

MESSAGE ONE:

THE PURPOSE OF DETOURS**SUGGESTED PASSAGE:** GENESIS 37:1-11 (NASB)

¹ Now Jacob lived in the land where his father had sojourned, in the land of Canaan. ² These are the records of the generations of Jacob.

Joseph, when seventeen years of age, was pasturing the flock with his brothers while he was still a youth, along with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought back a bad report about them to their father. ³ Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a varicolored tunic. ⁴ 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.

⁵ Then Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. ⁶ He said to them, "Please listen to this dream which I have had; ⁷ for behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf rose up and also stood erect; and behold, your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf." ⁸ Then his brothers said to him, "Are you actually 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.

⁹ Now he had still another dream, and related it to his brothers, and said, "Lo, I have had still another dream; and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me." ¹⁰ He related it to his father and to his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?" ¹¹ His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind.

MESSAGE GOAL:

1 – The first goal here is to provide understanding that God frequently takes us on detours from the path toward our own destiny for the purpose of maturing and equipping us.

2 – The second goal here is to encourage those who struggle with difficult circumstances by helping them identify the Lord's hand in the midst of the storm.

INTRODUCTION:

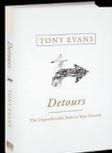
Detours are distractions from the original intended route that we had planned to take. When we get in our cars, we usually have a destination in mind. Typically, we know how we plan to get there, to include the roads and highways we intend to take along the way. But, on many occasions, we run into detours—things that take us off the pre-planned route that we had determined to use to get where we had hoped to go.

Detours are typically unexpected and inconvenient. Perhaps a police officer redirects traffic down a different road or a fellow driver flags us down to help with their broken vehicle. They take us off our intended route, and as such, it takes us longer than we had planned to get to our final destination. A straight line is simple, and an uninterrupted journey is preferable to a whole lot of stopping and starting.

As believers in Jesus Christ, we have a destiny. From an eternal perspective we know what our destiny is: to be in God's presence forever, worshiping Him and working for Him in that eternal state. But our focus here is on our present destiny—the one He has for us in this life. Put another way, we know where we are going in the life to come, but where are we going in the life we have today?

God has a plan for your life and a purpose for your existence. The reason you weren't taken to heaven the moment after you became a Christian is because of that purpose on earth He desires you to fulfill. It's not just to get a job, collect a paycheck, pay bills, or to have fun on the weekend. There is a God-designed stamp on your life.

But He rarely ever takes us to that destiny apart from detours. He seldom takes us from point A to point B without causing us to make stops at P, X, and Q along the way. As such, we almost never know which letter He's going to pull out of the hat next!

**DETOURS: THE UNPREDICTABLE PATH TO YOUR DESTINY** BY TONY EVANS

Tony knows a thing or two about detours. One of the things he knows for certain is that God works through detours to bring about His blessing in order to deliver you to the place He has created just for you. How do you find the destiny God has designed for your life?

SERMON POINTS:**1. GOD USES DETOURS AS PART OF HIS DESIGN FOR OUR LIVES.**

- Moses is on a detour in the wilderness for forty years (Numbers 32:13).
- Abraham is on a detour for twenty-five years while He waits for God to give him an heir (Genesis 12:1-4; 21:1-8).
- The Apostle Paul goes on a three-year detour in the Arabian Desert and Damascus waiting for his ministry to resume (Galatians 1:15-18).
- Joseph spends thirteen years on a detour enduring slavery and prison before entering Pharaoh's service (Genesis 37:1-2; 41:46).
- Joseph does not blame his brothers for what they did to him because he sees God's design in the detours (Genesis 50:19-21).
- KEY POINT: Just like these biblical figures, God takes us on detours to develop us for His purpose.

