INTRODUCTION: What Is Destiny? 1
CHAPTER ONE: The Purpose of Detours 17
CHAPTER TWO: The Pain of Detours 27
CHAPTER THREE: The Pattern of Detours 41
CHAPTER FOUR: The Purifying of Detours 51
CHAPTER FIVE: The Proof of Detours 63
CHAPTER SIX: The Presence of Detours 73
CHAPTER SEVEN: The Promotion of Detours 83
CHAPTER EIGHT: The Plan of Detours 93
CHAPTER NINE: The Pardon of Detours 103
CHAPTER TEN: The Pleasure of Detours 113
CHAPTER ELEVEN: The Providence of Detours 125
CHAPTER TWELVE: The Perfection of Detours 135
DETOURS

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: The Perspective of Detours  145
CHAPTER FOURTEEN: The Peace of Detours  155
CHAPTER FIFTEEN: The Patience of Detours  165
CHAPTER SIXTEEN: The Path of Detours  177
CONCLUSION  191
APPENDIX: The Urban Alternative  201
INTRODUCTION

What Is Destiny?

Millions of people loved the television show *Seinfeld* when it aired. A college drama department did a study to find out why *Seinfeld* was so popular. They determined that the reason was because of its plotless programming. Seinfeld just meandered haplessly from one scene, one circumstance to the next without connection. The drama department concluded that Americans who lead plotless lives prefer plotless TV programs.

There’s a plotlessness that exists in many of our lives today. Often we move from one scene, one circumstance, to the next without purpose. We wander from high school to college, from college to our first job. Then we’re just dying to get married. Then we’re just dying to have kids. Next we’re dying to get them out of the house. Then we’re dying to retire, only to find out that we’re
just dying—never having known why we were alive in the first place.

But what would life look like if we all lived with a purpose, with a destiny? How would we act and think differently if we saw God’s hand in the plots of our lives connecting one circumstance to the next in the tapestry of His will? How would that affect our emotions? How would that affect our choices? How would that affect our outlook?

I believe it would affect it greatly because when you add purpose to the mix of pain and patience, it gives you the ability to push on. It gives you the ability to keep going when your get-up-and-go has gotten up and gone. It gives you the strength to accept and face your fears, disappointments, and pain rather than seek distractions to avoid them.

Since this book is called Detours—sharing biblical principles of how God will often take you from you where you are now to where He wants you to go—I thought it would be best if we started with a look at the destination. Let’s look at what destiny means.
Destiny is the customized life calling for which God has equipped and ordained us, in order to bring Him the greatest glory and the maximum expansion of His kingdom. Every believer must understand first and foremost that his or her premiere destiny is to glorify God and make His name known (Isa. 43:6–7). Destiny always starts there. It always involves bringing glory to God somehow. It begins with the place of God integrating in our lives in such a way that people come into contact with Him through our words, spirit, emotions, or actions. If you want to find your destiny, find God. After all, He is the author of it.

And I don’t mean “find Him” as if He’s lost and you do not know Him. I mean get close to Him. Get to know God’s heart. Come to recognize His voice more than anyone else’s in your life. Learn what pleases Him and makes Him smile about you. Spend time with Him. Talk to Him. God must occupy the central place in your heart, mind, motivation, and actions (Deut. 6:5). After all, the heart of destiny itself is to serve the purposes of God.

As you obey and serve the Lord, He will make His purpose for you crystal clear (Prov. 3:5–7). You won’t have to hunt for it, or chase it, or put out fleece upon fleece upon fleece to discern it. God is not playing hide-and-seek with your destiny. He just wants you to seek Him first, and then all of the things you need in your life will be given to you.

Why is finding and living out your destiny so important?

I have served as a pastor for more than forty years. This has given me the unique opportunity to be in people’s lives at a level
most do not experience. With that, I’m able to notice patterns that pop up routinely. One pattern I have seen repeatedly is this pattern of purpose linked to personal satisfaction. When people don’t live with the sense that God has given them a divine purpose in life—or that they are fulfilling it—they become depressed. I’ve witnessed that more times than I wish. That’s why I’m so passionate about helping people find the principles that can open up the path of destiny in their lives. Everyone has a destiny and a purpose to fulfill. Everyone.

