

Detours

LESSONS FROM JOSEPH

The Unpredictable Path
to Your Destiny

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Week 1

THE PURPOSE OF
DETOURS

Start

Welcome to session 1 of Detours. Begin by taking a few minutes to be sure everyone knows one another, especially if this is your first time meeting as a group.

When has your life been going one direction and then something happened to make it change course?

When a detour occurs in your life, how have you generally reacted toward it?

Dr. Evans describes a detour as an unexpected shift in the route we were trying to travel. We often think of detours that happen when we are in our cars, but Dr. Evans will explore the detours of our lives and how the Lord sends them and uses them to draw us closer to Him.

Before we learn what Dr. Evans has to teach us about detours, would somebody pray for our time together, asking the Lord to open our hearts and minds to His Word as we begin this study?

Detours

Watch

Complete this viewer guide as you watch the video for session 1.

A _____ is an unplanned, often unexpected, _____ in the route we were taking to get to where we were trying to go.

Detours are determined by:

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Your destiny is your divinely-designed _____.

Joseph was given the position of the _____.

Why does God not take us on a direct route from where we are to where He wants us to be?

1. To _____ us

A _____ in the Bible is an _____ that God causes or allows to take place in our lives to bring us to the next level of _____.

2. To _____ us

Detours have a way of _____ you to things that you were unaware of previously for the purpose of _____ you.

3. To _____ us

In order for us to be tempted, it may come from Satan, but it must be _____ from God. _____ proves whether you are _____ for what God wants to give you.

Our destiny is all about keeping _____ with God.

Respond

Discuss the video with your group, using the questions below.

How do you think of detours when you encounter them while driving?

How do you normally feel when your plans run into detours?

Do you ever take into consideration the purpose of a detour? Does that influence how you respond or react to the detour?

Dr. Evans discussed three reasons why God uses detours. How have you seen these three reasons for detours brought about changes in your life?

Dr. Evans said, “A test in the Bible is an adverse circumstance that God causes or allows to take place in our lives to bring us to the next level of spiritual development.” How have you seen testing grow or change you spiritually?

Have you ever tried to refuse taking a detour? What happened as a result?

When you have been on a detour, what are some important lessons you learned along the way?

Share some biblical examples of God leading someone in a “roundabout way” toward an intended destination.

What are some emotions you commonly feel when you’re stuck taking long detours?

Read James 1:2-4. What does James say our perspective should be on “detours”?

Read week 1 and complete the activities before the next group session.

Positive Interruptions

When we get in our cars, we do so with a destination in mind. We plan to go somewhere. We typically know how we plan to get there, which highway we are going to take—even which streets we are going to turn onto in order to arrive at our destination.

And if we don't, we at least type in the destination address into our smartphone app and rely on an automated voice to guide us every step of the way.

Whether we are following our own mental map or the one in our phone, sometimes we run into a detour—some closed end that requires us to make a U-turn or go down a path we had not previously expected.

I don't know about you, but I like to get to where I am going without any detours. When I take a long road trip with the family, I won't even stop for normal things like food and bathroom breaks, unless my family insists, so you can imagine 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? You can admit it, too.

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.

They are a good thing that often feels bad.

Divinely designed detours in our lives are also positive interruptions designed to divert us to a better path so that we might have the opportunity to reach our destination well. What's more, they often provide the development we need in order to reach our destiny. How we view our detours will often determine how useful they wind up being, which is why we are going to spend the next few weeks examining the purpose, power, and perfection of the detours God both uses and allows in our lives.

Day 1

THE ROUNDABOUT WAY

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 a good thing that often feel bad.

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 cause you to 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 your original path. That will get you nowhere.

Ultimately, while detours may feel like negative things, they are good things. They provide safety, opportunities for road improvement, and a different way to get you where you wanted to go. When viewed from a short-term perspective, they may not seem that good, but when you look at them from the overall long-term vantage point, they are always good. This is why your perspective toward personal detours matter and will influence the impact they have on your life. If you spend your time complaining rather than seeking to understand the purpose of detours, you will be less likely to benefit from them.

Share how you feel when you come across a detour while you are driving. Do you ever take into consideration the purpose of the detour, and does that influence your emotions at that moment?

In what ways might understanding that your personal detours have a purpose (as opposed to those you come upon while driving) affect the way you view them?

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As people, we like to plan. We make our itineraries when we travel or 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 lives on purpose. And yet that seems to be God's *modus operandi*—His go-to mode for guiding us. Rarely does God ever take someone to the destiny He has for them without taking them on a detour, or two or ten, or even a 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 out next, either.

Read Exodus 13:17,18. Why did God not allow the Israelites fleeing Egypt to take the shortest, straightest path?

The New Living Translation records Exodus 13:18 like this, “So God led them in a roundabout way through the wilderness toward the Red Sea.” Give another biblical example of God leading someone in a “roundabout way” toward the intended destination.

Share a personal example of how God led you in a “roundabout way” toward a desired goal. What are some important lessons you learned on the path?

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 you have a purpose on earth He desires you to live out. 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, for good, and for the advancement of His kingdom.

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Yet, the development of your talents, the increase in your treasures, and the wisdom you acquire doesn't always come quickly. Just as an Olympic athlete must train day in and day out in order to prepare himself or herself for the race, or event, we are on a path to destiny that requires development.

Read Habakkuk 2:3. What are we to do when what we have been shown or guided to do faces a delay?

Is God mean to make us wait? Why or why not?

List three benefits you can gain from delays in reaching your destiny or purpose in life.

1.

2.

3.

God is a loving Father. His heart desires for you to be all that you can and should be. But just as any parent would not put their five-year-old child in high school, God knows that we require time and lessons to develop us to reach our destiny.

Thus, part of experiencing the fullness of your destiny simply comes 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, setting us up with a need for more detours in order to grow. It can become a vicious cycle.

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What are some common emotions and reactions we feel when our “plans” run into a detour?

Read Psalm 37:5. What does it mean to “commit your way to the LORD”? Can you simultaneously hold on to “your way” and “commit” it to God? Why or why not?

What are the benefits of committing your life path to God and trusting in Him? Also read Proverbs 16:3.