2. GOD USES DETOURS TO PREPARE US FOR OUR FUTURE.

- Often, we are simply not ready to handle our destiny because we lack maturity.
- God reveals to Joseph details of his destiny, but he is not mature enough to handle them.
- God gives Joseph two dreams about his future telling him that he would rule over his brothers, father and mother when he was only seventeen years old (Genesis 37:2, 6-7, 9).
- Joseph unwisely tells his brothers and his parents about his dreams (Genesis 37:5-11).
- Joseph's journey into slavery (Genesis 37:36) allowed for him to become acquainted with the Egyptian culture, government, and language.
- God allows Joseph to be falsely accused and imprisoned

(Genesis 39:7-20) in order to develop his character and fashion him into a better leader.

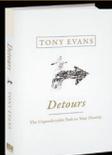
- Even though God reveals Joseph's destiny, He also takes him on many detours in order to mature him for his coming reign over Egypt.
- KEY POINT: Although each of our journeys looks different, God takes us on detours to prepare us for the things He has in store for us in the future.

3. AS WE EXPERIENCE DETOURS, SOMETIMES THINGS WILL GET WORSE BEFORE THEY GET BETTER.

- Joseph's brothers begin to hate him all the more for telling them about his dream (Genesis 37:8).
 - They resent him for trying to make himself look better than everyone else.
 - They do not understand his dream because they also had not been prepared for their part in Joseph's destiny.
- Joseph is stripped of his multi-colored tunic, an item of great personal value (Genesis 37:23).
- Joseph's brothers pick him up and throw him into an empty pit with no water (Genesis 37:24).
- Joseph is falsely accused of raping his master's wife (Genesis 39:17-20).
- Joseph spends over two years in prison before interpreting Pharaoh's dream (Genesis 41:1).
- KEY POINT: Even though most detours are difficult and seem as though life is getting worse, they are really part of God's design to prepare us for our future.

SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS:

WIZARD OF OZ: Dorothy Gale longed to go to a place "over the rainbow," where troubles would "melt like lemon drops." She was certain that this trouble-free place was her destiny. But along her journey toward that destiny, Dorothy encountered a

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whole lot of trouble. Evil witches, scary forests and an overbearing wizard all gave Dorothy reason to doubt that Oz was the place she truly longed for. What she didn't realize at the time was that she needed to go through Oz to get to a better understanding of what her true destiny actually was. The troubles in Oz were her detours on the road to understanding her true destiny: a better appreciation of her own home and life in Kansas. Detours give us the opportunity to mature and to be prepared for the bigger things yet to come.

PIZZA NEEDS PREPARATION: Being prepared for your calling is like going to a pizzeria. I'm talking about a real pizza place where they make the pies on the spot. It all starts with a ball of dough. They roll the dough, pressing and mashing it. Then they start pounding on it. After banging it around for a while, they start throwing it up in the air and twirling it. That dough goes through a whole lot so that you and I can have the pleasure of eating it. But when you go to a pizzeria, you don't ask for dough. You want the good dough has been prepared. In the same way, one has to be prepared for their calling. Sometimes, our preparation starts with some pressing and some mashing. Sometimes it means being thrown around or banged up for a little while. But this is only in preparation for the good stuff.

CONSTRUCTION: As we drive along the roads or highways, our goal or objective is to get somewhere specific. Ideally, we have a map or a GPS device guiding us along the way. It will tell us exactly which exit to take and how long the journey will last. However, occasionally, we run into road construction. When this happens, a man in a reflective vest might get us to slow down and point us in a direction we never intended to go. A police officer might stand in the middle of the road and direct traffic down a side road. When that happens, we will invariably never reach our destination the way we intended or in the time we intended. We are now on a detour, and what we experience in our attempt to get where we were going is uncertain. When it comes to God leading us toward our destiny, the irony is that the detour doesn't steer us away from construction.

We are the construction project, and God uses the detours to build us up for the destination to come.

BUTTERFLY TRANSFORMATION: A caterpillar is ugly, slow, slimy and it takes all day to go two feet, but when it undergoes the process of metamorphosis and the caterpillar becomes a butterfly, something beautiful is born. Metamorphosis is the process of something at work on the inside trying to show up on the outside. There's only one reason a butterfly can fly: its wings are strengthened by the work it does to break through the cocoon. If a bystander were to slit open a cocoon prior to the butterfly breaking itself loose from the cocoon, it wouldn't fly. Its wings are developed through the struggle. No struggle, no flight. Every Christian is a butterfly waiting to happen. A Christian may feel like a caterpillar or even think they look like a caterpillar, but the idea is to work out their salvation in the midst of adversity because God is at work within them to do His good pleasure. The road to our destiny is often ugly, and might seem like it's going nowhere. But God is transforming us into something beautiful, designed for a great work.