Each member of the body of Christ has a unique role to play. But when some members don’t fulfill their God-given destiny, the body cannot function (Rom. 12:4–8) as it was designed to function. Others are affected negatively when you do not live out your purpose. We are all interconnected in God’s kingdom, and that’s why it’s critical that we all make seeking God and living out our purpose an important thing to do. Not just for others but also because it will benefit you.

When you discover your destiny, you’ll begin to live life like you never have before. You will have skills to bounce back from disappointments and challenges, even pain. You will find resolve and determination that will enable you to accomplish things you didn’t even know you could accomplish. Your passion and delight in what you do will be contagious to those around you, making your sphere of influence better as a result. You will push through things that used to defeat you.
What Is Destiny?

Though persecution plagued the apostle Paul throughout his life, he frequently looked back to the destiny Jesus gave him on the Damascus Road and regained the confidence to keep going (Acts 9:3–6; 22:6–10). We know that we are fulfilling our purpose by the strength we find to keep going when circumstances say most people would give up.

Uniquely You

There was a little girl once who asked her father for a nickel. He reached into his pocket, but he didn’t have any change. So the father pulled out his wallet, and all he had was a twenty-dollar bill. His little girl had been a good girl so he said, “Sweetie, I don’t have a nickel, but here’s a twenty-dollar bill.”

The little girl pouted and said, “But Daddy, I want a nickel.” The father tried to explain how many nickels the twenty-dollar bill represented, but she didn’t get it. Many of us are the same. We want a nickel when God wants to give us a twenty-dollar bill. We want our will so much that we miss out on God’s perfect destiny for us—one that is worth much more than twenty dollars!

Far too many of us are missing out on a glorious destiny because we want what we want. We want a nickel. We want what we know. What we can see. But God knows we were created for so much more. He desires to teach us what that is if we will learn to let go of our own plans and our own will and seek Him first.
Too many Christians believe they are “off the shelf” people. When we walk into a clothing store, we can choose from a number of shirts, belts, dresses, and pairs of shoes. But before these clothing items made it to the store shelf, they were mass-produced in a large factory, likely with little attention to each individual shirt, belt, or sock. But God doesn’t produce “off the shelf” people. Each person has been custom-designed by His loving, sovereign hand. The fact that each person’s fingerprints are completely unique proves that God doesn’t mass-produce people.

Part of living out your destiny comes in living out the uniqueness of you. God has uniquely designed you for His purposes. God has woven you together intricately and uniquely to bring Him glory, bless others, and expand His kingdom. Psalm 139:13–14 says, “For it was You who created my inward parts; You knit me together in my mother’s womb. I will praise You because I have been remarkably and wonderfully made.”

Another verse which speaks to your personal stamp is found in Ephesians 2:10 (NASB): “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.” In this verse the word workmanship means “masterpiece.” Keep in mind that the title masterpiece is reserved for the most glorious example of a certain art form, such as a poem, a painting, a sculpture, or a piece of music. Masterpieces are known as such because of the skill and expertise of their creator. Because of this, God’s masterpieces must be set apart (1 Pet. 1:2–4). In order for you to be the masterpiece God wants you to
What Is Destiny?

be, He must sanctify you and make you more like Jesus Christ. To do this, He often puts detours in your life in order to develop you. He takes you on a path that will give you the grace to grow. God will continue shaping and molding you as His masterpiece over the course of many detours until you are ready to fully realize all He has for you to do.

Not only are you a masterpiece, but God has also prepared good works for you to do. That means the good works God has prepared for you are the biblically authorized activities that bring God glory and benefit others. As you walk in the path of good works He has laid out, you will fulfill your destiny. Sometimes this requires learning, growing, and developing as a person. These seasons are what we can refer to as a detour. They are times when God seeks to mold us into the character He can use for the good works He has prepared. That’s not always fun. Sometimes it hurts. It’s often longer than any of us wish. But God will accomplish His desired result, if you allow Him. It’s only when we fuss, fight, and complain that our detours drag on longer than necessary.