If you’ve never made the connection between your detours and your destiny, will you take some time to intentionally look at your detours in this light? It might be helpful to rehearse past detours in your life by writing in a journal or on a notes app and recording how these detours were used to get you where you are today.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for these lessons on detours and how You use them to positively impact my life. Please open my eyes to see how You have done this in my past and even how You are presently doing this in the circumstances and situations I face. I want to approach life’s detours in a mature manner so that I don’t cause additional delays. Increase my wisdom, patience, and insight so that I can. In Christ’s name, amen.

Day 2

THE IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPMENT

When you were in school you had to take regular tests. These tests let the teacher know where you stood on the material you needed to learn. If you didn't pass those tests, then more assignments and more tests would have needed to be given.

Have you ever known someone who “tested out” of a class or an assignment? Have you ever done this? What enables a person to “test out” of a class or assignment?

What prevents someone from testing out of a class or assignment?

God is not going to bring you to the fruition of your destiny until He knows you are able to handle it spiritually, emotionally, physically, and the like. 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.

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 we make it longer through our hard headedness, stubbornness, resentment, or immaturity and doubt.

What things can make a detour longer? Have any of these things ever made your detour, and what did you learn from that experience?

For those of you who work out, did you know that your muscles change almost immediately after a strength training session? The process called protein synthesis

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occurs anywhere from two to four hours after exercising. This is how the muscles grow stronger and bigger. Even though it happens so quickly after strength training, it is typically four to six weeks before noticeable muscle changes are seen by others.

Have you ever started an exercise regime only to quit it because you did not see any results? If so, how long after starting did you quit?

Why is it important to continue exercising even when you do not see immediate results?

How can we apply this physical lesson to our spiritual and personal lives with regard to the development we are experiencing in our detours?

Can you list three practical ways to remind yourself to keep going in those times when you do not see any results? Be sure to use scriptural truth to back up these reminders when possible.

1.

2.

3.

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 that he needed to be in order to have the mindset, faith, and abilities to carry out the plan.

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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. 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. But it was.

The greatest apostle in the New Testament, Paul, went on a three-year detour to a desert where God removed him from the front page of culture and life in order to strengthen him, teach him, and develop him for his calling.

Detours are often a regular part of God's plan in guiding us to our destinies. God 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 400-year detour in Egypt before they would reach their promised destination (Gen. 15:12-16).

Read Acts 24:24-27. In your own words, describe the situation that Paul faced.

How might Paul have felt, languishing in jail for so long?

Do delays always come with a ready explanation? Why or why not?

Read Psalm 62:1 and Psalm 69:3. List some common emotions that come when we are waiting on God, stuck in a detour we do not understand.

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What are some common feelings experienced when someone exercises longer than they want to or more frequently than they want to due to doctor's orders, the encouragement of others, or even personal willpower?

Share some approaches to overcoming the desire to give up when negative emotions appear and to push through even when results are not readily apparent.

Have you ever had to do this in your own life? Describe the situation and the ultimate result.

Development is not an event. Neither is it a one-size-fits-all experience.

Development takes time, tests, failure, and overcoming. God knows each one of us individually. He knows what we each need in order to develop and strengthen our spiritual muscles and sharpen our spiritual insight and wisdom. More often than not, this requires detours in life to allow us the opportunity to learn, grow, and develop.

God has a destiny for you. He has a purpose and a plan that 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 a preeminent virtue needed in order to reach your destiny.

Read Romans 5:3-5 out loud. Substitute the word "detours" for the word "tribulation" or "affliction."

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

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Just like your muscles will not grow simply by wishing them to grow stronger, neither will your hope. The process of strengthening your hope comes by detours, tribulations, afflictions, and trials.

Show me someone with an indomitable hope, and I will show you someone who has had his or her share of detours. This is because authentic hope is a learned trait. Authentic hope is that level of hope which stays steady despite the storm and circumstances. It is the hope that enables you to keep going on faith alone.

Prayer

Loving Heavenly Father, thank You for your gift of detours. Thank You for loving me enough to want me to grow, develop, and mature. Thank You for not giving me my destiny or dream too soon, before I am able to handle it because then, Lord, I may waste it, lose it, or even ruin it. God, You know what is best. And You are a gracious Lord to patiently develop me to reach that place of ultimate purpose and destiny. I am thanking You in advance for all You have in mind. In Christ's name, amen.

Day 3

INTRODUCING JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS

The eleventh son of Jacob, we discover Joseph as a teenager in a very dysfunctional home. His father was a deceiver and a trickster. He was a manipulator by trade. One of the more infamous deceptions he is known for is tricking his father into giving him the birthright that was due to his older brother.

Jacob had twelve sons by four different women, which explain a lot of the dysfunction right there. In the midst of baby-mama-drama, the children grew up to create their own form of chaos. One of the sons, Reuben, had sex with one of his father's concubines. When Jacob found out about it—which he did—you could imagine what happened. Reality TV has nothing on Joseph's family. You may be able to keep up with the Kardashians in our world today, but I doubt anyone could keep up with Joseph and his brothers.

Two of Joseph's brothers, Simeon and Levi, were mass murderers. In Genesis 34:25 we read, "Now it came about on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and came upon the city unawares, and killed every male." Not surprisingly, these two brothers set up the township for murder through deception. They talked the entire town into getting circumcised and then brutally murdered them while they were healing and unable to fight back.

Then there was Joseph's brother Judah who had sexual relations with his daughter-in-law. Holidays in Joseph's home would have been, no doubt, a disaster. This was one messed up family. If we were looking for a home out of which to pick the future savior of an entire nation, and even the known world to a large degree, from starvation by famine, it is doubtful we would have landed on Jacob and his twelve sons. How could anything good come out of such mess?

Add on top of already volatile emotions the dynamics of favoritism and you have a concoction worthy of a witch's brew. In Genesis 37:3 we find just that, "Now Israel (Jacob) loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a varicolored tunic." This is the verse where we are introduced to the famous "coat of many colors" which Jacob gave to his son, Joseph, sparking a fury of jealousy in the family.

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Despite Joseph's messed up background and volatile history, God went on to use him in a position of great influence and respect. Describe how this makes you feel, and why it is important to recognize this aspect of Joseph's life.

What are some meanings that Joseph's "coat of many colors" might have given to his other family members and community members nearby?

Based on Genesis 37:3, why did Joseph's father love him more than the others? In what way did the fact that Joseph's mother was Rachel play into this favoritism?