SERMON LINES:

This message will demonstrate the awesome power of the tongue as a tool to build up and to tear down.

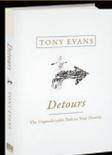
This sermon will demonstrate the awesome power of the tongue to give life and death.

This sermon will encourage you to control the use of your tongue for the purpose of administering life instead of death.

QUOTES BY DR. TONY EVANS:

"Detours are typically inconvenient distractions taking you off of your pre-planned route to arrive at the destination that you were seeking to reach."

"It's not all good on the road to destiny. There's some bad stuff on the way to destiny. There's some bad people on the way to destiny. In fact, we've made some bad choices on our way to destiny."



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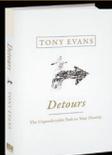
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"God's plan for Joseph was to get him to Egypt so that He could fulfill his destiny. But in order to get him to the last chapter, He had to back him up to the 'seventeen-year-old' chapter. He had to strip him of his tunic, separate him from his family, sell him into slavery, and put him in prison so that God could fulfill his destiny."

"You're on a detour because detours are divine—designed to contribute to our own construction. Because God must address our character, He must mature us if He is going to trust us with the destiny He has for us."

"God has a plan for your life, a purpose for your existence. The reason why you weren't taken to heaven the moment after you were converted is because there is a purpose on earth He desires you to fulfill."

"God is doing two things at one time; He's developing you toward maturity while He's working on the destiny itself for when you get there. Now it's nice if both of them happen at the same time, but I think for most of us the destiny is sitting there waiting for us to arrive."



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MESSAGE TWO:

THE PROOF OF DETOURS**SUGGESTED PASSAGE:** GENESIS 39:19-23 (NASB)

¹⁹When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, "This is how your slave treated me," he burned with anger. ²⁰Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined.

But while Joseph was there in the prison, ²¹the Lord was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. ²²So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there. ²³The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the Lord was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.

MESSAGE GOAL:

- 1 – The first goal here is to help Christians understand that some detours are God-sanctioned and some are self-made.
- 2 – The second goal here is to empower Christians as they journey through their own detours by giving them four proofs for determining that their detour is, in fact, God-sanctioned.

INTRODUCTION:

How do we know if we are on a detour from God as opposed to one of our own making?

I have a friend who once aspired to become a pastor. He was a nice enough guy and a deacon at his church. He had a real love for the Lord and enjoyed serving his congregation. Then one day, he called me and told me that his wife had gotten sick and had been admitted to the hospital. Within a few days, she died from a brain aneurysm. Understandably, it devastated him, and he began asking the question that so many others have asked: Why? As the weeks passed by, the bitterness of his loss got the better of him. He quit going to church and withdrew from his friends. A whole year had gone by when he got a phone call one day from an old friend who was in tears. This friend's son had just died in a car accident, and he was emotionally devas-

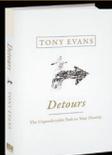
tated. Without hesitating, this former deacon drove four hours to a friend in need and spent weeks helping him work through his deep grief. That same year, my friend went from losing his own wife to counseling six other people who experienced similar personal losses. He returned to the church, and today, he is a grief counselor in a successful Christian counseling center.

If you had run into this man early in his grief, shortly after he quit the church, you might be inclined to think that he had departed from the path that God had him on because he couldn't reconcile his own misery. But never underestimate the awesome power of God to take a man at his worst and turn him around for the glory of the kingdom! Remember, Joseph started his own detour in part because of his own immaturity. His brothers stripped him and left him for dead in a pit because he just didn't know when to leave well enough alone. But whatever started him down a path that seemed to have nothing to do with his dreams of greatness and destiny, God remained committed to preparing him for the important work he had yet to fulfill. God takes that which was intended for evil and uses it for good!