When you iron a shirt that is wrinkled, you have to add steam and heat in order to get the wrinkles out. And why do we iron shirts, pants, and dresses? Because we want to look good when we wear them. In the same way, God has to put us through the fires of refinement to smooth out the rough places and correct our flaws.

Now imagine if that shirt you were ironing wouldn’t sit still. Imagine if it kept hopping up off the ironing board. Or what if it would bundle itself up into a tight ball each time you attempted to
Detours

Iron it. How long would that ironing session take, then, if the shirt simply lay flat and allowed you to press it into perfection?

The same holds true for us on our detours. Far too often, we are the cause of our own delays. We are the cause of our own additional detours. Our lack of compliance with God’s development in our hearts, spirit, and souls will far too often prolong that which we do not enjoy. Surrender is a critical secret to speeding up the process toward your destiny.

We, as God’s masterpieces, bear our Master’s name and image. He wants to make sure that image reflects Him well. When we fulfill our God-ordained destinies, God wants others to see the beauty of Him through us, and that takes refinement in us.

Tools of Destiny

A hammer and a chisel in the hands of a sculptor can turn a piece of stone into a work of art. With each blow, as the hammer strikes the chisel, chunks of stone fall away, eventually revealing a beautiful sculpture. Though the process of chipping away at the stone seems harsh and unyielding, the result is well worth the pain.

Likewise, when God gets His hands on our joyful and painful experiences, He can turn our lives into masterpieces that display His glory and channel His blessings to others. God will use our skills, training, and interests to help us discover our purpose in life.
What Is Destiny?

He will also turn our failures and sin into opportunities to form us into the people He created us to be. And even when we face injustice, persecution, and unbearable tragedy, God will transform our pain into a passion for Him—if we let Him.

Some of the primary tools God uses to help us identify our divine-designed destinies are our experiences. God is able to thread together the good, the bad, and the bitter experiences life has taken us through to shape a beautiful masterpiece of destiny and to accomplish His purpose in our lives.

But you guessed it. You can’t have experiences without going through—yes—experiences. Detours are often those opportunities God uses in our lives to chisel us through the experiences we face. We can either cooperate with these detours by asking God to reveal to us the lessons He wants us to learn, or the skills He wants us to develop—and so on, or we can complain, kick, scream, fight, and remain on the detour much longer than we ever needed to.

One of the things that can help you and me as we go through various experiences in life that we may not want to go through is to remember this biblical truth: God uses all of our experiences to bring Him glory, when we allow Him. God sovereignly works through all of our detours to glorify Himself and achieve what is best for our development and the good we are to bring to others (Rom. 8:28–30). Through good, bad, and bitter experiences, God prepares you to fulfill His plan.
The Good

Good experiences are the positive things that have happened as a result of God’s will and your good choices. These might be your education, connections, family, accomplishments, and more. God will use them to craft you specially to fulfill His plan. This can happen even if you did not set out to serve God in these experiences you acquired. For example, God took Saul’s training as a Pharisee, sanctified it, and used it to prepare the converted “Paul” to craft the theological foundation of the church in the New Testament letters he wrote (Acts 22:3).

God also used Peter’s trade as a fisherman to turn him into a fisher of men and a leader in the early church (Matt. 4:18–20). God used Moses’s training in the royal Egyptian household to give him access to redeem God’s people (Exod. 3:10). God used Esther’s beauty to make her the queen so she could save His people (Esth. 4:14).