Have you ever been the "favored one" or known someone who was the "favored one"? How does this reality impact other people's perceptions of and interactions with the so-called "favored one"?

Scripture pulls no punches in telling us how Joseph being the "favored one" made his brothers feel. We read, "His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers; and so they hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms," (Gen. 37:4). Joseph's brothers hated him so much they couldn't even talk to him right.

Add to this storm the lightning and thunder of a dream and you have a recipe for murder. Shortly after getting the robe, Joseph had a dream in which he saw his brothers bowing down to him as sheaves of grain. At the tender age of seventeen, Joseph didn't have the wisdom to keep that type of dream to himself. So when he told his brothers about what he saw, they mocked him and said, "'Are you actually

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going to reign over us? Or are you really going to rule over us?' So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words," (v. 8).

They already hated him just because of the coat of many colors. Pile the dream on top of that and they "hated him even more." Not only that, in verse 9 we discover Joseph had another dream. This time the sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed down to him. When he told his father about this dream, his father rebuked him for thinking that they would one day bow down to him. Joseph's dreams had even gone so far as to offend the one who loved him most. You can imagine what that did to his brothers.

Is it always wise to share your dreams and visions with others? Why or why not?

When might it be wise to keep your dreams to yourself or to a select few trusted friends or relatives?

What are some reactions you have seen or possibly given when someone shared a dream with you that seemed "unlikely" or "impossible"?

Wisdom is the ability to know when and what to share. Just because the Lord lays something on your heart doesn't mean you have to tell it to everyone. Joseph did not know this truth early on, and it cost him a lot. He wound up being left in a pit and later sold as a slave. Joseph still needed to be developed before the essence of his dream and vision could come true.

I know so many of us have dreams of shiny lives and magnificent futures—love like in the movies and careers that satisfy us while affording us our greatest desires. Yet God says, "I can't put you where you need to be until I clean you up first." He cannot give us our destiny if we will not allow Him to shape our character, to deal with our sins, flaws, fears, doubt, and immaturity. Until God is free to produce and promote righteousness within us, He is not free to move us to our intended

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destination. We have to take a detour first, second, third, and so on until we have been developed enough to handle what He has in store.

So few Christians understand that. If we could only grasp this truth and reality, it would make the way we view and go through trials entirely different. If we could see the purpose through the pain, we would bear up under it with a great deal more dignity. Because we don't, we often wind up like Joseph—learning lessons of loss, lust, and lies over and over and over ad nauseum.

When you look at where you are now emotionally, spiritually, and so on, what areas do you see where you still need to develop before being able to fully live out your destiny?

Read James 1:2-4. What is the purpose of detours (trials, testing)?

How does the purpose listed in James 1:2-4 differ from your viewpoint about trials, testing, or detours? In what ways does it align?

How can you help someone else who is going through a detour or trial understand this important truth without coming across as being “preachy” or “meddling”?

I can't imagine the pain God bears in witnessing our pain, especially when we can't understand what He is doing. When we blame Him, yell at Him, ignore Him, become bitter toward Him, and all along, He knows what He is allowing is for our good, His glory, and the benefit of those we love. He takes our punches and defends our blows because He knows that some day we will recognize His hand of kindness and direction, and thank Him.

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You may be in a bad place right now. You may be in a pit like Joseph, without water, food, or fellowship. You may feel like you are the only one in a perfect storm designed specifically to take you down. But I want to speak to you in the middle of your detour. I want to ask you to make yourself available to God in whatever form or fashion He chooses. If you do, you will one day discover His divine providence in using the pain to strengthen your spirit and to deliver you from that pit or storm to that perfect place that is waiting for you.

God has a plan for you. Try not to fight the detours that are designed to take you to its culmination. Praise Him in the pain, even if it is just a faint word that falls off your parched lips. He knows what He is doing. He has great things up ahead for you.

Prayer

Dear Lord, I give You permission to develop me in order to prepare me for my destiny. I understand that this will require tests, trials, and detours along the way. I only ask that You make Yourself present to me in every way, reminding me along the way that You have a purpose to the pain and a greater good in mind. Make me into the person You most desire and allow me to serve You in ways I have previously only yet dreamed. In Christ's name, amen.

Day 4

THE LORD WAS WITH JOSEPH

When you fill a sponge full of water and then you squeeze the sponge, water is going to come out of it because it is full of water. When you are going through a trial and you feel the pressure of life caving in around you, how much of God comes out? Or is it cussing, fussing, complaining, and blaming that comes out instead? Why are those things coming out? Because that is what you are full of. A sponge only lets out what is in it.

Most people fill themselves with entertainment, alcohol, gossip, distractions, bitterness, and things of that nature when life is not fair. But in order to have your detour fulfill its purpose of taking you to your destiny, you have to draw near to God so that God will also be near to, and in, you.

The key to making it through your season of testing is not found in your contacts, notoriety, name, or bank account. The key is found in your intimacy with the Lord.

As we look more deeply at the life of Joseph, we discover that the Lord was with Joseph through the difficult times, even if it may not have appeared to be so at that time.

Read Genesis 37:21,22. In what way was God with Joseph when he was in the pit?

Read Genesis 37:26-28. How was God with Joseph in having him be sold to slave traders? In what way would this seemingly negative reality later prove to be a positive life detour?

Read Genesis 37:36. Why is it important to note that Joseph was sold to the “captain of the guard”? In what way does this indicate that God was with Joseph at this time as well?

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When Joseph was in the pit, God sovereignly guided his every step, using the difficult detour to ultimately get Joseph in a position where he would one day rise to prominence. Not only that, but once Joseph arrived in Egypt, God was able to give Joseph favor in his position as a slave, and even later in prison. God was able to cause Joseph's hand to prosper and let other people give Joseph authority because God was with Joseph during the detours. What's more, Joseph was with God. We do not read of Joseph complaining, whining, or doubting what God had told him despite his dire situation.

Read Genesis 39:2-6.

The LORD was with Joseph, so he became a successful man. And he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian. Now his master saw that the LORD was with him and how the LORD caused all that he did to prosper in his hand. So Joseph found favor in his sight and became his personal servant; and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he owned he put in his charge. It came about that from the time he made him overseer in his house and over all that he owned, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph; thus the LORD's blessing was upon all that he owned, in the house and in the field. So he left everything he owned in Joseph's charge; and with him there he did not concern himself with anything except the food which he ate.

