you allow the TV (or show) decide what you do and don't do based on the TV's schedule. Alcohol does the same thing, when someone drinks to the point of drunkenness they choose to give the alcohol control of their life. It may not seem like a big deal until your friend is killed by a drunk driver and the drunk driver doesn't remember getting in the car. It may not seem like a bid deal until your friend gets pregnant and they don't do who the daddy is. You see we all know people who follow this type of behavior in one way or another. Maybe its alcohol, maybe it's work, money, selfishness, athletics, and they keep telling you it's not that big of a deal. But you're watching and you're pointing as their sign "make a u turn" but they keep going. The signs get bigger, the road gets worse, but yet they keep going, until what? An event takes place and no matter how much you questioned their decisions or lifestyle before, you know beyond a shadow of a doubt that you will never ever go down that path. You were there at the funeral, you saw what it cost, how it hurt, and you realize it's not worth it. There is no drink that'll ever be worth it. You were there in the delivery room and you realize that there is no way that you're anywhere near ready for what the life your friend and their family are going to live for the next 18 plus years. An event took place and it served as a sign for you.

This was the case with the people of Egypt. God told Pharaoh "Let the Israelites go" and Pharaoh was like, "um no". This happened at least 10 times (Ex. 7-11) and each time the event got a little bit heavier and the sign got a little bit bigger. A wooden staff turns into a snake and then back again, a river changes color and substance for a little bit. Not too big of a deal. So many frogs that you can't see the ground, gross, but I can deal with it. The threat of your country going broke big deal. Losing your entire food crop, now that's big deal. The next sign, watching your oldest child die, really big deal. These events took place to show the Egyptians that they were disobeying God and to show the Israelites the God they served.

What types of signs are on your journey? Signs that say, you're doing well, keep coming closer to God or signs that are saying make a u turn it's going to get ugly? What people in your life is God using as signs for you to listen to? Are you opening his word and looking for the signs that will keep you on a straight and level path? What types of events have you witnessed that have prevented you from walking down paths of pain and destruction?

The kicker about signs though is this, you got read what they say and you have to believe what they say. If you're at a stop sign and you don't read it and keep going does traffic stop. If you see a stop sign and you don't believe it says stop does that change reality. The answer to both of those is no, but pretty often in life we either choose not to read or not to believe the road signs that God gives us. And we don't have to live that way, it's a choice we make and a path we build.

What sort of path are you on, will you read and believe the signs?

Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Can you think of a person in your life that has served as a sign?
 - a. Who is it, why do you see them that way
 - b. Do you listen to them
2. How often do we not follow clear biblical signs and then wonder "how'd I get here?"
3. Look for three signs in the passage in Proverbs (7:6-26), there is more than three.
4. Has an event served as a sign for you?
 - a. What was it?
 - b. What did it encourage you to do and keep you from doing?
5. Are there signs in your life that you either don't read or don't believe?
 - a. Why?
 - b. What do you think it will take to get you to follow these signs, should it take that?