The Bad

God will also use your bad experiences to achieve His will. Bad experiences are the mistakes, sins, failures, consequences, and regrets that have occurred because of your own choices. God can take your bad experiences and turn them into tools to bring Him glory. For example, Peter denied Jesus three times, but God used that failure to humble Peter and prepare him for ministry and to strengthen other Christians (Luke 22:31–34).
How did God bring Peter back after he denied Jesus? When Peter was out fishing on the Sea of Galilee, he saw Jesus on the shore cooking fish over a charcoal fire. The Greek word for charcoal is only used two times in the New Testament—once when Peter was warming his hands over a charcoal fire when he denied Jesus, and the other time when Jesus cooked Peter’s breakfast over the charcoal fire. God took Peter back to the place of his failure—to the charcoal fire where he denied his Lord—humbled him, and then told him to feed His sheep. Finally, Peter was ready to help others.

One thing to remember with regard to the bad experiences in your life is that you must learn from your failures and the consequences of bad choices and be humbled so God can use them for His good. God will often take you back to a point similar to that of a time of failure in your life to retest you, or to remind you—so that you can be humble and grow.

The Bitter

Last, God uses your bitter experiences to accomplish His desires. Bitter experiences are the things that have happened to you but that are not your fault, such as abandonment, abuse, neglect, injustice, and disease. As we will study in our time together in this book on detours, Joseph was born into a dysfunctional family, sold by his brothers, wrongly accused by Potiphar’s wife, sent to jail unjustly, and forgotten. No story quite spells bitter like Joseph’s.
Yet in His perfect timing, God elevated Joseph to a position of influence. Joseph didn’t allow bitterness to take over from negative experiences that he clearly did not deserve. Rather, he saw God’s hand working through evil people and injustice to put him in a position to save his family and his people (Gen. 50:20). As Joseph recognized God’s sovereignty, he trusted Him and didn’t allow bitterness to take root in his heart (Gen. 39:20–23).

Some of the primary things God uses to help us identify His divine, designed destiny are our good, bad, and bitter experiences. God has the ability to take our mess, or the mess people mess over us with, and construct our miracles. Yet one of the reasons many people stay stuck on detour after detour after detour is they have not learned from their failures, or they have not learned to forgive other people’s failures.

God has a way of taking bad and making it better when we surrender to His hand, His sovereignty, His plan.

It’s All about Alignment

Just like a car must be in alignment in order to drive smoothly down the roads of life, we also need to be spiritually aligned with God in order to travel our journey smoothly. Doors remain closed when we are out of alignment. Detours remain looming for miles and miles up ahead. Alignment is one of those critical spiritual components that so few people seem to fail to grasp, and even more
fail to apply. Yet it can open up your pathway to destiny faster than almost anything else (John 15:5).

There was a businessman who had a demanding day ahead of him and was already late for work. He turned on the car, put it in reverse, and punched the button on the garage door opener. Nothing happened. He hit it again and again, a little harder each time. Still nothing. *I've got to get out of this garage and make it to work in time for my big meeting*, he thought. Frustrated, he put the car in park, pulled out his cell phone, and called the garage door repairman.

When the repairman answered the phone, the businessman explained the situation and begged for help. “I can’t get to my destination because I’m stuck in my garage.”

The garage door repairman told the businessman to walk over to the garage door and find what looked like canisters at the bottom left and bottom right of the door. So the businessman found the canisters.

The repairman asked, “Are the red lights at the center of the canisters pointed exactly at each other?” The businessman noticed that the red lights in one of the canisters were not in alignment.

The repairman said, “That’s your problem. When the red lights are not in perfect alignment, the door can’t receive the signal to open.” After the businessman shifted the canister a little bit, the red lights matched up, the door opened, and he was off to tackle his busy day.
One of the reasons people have trouble staying on detours too long is because they are out of alignment with God—the only one who can give them the straight line ahead. If Christians live misaligned lives, we won’t get His signal. We won’t hear “Turn here,” when we need to. Or “talk to this person,” or “apply for this job.” Rather, we will be stuck trying to constantly figure things out on our own based on logic and reasoning. While logic and reasoning have their place, far too many unknowns exist on the path of life—things we can’t see, hear, or even predict may happen. Only God knows the beginning from the end. Only God knows what He has planned down the road. Logic and reasoning can only discern within the context of their own awareness. But when you are aligned with God and abiding in His Spirit, He will guide your spirit like a personal GPS system.