Also read Genesis 39:21-23:

But the LORD was with Joseph and extended kindness to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer. The chief jailer committed to Joseph's charge all the prisoners who were in the jail; so that whatever was done there, he was responsible for it. The chief jailer did not supervise anything under Joseph's charge because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made to prosper.

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Describe what you think it means when it says that the “LORD was with Joseph”?

Because the “LORD was with Joseph,” what were some of the things the people in authority over Joseph gave to him?

**Have you ever experienced favor in your life from someone in authority?
Do you recognize God’s hand in giving you this favor?**

What did God give Joseph and do for him on his detour in Potiphar’s house and in the prison?

In what ways has God prospered you while you have been on what seems to be a “detour” in your life?

Do you recognize a pattern of your trust in Him and His hand of favor and prosperity in your difficult situations?

**Are there areas in your life right now where you need to trust God more?
What practical steps can you take to do this?**

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One of the purposes of detours is to develop you to have the capacity, skills, and character you need to carry out your destiny. While Joseph was a slave in Potiphar's home, the Lord prospered him so that he became second in command in Potiphar's home. Little did he know that one day he would become second in command of the entire nation of Egypt. God was preparing Joseph with the skills necessary to both follow and lead simultaneously.

Joseph did not have the details of his destiny, but his obedience in his detours and his aim for excellence in all he did gave him the opportunity to learn skills he would use later on as a ruler.

Joseph acquired experience in leadership, management, handling staff, dealing with problems, and more. One of the problems we have today in our culture is that people want what they want right now. What we don't realize is that if you can't handle where you are now, how will you handle more responsibility later?

Read Jeremiah 12:5. How important is development of skills, character, mindsets and all else before being promoted to your destiny?

Who among your friends or family has gone through development when they felt they were on a detour but later came to discover how that played into their future destiny? Can you share about their experience and what encouragement it ought to give to yourself and others?

Look back at your last few years, or even a decade, and see if you can discern a pattern of God developing certain skills, character qualities, leadership abilities, and more in your life.

List three of these and share how God has used them to take you to your next level, or how you think He may want to in the future. Do any of them surprise you?

1.

2.

3.

Training for greater things always takes place in lesser things. Be faithful and responsible and content where you are now. That is one of the major secrets to God taking you further and giving you more.

God is not ready to give you your destiny until you can handle where you are now. How can you take care of your destiny there if you are not yet taking care of the destiny He has you in right here? You have to get enough experience first with the “this” you are in now before He gives you the “that” you are hoping for.

As a believer, you should be the best employee, the most on-time employee, the most productive employee because the Lord is with you. Translate that into any area—to be the best volunteer, spouse, parent, friend, etc. Your relationship with God should bring favor to those around you due to your integrity, honesty, morality—not theirs. You should stand out as Joseph stood out—wherever you are.

Prayer

Lord, I want You with me. I want You to show up in all that I do. Give me Your favor and develop a heart that seeks You first in everything. Help me live closely related to You, so much so that other people can't help but recognize it. Even in my detour, God, I want to glorify You. In Christ's name, amen.

Day 5

WHAT DETOURS ARE

Let's take a moment to review what we've covered this week. First, we looked at what detours are. We also looked at how they may feel like a negative thing we don't want, but if we look at them through the lens of God's purpose, we can discover they are good after all.

Next, we talked about the importance of development on the path to our destiny. We looked at a few biblical people who experienced significant detours such as Moses, Abraham, and Paul. Then we went deeper into the life of Joseph on Day Three. Since Joseph serves as the basis for our study on detours, we started his story at the beginning where we found him in a very dysfunctional family.

Yesterday, we introduced the concept of sovereignty—a concept we will look at in greater detail later on. We examined how even in those times that it didn't appear that God was with Joseph that He was, in fact, working things out to accomplish His intended purpose. And later, as Joseph inched closer to his destiny, we saw how God brought favor, authority, and prosperity to Joseph in the midst of his being in positions of servitude and slavery.

Today, as we conclude our time looking at the purpose of our detours, I want to add a few more important things. One of them is something we touched on briefly before—that is God using Joseph's detour to literally take him someplace he didn't plan to go.

Sometimes detours God will use detours to re-route us to an entirely new location that we wouldn't have even thought of going to ourselves. Yes, it would be nice if God simply spoke to us like He did Abraham and tell us to go to a land unknown. It would also be nice if we would have the courage to respond as Abraham did. But far too often we either fail to hear, or if we do hear, we fail to follow because it just doesn't make sense. So God ties us up, as He did Joseph behind some camels, and He finds a way to get us there anyhow.

The problem comes if you or I only see the camels. The frustration happens if you or I only see the ropes. If we only feel the hot sun or the hunger and emptiness night after night and miss seeing what God is doing—we will miss the divine purpose of the detour.

God allows people to move us, shape us, and take us to our next step on the path He wants us to travel. So never think that just because it's people you see that it isn't God directing behind the scenes. God will often use people—even

people in your family, even messed up people in your family—to move you to your destiny through a detour.

Read 2 Kings 6:15-18. In what way was God working behind the scenes to bring about His ultimate good in this situation?

Name or describe a time in your life, or someone's you know, where God was arranging things behind the scenes to usher in the next scenario.

Read 2 Kings 8:1-6. Describe the critical nature of “timing” in how God brought about a positive solution to this woman's dilemma. Why is it important to wait on God's perfect timing?

Timing matters—which is how it always is with God. It's a matter of timing. It's a matter of Him setting up the intersections of life so that when you get there, the people you are connecting with are ready for you. And, even more importantly, you are ready to handle what has been given to you as well.

Is there something you are waiting on that God has put in your heart? Describe how you feel about the wait and how a perspective on God's perfect timing helps you to wait with expectation.

Detours

Read Ecclesiastes 3:1. What does this verse tell you about life's ebbs and flows and the purpose of our detours?

It's easy to worship God and surrender to Him when all is well and life doesn't seem to have any detours, isn't it? It's not easy when you are in a jail, like Joseph wound up in. But for us, jails come in all shapes and sizes. It may be an emotional jail. A relational jail—like a relationship you wish you were never in but have no way out of, or a relationship you wish you had but are, at the moment, alone. Your jail could one of finances or health or even your job.

