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Enjoy the Detours of Life

Steven Conger

(Habakkuk 1:1-2,2:2-3) The oracle that the prophet Habakkuk saw. {2} O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not listen? Or cry to you "Violence!" and you will not save? 2:2 Then the LORD answered me and said: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it. {3} For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay.

Three weeks ago, I made a profound statement about Christianity. I stated that the point of one becoming a Christian is not to reach some ultimate destination — ie, perfection, or heaven, — but the point of being a Christian is to be on a lifelong —> eternally lifelong —> journey with Jesus Christ. And the point of the journey is not reaching some goal (although, those things are great) the point is THE JOURNEY. Being a fellow traveler with Christ and with each other.

When we pay attention to our journey in the present, we encounter the living Christ, and ultimately experience the power of Christ in what we might call those "unexpected Holy moments" along the way.

But, on the other hand, when we see our Christian faith as a means to an end, as a way of getting from A to B, a way of getting from this life to eternal life, and we pay no attention to life in between, life tends to become miserable —> the journey becomes long and arduous —> and we cut ourselves off from the many ways that Christ is waiting and wanting to touch our lives!

As we constantly seek to keep before us the notion that Christianity is a never ending journey —> and when we realize that the point of the journey IS THE JOURNEY! —> then there are some "RULES OF THE ROAD" that can help make the journey more profitable and more fun! So, this morning, I am going to share with you some of the rules that I have encountered on my journey with Jesus Christ!

RULE # 1 We are in this together, so wear your name tag!

This journey of life is much more fun if you know who you are traveling with. And since most of us are too shy to go up to somebody that we don't know, and ask them their name. Let's help each other by being sure that we wear our name tags, and are friendly with those we don't know.

RULE #2. If you are not sure just where you are going → GO SOMEWHERE!

Too many Christians never get off the starting blocks in their walk with Jesus Christ because they are not sure exactly where they are supposed to go, or how they will get there.

A young person once said to me: "I know that God is calling me to do something, but I don't want to just try anything → I want to make sure that I do the right thing → rather than try something and find out that isn't what God wants of me."

How many of us have said almost the exact same thing?

I know God wants me to DO something, but what that is, I really don't know — so I had better not do anything until I figure out exactly what that is. I will wait for God to bop me on the head → then I will get started.

We all have all kinds of excuses:

I can't do anything . . . I'm divorced
 I'm too old
 I'm too young
 I'm a single parent
 I have small kids
 I have grown kids

If you are not sure just where you are going → PLEASE, just go somewhere. Jesus tells the disciples to GO → he doesn't tell them where to go — > JUST GO

Remember the stories I shared three weeks ago

ABRAHAM

God calls him and tells him to leave his home in Haran and GO!
my journey to Ridge

There is an old Chinese proverb that states: "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."

Samuel Johnson once said: "Nothing will ever be attempted if all possible objections must first be overcome."

There will always be temptations and rationalizations that tell us to seek the safety of doing nothing —> BUT God calls all of us to GO! And if we believe the Gospel we also believe that God will lead us!

That leads me to our third rule: CONTRARY TO POPULAR OPINION, MAPS REALLY ARE OK!

I know that this is a particularly difficult rule for those of us who are of the male gender. We tend to believe that we can figure it out on our own (and, I have to admit, occasionally we get lucky) but, more often than not we make the journey a lot longer than we need to.

As you move along on your Christian journey —> do you consult your map? And since the point of our journey is the journey we find ourselves on every day —> do you consult your map daily'?

WHAT IS OUR MAP? THE BIBLE!

We have in our possession, the greatest collection of maps in the world. Within that book is are maps that will show us the way on our journey, BUT, how often do we really consult it?

How often do we go through life, assuming we know the way. Never consulting our maps —> only to find ourselves desperately lost and confused. How many of you could I call up here by name have lost your way when you thought you knew how to get wherever it was you thought you were going'?

The fourth rule is the one that is most prevalent in my life right now, and I

bet it is working (or not working) in many of your lives as well. The fourth rule is: just when you think every thing is going smooth and you want to shift into fifth gear —> there is always a car doing forty in the passing lane! To say it another way: LEARN PATIENCE.

Yep, those of you who know me, know that this is my long suit. I am a very patient kind of guy -
I always wait until it is time.

It is hard to be patient.

We get on a roll —> we're cruising down the highway of life and were ready to pass that little old lady who is in front of us —> then all of a sudden the car in the passing lane is moving at a crawl also —> and we are left with a choice: Slow down or crash and burn.

Interruptions are a part of life! The question we must ask ourselves is: on our Christian journey are we angered by having to slow down? Or are we willing to seek the Holy moments that can be found in the detours of life.

Our scripture reading from Habakkuk reminds us that we must slow down.

O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not listen? Or cry to you "Violence!" and you will not save? Then the LORD answered me and said: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it. For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay.

Paul writes in the book of Colossians: (Col 3:12) "As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience."

A Sunday school teacher was teaching her class about patience. "What is patience?" She asked. One little girl raised her hand and said, "Patience is when you are sitting in church and the preacher is preaching. You're just sitting there and he is preaching. He keeps preaching and you keep sitting

there. That's patience."

If indeed, interruptions are a normal part of life, then we must learn the lesson from Paul and the author of Habakkuk. We must learn patience → because in learning patience we can experience a fifth rule of the road. ENJOY THE DETOURS, YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT YOU WILL FIND!

I hate detours, especially when traveling on a long trip

Our Christian journey is filled with detours! Unplanned interruptions, circumstances that make us alter our course and take a different route → things that cause us to change our plans.

When we hit the detours we face a choice → be miserable and angry about how life is unfair, God is unfair, our friends our unfair, everything is unfair or enjoy the detour, because you never know just what you will find.

A train was filled with tired people. Most of them had spent the day traveling through the hot dusty plains and at last evening had come and they all tried to settle down to a sound sleep. However, at one end of the car a man was holding a tiny baby and as night came on the baby became restless and cried more and more. Unable to take it any longer, a big brawny man spoke for the rest of the group. 'Why don't you take that baby to its mother?' There was a moment's pause and then came the reply. "I'm sorry. I'm doin' my best. The baby's mother is in her casket in the baggage car ahead." Again there was an awful silence for a moment. Then the big man who asked the cruel question was out of his seat and moved toward the man with the motherless child. He apologized for his impatience and unkind remark. He took the tiny baby in his own arms and told the tired father to get some sleep. Then in loving patience he cared for the little child all through the night.

That man wanted to sleep, he wanted that baby to shut up → put in the end, instead of allowing the detour to destroy him → he allowed the detour to change him.

Detours are a fact of life. They are a part of the Christian journey. Sometimes we make a wrong turn → sometimes the road gets blocked.

At times I feel overwhelmed with the interruptions that happen in the day I have planned out, but at other times I find precious God given moments in them. How we handle the detours, the interruptions of life says a lot about how we view and experience our Christian journey.

Let me close with this story:

A college class was graduating on a hot and humid day. As the graduates walked across the platform to receive their diplomas from the president of the University, he smiled, shook their hands, and said loudly, "CONGRATULATIONS!" Then, in a much lower voice, one that was firm and could only be heard by the graduates, he would say, "Keep moving."

He was only trying to keep the line moving across the stage, but his words are good advice for a lifetime — "Keep Moving." After every achievement — growing up, graduation, marriage, job promotion, even retirement — the best advice is: "Keep moving. Don't stop. Don't stagnate. There is more to life than you have found thus far."

Even once we have made the decision to become a Christian, God says the same thing to us:

"This is not the end of the journey, only the beginning. Keep moving!"