Many people who have a TV have a satellite dish of some sort. When the dish picks up the frequency, you get a picture and you can see your favorite TV show clearly. But when the signal is interrupted, though the signal has been sent, your dish doesn’t pick it up. And you can’t see anything on your TV.

Likewise, God wants to give you the next steps on your detours to your destiny. But He wants to know that you’re in a place to receive His message. That means you must remove yourself from the static of this world order, from thoughts that deny the spiritual framework of biblical truth—from materialism, distraction, and worldliness.

When you abide in His presence, He speaks.
What Is Destiny?

The Lord spoke to the apostles and set Paul and Barnabas apart for His purpose while the apostles were worshipping the Lord in His presence (Acts 13:2–3). God often gives us guidance as we practice spiritual disciplines, including worship, fasting, and prayer. What is worship? Worship is positioning your spirit in alignment with God so you can hear from Him. When you worship God, you acknowledge who He is, what He has done, and what you trust Him to do in the future. You acknowledge and rest in His preeminence over all, even yourself. The Lord wants to give you guidance, but you must remain in a position to hear Him.

If you feel you are out of alignment, one thing you can do is begin living in submission to Him. Scripture says this is our daily act of worship. Sacrificing your perspective, plans, and will for His aligns your soul with Him. Then you are able to understand His perfect will and see His will being worked out in your life (Rom. 12:1–2).

When a baby is breach, her head is up. The doctor has to go in and turn the baby around and point the little head down. But when her head is in the right place, it’s time for a delivery.

When you live with your mind and thoughts focused in the wrong direction, you will have a difficult time finding your destiny. You will go on detour after detour after detour. But when you allow the Great Physician to turn you around—to bow your head down, even though the process may feel painful, you become ready to walk with purpose.
Always remember, even in the dark places, God has a plan for you. The good news is you don’t have to find the exit of your detours yourself. You just have to find God, and He will give you your exit ramp. But before He does, He may have a few things to prepare first. Let’s learn about those in the next chapters.
CHAPTER ONE

The Purpose of Detours

Detours are delays. They are rerouted paths that keep us from our original route. Detours pop up in places we had not expected. When we get in our cars, we do so with a destination in mind. We plan to go *somewhere*.

And we typically know *how* we plan to get there—which highway we are going to take, which turn to avoid rush-hour traffic, and which side streets we are going to use to arrive at our final destination.

And even if we don’t know the way, we can type the destination address into our smartphone app, and rely on an automated voice to guide us through every turn.

Regardless if we are following our own mental map or the voice in our phone, sometimes we run into a detour (something we did
DETOURS

not expect). Some roadblock that requires us to make a U-turn or go down a path we did not expect.

I don’t know about you, but I like to get to where I am going without any detours.

In fact, when the kids were younger and we loaded them all into the car to drive from Dallas to Baltimore to visit my parents each summer, I barely even stopped. Sometimes I would race myself based on the last year’s time clock in order to see if I could beat my previous time.

If the kids needed to use the bathroom, I told them to wait. If they were thirsty, they had to wait. There was a method to my madness, you see. If I got the kids a drink, then we would have to stop more down the road to use the bathroom. Essentially, they all buckled down at my mercy because I had a destination at which to arrive.

As you might imagine, if I won’t even stop for normal things like food and bathroom breaks, you can guess how I feel about a detour. It’s not good.

I sigh.
I moan.
I wonder why on earth did this have to happen to me right now.

Have you ever done something similar? Have you ever been driving down the road when all was well only to arrive at a construction site with orange signs and arrows and experience your whole attitude and outlook change?
The Purpose of Detours

I’ve admitted that mine changed; you can admit it too.

Detours are typically unexpected inconveniences that, without fail, cause a speed bump in your emotions. It’s either a sign you come up on, or a person who steers you elsewhere, or a police car with lights on it sitting there to let you know the road you are traveling is no longer available. Now, because of the detour, you and I must go off the beaten path, take longer than we had wished to, and be inconvenienced in order to arrive where we had hoped to go.