Are you in a holding pattern emotionally, relationally, career-wise, or in any other way? In what way does this impact your worship of God?

Take some time to identify ways you can improve your relationship with God in the midst of your detours and disappointments.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, I am choosing to humble myself before You as I discover Your purposes for detours in my life. Help me to open my mind and my heart to learn about Your ways and reasons for allowing things in me and to me. Use this Bible study as a time to develop me spiritually so that I become more and more like Your Son, Jesus Christ, in my attitudes and in my character. In Christ's name, amen.

Week 2

THE PROOF OF
DETOURS

Start

Welcome everyone to session 2 of Detours.

What was a helpful point of review or a new insight gained from your personal study last week?

Does anybody have any stories or updates related to our discussion and application from the previous group session?

As we continue to study Joseph's story, and the detours God took him on, notice how God uses detours in our own lives to bring us closer to Him. Sometimes detours take longer than we hoped for, but remember that the Lord has a purpose and a reason for them and that we can trust His timing.

Have you recognized detours in your life that you didn't realize were detours at the time?

Before we see what Dr. Evans has to continue teach us about detours, would somebody pray for our time together? Especially ask the Lord to open our hearts and minds to His Word?

Watch

Complete this viewer guide as you watch the video for session 2.

You know you are on a detour when:

1. God allows the same thing to happen to you _____.

God confirms the truth and application of His Word through
_____ of the same _____.

2. You're suffering for being _____.

3. God gives you glimpses of His _____ even while your _____
has not changed.

4. God gives you people to _____ who are in the same _____
you are.

Ministry during times of _____ is critical.

5. God _____ your _____ when you think you had one.

6. Sometimes you have to take by _____ what you do not
_____.

7. God delays until your _____ and your _____ connect.

Respond

Discuss the video with your group, using the questions below.

Have you ever been on a detour that led to another detour? Maybe an alternate route that had a repair or accident on it that required yet another change of route? Explain.

Remember a time when you have realized that you were on a God-ordained detour?

Have there been “two-witness” scenarios in your life, where God has repeated a situation to get your attention? Share your experience with the group.

Have you ever done something that was the righteous thing to do in the sight of God but you suffered as a result of it? What lessons did you learn from that experience?

Read 2 Timothy 3:12. When have you been persecuted for living for God?

Read 1 Peter 2:20. What does God promise us in our suffering?

How has God given you glimpses or even full-on assurance of His presence when you have suffered?

How has God used an unlikely person in your life to guide you to the next stage of your detour?

What does Dr. Evans mean when he said, “Sometimes you have to take by faith what you do not feel.”? How have you experienced this statement in your own life?

How have you mistakenly credited luck or fate in a situation where you now recognize it as God’s providence?

Read week 2 and complete the activities before the next group session.

Under Construction

Part of my role as pastor involves mentoring and counseling. With a fairly large church, you can imagine the number of calls I get. I can honestly say I enjoy this aspect of being a pastor immensely. Not too long ago, one of the men from the church came over to my home to meet with me. He had been going through a rough time.

As he sat in my family room, head hung low, he lifted his eyes to mine and said, “Pastor, I feel as if my detour has met another detour and they got married and had a baby detour.” In other words, he felt as he were running into detour after detour after detour and that the detours merely kept replicating and multiplying rather than taking him anywhere meaningful.

It is easy to feel that way when God is taking you to your destiny. This is because before you can ever get to where God wants you to be, He has to do some twists and turns. In life, as it is often on the road, detours exist because construction is taking place. When you are on a highway and there is a detour, it is usually because workers are trying to fix, build, correct, or improve something.

Similarly, God will take us on a detour because He is constructing something in our lives as well. Granted, detours are anything but convenient. They take you out of the way. They are longer than you originally had planned to travel. But they are necessary. God is more interested in your development than your arrival. He cares more for your character than your comfort, more for your purity than your productivity.

In this week’s lesson, I want us to look at ways to help us determine and confirm that we truly are on a detour, rather than simply experiencing a bad circumstance. How can we know that this is a God-ordained detour rather than things just aren’t working out right now?

How can you discern that you are not under the circumstances of normal life and consequences but rather in a situation that God Himself has guided you into? We will answer those questions, and more, up ahead. Keep driving.

Day 1

SUFFERING FOR DOING RIGHT

After Joseph had worked in his master Potiphar's home for some time, he had earned Potiphar's trust. So much so, that Joseph was over pretty much everything in Potiphar's home.

Potiphar's wife had noticed that Joseph was attractive, so she made advances at him—day after day (Gen.39:6-10). However, Joseph was wise enough to pass on the passes. He was wise enough from God's perspective, that is.

From man's perspective, that decision to refuse the request of his master's wife landed him on the hot seat and ultimately in another pit as she, in her pain of rejection, accused him of rape.

Read Genesis 39:19-20. Does this verse tell us if Joseph had the opportunity to tell his side of the story?

What happened to Joseph as a result of this accusation?

How do you think Joseph felt knowing he had made a moral decision but seemingly wound up worse off because of it?

Have you ever done something that was “right” in the sight of God, but suffered as a result of it? What lessons did you learn from this experience?

Detours

When you find yourself, like Joseph, struggling or suffering as the result of a decision you made in obedience to God, your struggle is right where God wants you to be. This is actually one “proof” that you are on a detour:

If and when you are suffering for doing good rather than doing bad, we also call that being persecuted for righteousness, you can know you are in a God-planned detour.

If we look more closely at the biblical account of Joseph and Potiphar’s wife, it clearly tells us that Joseph refused her out of obedience to the Lord. He said, “Behold, with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge. There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?” (Gen. 39:8-9).

Joseph recognized the blessings in his life and felt gratitude for how far God had taken him—from a pit left to die to a position of great authority and responsibility in a foreign land. Knowing his source was God Himself, Joseph made his decision on God alone.

Reflect on a time or situation when you were tempted to sin but instead chose not to out of your love and gratitude toward God.

How did God respond to you at that time or even later in life as a result of your decision to resist temptation?

Read 2 Timothy 3:12 and summarize it in your own words.