Few of us like to be stalled for any reason. Even if it’s just someone cutting us off in traffic and forcing us to slow down. But detours are necessary if any improvement is going to be made on the paths we travel. Or if any wreck is going to be cleaned up or hazard avoided. Detours are designed for our own good, regardless of how we view or feel about them. Detours are good things that often feel bad.

Divinely designed detours are positive interruptions designed to divert down a better path so that we might have the opportunity to reach our destination at all.

Let me repeat that since it is something we don’t often hear: Detours can be a good thing. They provide safety, opportunities for road improvement, and a different way to get where we want to go.

If you were to sit at a detour sign and stubbornly refuse to take the diversion, you would go nowhere. You would just sit there. For days. Possibly weeks sometimes.
Yes, a detour may take longer than you had originally planned; however, it won’t take any longer than if you were to try to push through it on the original path. That will get you nowhere.

**Detours on the Road of Life**

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you have a destination. We often refer to that throughout this book, and in life, as your *destiny*. From an eternal perspective, we know what our destiny is to be and that it involves being in God’s presence forever—worshipping Him and working for Him in our eternal state. That is our *eternal destiny*.

But each of us also has a time-bound destiny here on Earth. I call this our *historical destiny*. It is the unique purpose you and I have been created for in order to fulfill.

God has a plan for you. He has a plan for your life. He has a purpose for your existence. The reason why you were not taken to heaven the moment after you were converted is because there is a purpose on the earth; He desires you to live out your destiny. Your destiny is not just to go through the motions day-in and day-out. It is a God-designed stamp on your soul that involves the use of your time, talents, and treasures for His glory and other people’s good for the advancement of His kingdom. As you fulfill your destiny, you receive the satisfaction and contentment that comes from living out your calling. You receive the peace that come from purpose.
Rarely though does God ever take someone to their destiny without taking them on at least one detour, or two, or ten, or one hundred. It is the one-in-a-million Christian who gets to go from point A to B to C and straight on to Z. Most often, God takes you from A to F to D to R to B to Q, and so on. You never know which letter He is pulling you toward next.

As people, we like to plan. We make our itineraries when we travel. We keep a log of our schedule on a calendar app. We appreciate the efficiency of moving forward steadily. We would never plan chaos and detours into our life on purpose. And yet that seems to be God’s *modus operandi*—His default mode for guiding us.

This is because it is in our detours that we become developed for our destiny.

**Development**

Part of experiencing the fullness of your destiny is in understanding your detours. Far too often we fail to understand our detours, and as a result, we wind up viewing them in a wrong light. When this happens, we give room for things like impatience, bitterness, regret, and doubt to grow. Rather than allowing the detours to produce the development we need, they actually set us back spiritually, thus setting us up with a need for more detours in order to grow. It can become a vicious cycle.

For example, when you were in school, you would have to endure academic testing. These tests let the teacher know where
you stood on the material you needed to learn. If you were unable to pass these tests, then more assignments and more tests would have to be given. Have you ever known someone who “tested out” of a class or an assignment? This happened when they felt they had enough knowledge to pass the test without having to do the work. In this case, they took a test and if they scored high enough, they could skip the rest of the course.

I never “tested out” of a course, but I know people who did. Most of us have to go through the learning process—unfortunately, some of us more often than others—in order to gain mastery over what we need to know.

God is not going to bring your destiny to fruition until He knows you are able to handle it spiritually, emotionally, and physically. If you cannot handle it, you will lose it rather than use it, for His glory. That is why He focuses so intently on our development as He takes us to our destiny.

When you look at Scripture, it is full of destinies being reached by detour. When God told Israel He would take them to their destiny in Canaan, they had to cross the Red Sea in order to get there. However, He didn’t take them directly to the Red Sea. Rather, He took them down south and then brought them back up before He led them across the Red Sea. In fact, because they had not yet developed in their level of faith that they needed in order to conquer the enemy in the Promised Land, they wound up wandering on a forty-year detour before ever reaching their destiny.
The Purpose of Detours

The timing and length of our detours in life are often dependent upon our personal choices and growth. God may have a short detour planned for us, but sometimes through our hardheadedness, stubbornness, or immaturity God extends our detour.

Moses was on a detour for forty years. He knew what God wanted him to do. God wanted him to deliver his people from slavery. Yet it took forty years in the wilderness to develop Moses into the humble and trusting servant he needed to be in order to have the mind-set, faith, and abilities to carry out the plan.

Abraham was on a twenty-five-year detour. At one point God had told him His plan for him—that He would bless nations through Abraham and make his name great. How could Abraham have thought at that time it would be twenty-five years before he would have a son? The vision and the proclamation from God to Abraham were real and vivid. It would have been odd for Abraham to believe at that point that it would be nearly three decades before he would witness the literal birth of it.

When we give a plan or projection to someone, we typically do so shortly before we plan to carry it out. Yet God is not like us and will often give us a glimpse of our destiny long before we are prepared to actualize it, as He did when He told Abraham that there would be a four-hundred-year detour in Egypt before they would reach their promised destination (Gen. 15:12–16).

The greatest apostle in the New Testament, Paul, went on a three-year detour to a desert where God removed him from the
DETOURS

front page of culture and life in order to strengthen him, teach him, and develop him for his calling.

I could go on and on with biblical examples of detours, but I think you get the picture. Detours are often a regular part of God’s plan in guiding us to our destinies.

God has a destiny for you. He has a purpose and a place He wants you to live out. But it may not happen tomorrow. You probably won’t get there by going in a straight line. Patience is the primary virtue needed in order to reach your destiny.

The following is a passage speaking on “trials” but we can easily substitute the word affliction with detours and arrive at the same intended meaning:

And not only that, but we also rejoice in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope. This hope will not disappoint. (Rom. 5:3–5)

Hope does not disappoint. Detours disappoint momentarily. But when we allow them to produce hope, God promises that hope will not disappoint. And in order to arrive at an authentic hope in your spirit, accepting your detours is necessary.

Just as your muscles will not grow stronger simply by wishful thinking, the painful process of strengthening your hope comes by detours, tribulations, and trials. Show me someone with an indomitable hope, and we will see someone who has had his or
her share of detours. I promise you this is true. Authentic hope is a learned trait.

Now, I don’t mean wishful thinking or an optimistic attitude. I am referring to that level of hope that stays steady despite the storm and circumstances, which circle you in waves of chaos, testing, and pain.

**Joseph’s Detours**

There is no person in Scripture who better illustrates the principles of detours in relationship to destiny than Joseph. His life reads like a good suspense novel; it displays like an epic film. It has twists and turns along the way. Not only that, it contains stories within stories within stories. If you didn’t skip ahead to the end, you may wonder how it could ever end well along the way. But it does. Moving ahead from chapter 37 up to 50, we catch the culmination of the detours and distresses when it gives us Joseph’s response to those who had served as the catalyst to his life’s chaos. We read,

> But Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for am I in God’s place? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.” (Gen. 50:19–20 NASB)

Please notice the phrase, “You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.” This insightful inclusion in Scripture gives us
a clue as to the makeup of detours. They may oftentimes contain evil. They may oftentimes contain bad people. In fact, in our lives it can even be our own bad choices that set us off on a detour. In this cosmic battle of good against bad, we cannot expect to escape without coming in close contact with that which intends our harm.

Yet what we often do is stay stuck there. We suffer under the evil of people acting badly or our own bad choices producing bitterness, cynicism, hate, and stunted growth. It is only when we read the entire phrase—keeping in the part that Joseph included “but God meant it for good”—that we are able to move forward, grow, trust, and reach our destiny.

Bad and good happen concurrently in order to bring us to the place God has for you. The first and greatest lesson in detours includes recognizing this reality at a level that allows you to trust God and His hand in the midst of evil, sin, and disappointment in your life.

God is greater than all of it and will use it for good when we surrender to Him through a heart of faith, hope, forgiveness, and love.