This part of Joseph’s story is not one we normally discuss, but I think it is important. We are never told this exactly, but it could be that Potiphar’s wife was an actual temptation to Joseph. It could be that she was attractive, the servants were away, Potiphar, also, was gone, and Joseph may have felt something for her. We don’t know.

The Proof of Detours

What I do know is that a sacrifice isn't a sacrifice unless it costs you something (1 Chron. 21:24; 2 Sam. 24:24). And a temptation isn't a temptation unless it's tempting. Knowing this, it underscores the reality that Joseph turned her offer down out of his conviction before God, not necessarily out of a lack of interest. That's important to keep in mind as you go through life and make decisions.

As God did in testing Abraham by asking him to offer up the child of his heart as a sacrifice (Gen. 22), God will also often ask us to sacrifice or overcome a temptation out of our love and obedience for Him, something that costs us something as well. This decision cost Joseph the loss of potential pleasure, his job, and ultimately his freedom.

List three examples of temptations for you. You can keep them vague such as overeating, a relationship, etc.

1.

2.

3.

List three approaches you can take to overcome these temptations out of your love for and commitment to God. Will you spend some time in prayer asking God to help you to do so?

1.

2.

3.

If you are a serious believer and you are making decisions based on what God wants over what you or even your friends or society in general want, the Bible says you can be sure that there will be persecution. There will be suffering. There will

Detours

be sacrifice. It may come in different shapes, sizes, and forms—but it will come. Negative repercussions follow those who live by faith.

In fact, if you never get negative repercussions in your life for godly decisions you make then that is a good sign that you are not living solidly as a Christian. The Bible says clearly that those who make their choices based on their faith (who desire to live godly) will be persecuted. Everyone is not going to be your friend if you are serious about Jesus. This is because you will have to make choices that go against the grain.

Scripture gives us the following verses about suffering for God:

- Acts 5:41: “So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.”
- Acts 9:16: “I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake.”
- 1 Peter 2:20: “For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.”
- Romans 8:17: “...and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.”
- Philippians 3:10: “My goal is to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,” (HCSB).

Read 2 Timothy 2:12 and write it in your own words:

Read Hebrews 11:25 and write it in your own words:

Based on all of these verses, what do we learn about the nature, condition, and biblical perspective of suffering for righteousness?

The Proof of Detours

Daniel was thrown into the lion's den because he wouldn't compromise on the job. Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego got tossed into a fiery furnace for refusing to bow to an idol. They suffered the effects of their decision to not compromise their faith. It is unfortunate today how few Christians are willing to bear consequences for their commitment. Too many believers today are moving along as cultural Christians, or convenient Christians—not so many are committed Christians.

The most critical test you will ever face is the test for suffering when you did nothing wrong. When you do exactly what God has told you to do and you have to pay a price tag for it, you are paying a penalty for righteousness sake. You are on an intended detour that will test and strengthen both your character and your resolve if you will let it.

The greater the calling, the deeper the pit. The higher the destiny, the tighter the shackles. The more glorious the future, the more persecuted the present. Learn to view suffering (when suffering for good) through the lens of the Lord. He has a purpose for the pain if you will discover how to hang in there—like Joseph—even when life does not seem fair.

Prayer

Loving heavenly Father, give me the heart, patience, and perspective to view my suffering for righteousness' sake as a blessing rather than a curse. I want my detour to accomplish its intended aim, God, so help me to get in alignment under You with my thoughts, heart, and actions in order to honor You in the face of unjust or undeserved suffering.

Day 2

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Do you remember in school when the teacher would grade on the curve? At first when this decision was announced, it would give everyone hope. It would make us believe that we had a chance at a great grade because if the subject matter was difficult, our doing poorly may be good enough after all. But then, if your class was anything like mine, there would always be that one person, or two, who would somehow manage to ace the test even though the rest of us got low Bs or even Cs. Those amazing scores would cause the curve to not mean much or anything at all. We called that breaking the curve where I came from.

When you are chosen by God to represent Him in the culture, He wants you to break the curve. He wants you to set the standard so high that you truly reflect Him in your life. When you choose righteousness, and suffer because of it, the Lord will often allow continual trials because He knows they will test you even further. They will produce in you the qualities and character that will make you more like Jesus Christ. Joseph had a glorious destiny ahead of him. He had a destiny that would save people—save nations—from literal starvation. But Joseph wasn't going to arrive at his destiny until his character was molded and shaped in a manner where he could handle his destiny well.

Have you experienced this in your own life or in the life of someone you know, where God has asked you to set a standard that is higher than those around you? Or when it has seemed that God has continually allowed you to be in trial after trial due to no known fault of your own? Describe your mindset to these situations and what gave you the courage to stay strong.

In yesterday's lesson we looked at one way to discover if you are on a God-inspired detour or simply going through the consequences of bad choices. We saw how suffering for what is right is often a way that God tests us. Joseph wound up in jail because he refused to dishonor God by accepting the advances of Potiphar's wife.

The Proof of Detours

Another way you can discern you are on a detour designed by God is that in the midst of your suffering for doing good, God shows you His presence. He shows you His favor. God joins you in the pit.

Read Daniel 3:24-26. How many men were originally tossed into the fire?

How many people did the king see when he looked into the fire?

God's presence with the three men in the fire not only freed them from the restraints that bound their arms, but it also protected them from what should have killed them. In addition to that, because of what the king witnessed when seeing them walk around, he told his guards to release the men. Thus, God's presence delivered the men out of the fire as well. God's presence is powerful. It brings comfort, protection, and deliverance in the most trying of times.

Describe a time in your life, or in the life of someone you know, where God's presence brought about a noticeable change in a difficult situation.

How can we as individuals provide the opportunity for God to join us more often? What did the three men and Joseph all do that led to God being with them?

Is there something in your life that you need to yield in obedience to God right now? Take a moment to pray about this or to ask God to reveal this to you. You can also thank God in advance for His powerful presence which will be with you in times of difficulties that arise from obeying Him.

Detours

Before we go any further, stop and examine your own views on obedience to God.

Read John 14:15 and Luke 6:46. What are your initial reactions to these verses from the Gospels?

Based on these verses, are we to be obedient based on extrinsic motivation (external reward or consequence) or intrinsic motivation (internal desire)?

How does this reality shift our mindset to one of acceptance when things externally may go wrong (according to the human viewpoint) even after we have obeyed?

There is a lot of confusion today between the connection of obedience to blessing. Many believers assume that if they are obedient to God, they ought to deserve a tangible reward. We live in a rewards-based culture and that mentality has drifted into the Christian worldview in many ways. However, based on Scripture, many people were worse off in the tangible world when they obeyed. After all, Jesus' obedience led Him to a cross. It is only when we align our understanding of obedience with God's overarching sovereign hand of purpose (and even pruning) that we will be able to approach and go through our detours with faith, trust, and dignity rather than doubt.

Far more often than not, the proof that you are on a divinely-designed detour will come from the realization of God's presence in the midst of difficulty. It will not come from the immediate removal of difficulty (although that can occur) but rather from the persevering and preserving power given to you by God Himself as you go through the detour.

God didn't keep Daniel from the lion's den; He met him in it. He didn't keep Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace; He joined them in it. He didn't keep Joseph from being a slave to Potiphar; He gave him favor in it. And

The Proof of Detours

He met him in the prison as well. The second proof in knowing you are where God wants you to be in your detour is that God doesn't deliver you from it but rather joins you in it.

Prayer

Loving Christ, teach me how to recognize Your presence in the midst of my trials and detours. Help me to focus more on You than on my detour. Forgive my complaints, doubt, and desire to exit quickly from what You have designed not only for my development but also as a future testimony to Your goodness and grace. I adore You and ask that You will reveal Yourself to me all the more through times of testing. In Christ's name, amen.

Day 3

TWICE IS A CHARM

If you'll remember when Joseph was a slave in Potiphar's house, Potiphar promoted him and made him head over everything. Later, when Joseph languished in jail, the same thing happened. The jailer took notice of him and put him in charge over everything at the prison. God showed up twice in a very similar way.

Scripture often says that by two or three witnesses a matter will be confirmed (2 Cor. 13:1; Deut. 19:15). When the Lord shows up twice in your life in a similar fashion, pay attention. He is talking. It's not bad luck. It's not good luck. It's not chance. It is God confirming He is doing this on purpose because He is giving you a double witness.

When Gideon needed proof that he was really hearing from God, he put the animal skin out and asked for God to make it dry on one side and wet on the other. The next day he flipped it over and asked for the opposite. God will often reveal Himself in groups of two. Not always, but there is often a pattern you can see if you look through spiritual eyes.

Read 2 Corinthians 13:1. Why is it important to confirm things through two or three witnesses?

Now read Isaiah 55:11. God speaks to you through His Word. Describe a time God confirmed something in your life through two or three Scriptures that stood out to you.

Based on Acts 5:32, do the two or three witnesses have to only come from people? Who else and what else can be a witness of God's confirming message or guidance in your life?

The Proof of Detours

Look for how God might be speaking to you by doing or allowing something twice in your life. Ask Him for wisdom to discern His hand of favor and what it means. Sometimes it may mean no real change in your situation—you may still be in the pit—but just knowing you are not alone is enough to give you the strength to wait.

Read Genesis 40:1-8. Briefly describe what had happened and how Joseph responded. Note the occurrence of twice. What two ways does “twice” show up in this passage (reflect back on Joseph’s ability to interpret his own dream as a young man for one of the instances)?

1.

2.

Is God, or has God, confirmed any situation in your life through this pattern of “twice”? Share some of the details and what you learned from the experience.

When you want to know if it’s just chance, or Satan trying to trick you, or even just your own wishful thinking, look for the pattern of repetition. Look for twice. God will always confirm His will. He will always validate His Word. Interestingly, two years after the cupbearer and the baker were released from jail, Pharaoh had a dream (Gen. 41:1).

Read Genesis 41:32. Notice Joseph’s reference to God’s pattern of “twice.” What conclusion does Joseph draw about God’s use of “twice”?

Why do you think Joseph stated the matter would be carried out soon since the dream was given twice?

Detours

In what way can you apply the realization of this pattern of proof that God uses to your own life?

Recognizing patterns in our lives sometimes gets lost in the everyday busyness that consumes a lot of our time and attention. Be mindful to pay attention to what God is doing in your life, and in particular the repetition of similar things God does or says to you. If you are on a detour, this reality can bring you comfort knowing that you are not alone and trusting that God has a purpose for where you are right now.

Prayer

Lord and Savior, open my eyes to see ways that You communicate to me. Help me not to miss the spiritual connections You make through things that happen or things I read in Your Word. I want to know Your will and Your way so give me wisdom and insight to do that well. In Christ's name, amen.

Day 4

SURPRISE!

In yesterday's lesson, we looked at one clue that can let you know when you are in a God-ordained detour, as opposed to just running into a difficult time—when God shows up in a similar fashion or communicates a similar message twice. Like Gideon and his fleece set out twice to confirm his answer, God will often repeat a matter in order to affirm the mindset He wants you to have toward your detour.

In today's lesson, I want us to look at another proof you are in a God-ordained detour and that this is when God may surprise you.

Has God ever come out of nowhere in a situation in your life to turn it around or provide for you? Describe what happened and what you learned from it.

Read Genesis 22:13. What is the surprise in this passage?

Was there any way for Abraham to predict how God would provide a sacrifice? Is it common to find rams on a hillside caught in a bush?

Apply what you learned from Genesis 22:13 to a situation you may be facing right now or have faced in the past. In what way do you need to release to God the “how” of what you need provided or changed? Take a moment to pray and let Him know you are trusting Him even though the “how” may be a mystery right now.

Detours

For two full years, Joseph sat in jail having hoped that the cupbearer would remember him. I'm sure after some time, he assumed the cupbearer would not. He probably felt forgotten, overlooked, and even skipped by God. Waiting for that knock on the door that never came, I wonder if Joseph even bothered to keep track of the days.

After that long, would you? After that long, have you?

Are you somewhere in your life where you feel forgotten, overlooked or even skipped by God? Have you been praying for, waiting for, and hoping for His hand of intervention to no avail? Do you feel trapped, stuck, or as if you are in a hopeless situation? If that's you, then not only is today's lesson for you but so is this entire study. Hang in there—God has something to speak to your heart about where you are right now. One of the primary principles is that after preparation and development have run their course, God is ready to do to you and through you what He planned all along. How that comes about will often surprise you.

Let's look at how God did it with Joseph. While Joseph sat yet another day in jail, the wisdom of the wisest men in Egypt fell short for Pharaoh who had experienced alarming and confusing dreams. This left Pharaoh at a loss for what to do next. That is, until the cupbearer spoke up.

Read Genesis 41:9, “Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, “Today I remember my faults” (HCSB). Notice the word *remember*. What did God cause the cupbearer to remember?

How many years had it been since the cupbearer last interacted with Joseph? (Refer to Genesis 41:1).

Is there something in your life that you thought was going to be brought about, changed, fixed, or redeemed but several years have passed since you first had that belief? How does this passage encourage you to just hang in there and wait well for God's timing?

Read Genesis 41:10-14. Summarize the words of the cupbearer and tell what happened as a result of his testimony to Pharaoh?

Some people may call what happened in that meeting between Pharaoh and the cupbearer luck, chance, or happenstance. Some may even call it fate. But as a believer in God, none of those words should even be in your vocabulary. What happened that day is providence. Providence is the hand of God moving in the glove of history—giving a dream, having set up the dream-reader, and reminding the cupbearer about his connection from years before.

In volleyball, one player will often set a ball. Setting is one of the fundamental types of hitting in the game. It is a strategic move that sets up another player to come and spike the ball, driving it down like a missile, into the opponent's side of the net. Once a ball is set, the other player runs up to it and hits it forcefully in an area that will be difficult to defend for the other side. In volleyball, it always takes two players to set and then spike a ball. But, as we see so often in Scripture and as this powerful illustration of Joseph's life reminds us, God Himself is constantly setting things up ahead of time and then spiking them for a point in our lives.

It was God who set the situation up for the cupbearer so he could remember Joseph from prison. In order for that to happen, God orchestrated two dreams two years earlier while the cupbearer and the baker were in jail. Then, He sovereignly arranged for Joseph to correctly interpret those dreams. Next, He providentially fulfilled the interpretation of those dreams. Finally, two years later, He gave Pharaoh two dreams which could not be interpreted by Pharaoh's key advisors. Thus, the spike. The cupbearer remembered that "Hebrew man" in jail and recommended him to his agitated and frustrated leader.

Detours

Take some time to look back over your life and to identify patterns where God has prepared beforehand something He carried out later in your life. Share how you felt before you saw it all “come together” and how you felt after.

Are you willing to see your faith increased in times of waiting, trusting that God is providentially setting things up for His perfect moment to act? What steps can you take to actively live out this increased level of faith?

We read in Genesis 41:8 that after Pharaoh sent for Joseph, Joseph shaved and changed his clothes. Having sat in the horrid environment of a dungeon for so long, it was time for a makeover. But that’s exactly what God will do. When He brings you out of your detour and into your destiny, He cleans you up. He gets you ready. He transforms not only your soul but all there is to you. God can take off those jail clothes when He removes you from a negative reality, giving you a fresh start and a fresh face.

If you ever want to do a study in the Bible, I recommend doing one on the word *suddenly*. Suddenly is when God surprises you, when He comes out of nowhere, when you couldn’t have planned it or created it yourself.

Suddenly.

You think you are stuck somewhere but then suddenly, God shows you you’ve already arrived.

Prayer

Dear Lord, I choose to trust in You even in the times when I do not see how You will bring about a change or provide what I need. Your ways are higher than my ways and Your thoughts are beyond my comprehension. Remind me to let go of anxious attempts at trying to figure out what You will do and to instead rest in the assurance of Your providential hand. In Christ’s name, amen.

Day 5

GOD CAN WORK IT OUT

When I was a boy growing up in Baltimore, my daddy bought me a balloon punching bag. I loved that balloon punching bag. No matter what I did to it, it kept bouncing back. I'd hit it—boom! It'd hit the floor. But then—bam! It'd bounce back up. I'd hit it again—boom! But then—bam! It'd be right back up. Over and over and over I'd hit this bag and it would bounce up for more.

The reason that balloon punching bag kept coming back for more was that there was a weight in the bottom that was heavier than the air in the bag at the top. No matter what I did to it up top, down below determined where things wound up.

That illustration leads us to another proof that you are on a God-ordained detour. You will have proof that God is working on your behalf because every time it looks like you are going down, you bounce back. Every time it looks like that should be the last straw, or you could never make it through, somehow you manage to regain your footing and get back up. You stand your ground.

Have you ever seen someone who manages to come through trial after trial, discouragement after discouragement? Take note of that person if you do. That is a person's whose faith is deeply weighted with the living God. That is a person who understands and believes that no matter what may happen, all things are definitely working out for good.

In what ways do you notice God working things out for good in your life?

Lastly, a proof that your detours are part of God's ordained plan for your life is when you see God help you in ways that you cannot explain. God has ways that are based on nothing tangible at all, and when He uses them, only He gets the credit. When Joseph was moved from the prison to the palace, He had no other way to explain it except for God.

Detours

Read Genesis 41:14-16. Compare and contrast Joseph's spirit in his response to Pharaoh here with the spirit he had toward his brothers as a teenager. In what way had Joseph matured?

Is there something in your life that has happened which can only be explained that it was done by God?

Joseph wound up second-in-command in Egypt off of a coat he never even asked to have—and some downtime in jail interpreting dreams. Not only that, he wound up with the authority and ability to move his whole family to Egypt and enable them to have plenty to eat during a time of worldwide famine. God used one mess after another mess and one situation after another situation to bring him to his destiny. Success is not in what you have. Success is in Who you have.

What role does obedience play in God moving us into a new season and position?

God doesn't need more than a minute to completely change your life and usher you into your destiny. What's more, He will more often than not do it in a way you could have never anticipated or even prepared for. When He does, He gets the

The Proof of Detours

credit for what He has done. This allows us to remain humble, knowing that it was God's hand who moved us into the place He wants us to be.

If you recognize any of these proofs that you are on a God-ordained detour currently, then wait on Him to move. Let go of the need to figure out "how" God will move, and simply trust instead that He will.

Prayer

Loving Lord and Savior, You can make a way where there seems to be no way. You are the ultimate One in control.

Forgive me for trying to maneuver my life to my own destination rather than trusting that You are wiser, more powerful, and more gracious than I could ever even know. I yield my life to you and my detour, thanking You in advance for the upcoming destination. In Christ's name, amen.