Frequently, as we move toward the future that God has planned for us, we experience stops along the way called detours. When that occurs, we feel compelled to ask certain questions like, "Why is God punishing me?" or "What did I do to deserve this?" While such questions are natural, they are not necessarily helpful. God allows us to go on detours and always with a purpose. We need preparation, maturity or even correction. And while these moments might look like setbacks to us, to God they are simply part of weaving together a larger tapestry called our destiny.

So, how do we know if what we are experiencing is a God-sanctioned interruption, as opposed to a self-made distraction?

There are four ways to help determine if the path that we are on is one that God designed for us.

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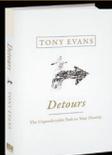
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SERMON POINTS:**1. THE FIRST WAY YOU KNOW THAT YOU'RE ON GOD'S DETOUR IS THAT YOU ARE BEING PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

- Joseph went to prison not because he did something wrong, but because he stood up for what was right (Genesis 39:6-20).
 - He never slept with Potiphar's wife or welcomed her advances.
 - When the situation with Potiphar's wife became too much to bear, he fled from the temptation altogether.
 - Because of Potiphar's wife's accusations against Joseph, he was sent to prison, even though he did what was right.
- If you NEVER experience negative repercussions because of your Christian faith you probably aren't a Christian or at least not a very good one.
 - Daniel was sent to the lion's den for continuing to pray to God and refusing to bow down and worship Darius (Daniel 6:16-28).
 - In Matthew 10:22, Jesus promises that "You will be hated by all because of My name."
 - Again, in Matthew 24:9, Jesus tells His disciples, "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name."
 - 2 Timothy 3:12 says, "Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."
 - Philippians 1:29 reads, "For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake."

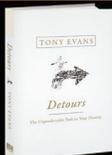
2. THE SECOND WAY YOU KNOW YOU'RE ON GOD'S DETOUR IS THAT IN THE MIDST OF THE PERSECUTION, GOD REVEALS HIS PRESENCE TO YOU.

- As Joseph was carted off to prison, Genesis 39:21 says that "the Lord was with Joseph and extended kindness to him."
 - He found favor with the chief jailer, who gave him the responsibility of being in charge of all the other prisoners.
 - The same jailer never micromanaged Joseph's supervision, because the Lord remained with Joseph and prospered his efforts as a supervisor.
- God promises to stay with us not just through detours, but through a host of trials and storms.
 - Deuteronomy 31:6 promises, "Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at [the enemy nations], for the Lord your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you."
 - Even though the disciples panicked and thought they were going to die in the midst of a storm, Jesus remained with them and calmed it (Matthew 8:23-27).
 - In Isaiah 41:10 God reminds us that "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."

3. THE THIRD WAY YOU KNOW YOU'RE ON GOD'S DETOUR IS THAT DURING YOUR OWN SUFFERING, GOD GIVES YOU OTHER PEOPLE WHO ARE SUFFERING SIMILARLY SO THAT YOU MIGHT MINISTER TO THEM IN THEIR NEED.**DETOURS: THE UNPREDICTABLE PATH TO YOUR DESTINY** BY TONY EVANS

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- Joseph encountered two new prisoners, the cupbearer and the baker, who also were put in prison because they offended Pharaoh (Genesis 40:1-3).
 - In the prison, both men were assigned to Joseph, who took care of them (Genesis 40:4).
 - While in prison, both men had a dream. Each man had a different dream, but they did not know how to interpret them (Genesis 40:5-8).
 - Joseph provided them each with interpretations of their dreams; the cupbearer would be returned to service, but the baker would be decapitated and hanged (Genesis 40:9-19).
 - Joseph asked the cupbearer to put a good word for him to Pharaoh, but he forgot (Genesis 40:14-15, 23).
 - God places others in your life who are going through similar struggles so that He might prepare you for similar service in His kingdom.
 - He uses other people and their problems to help you focus on them (selflessness) and not yourself (selfishness). See Philippians 2:3-5
 - If you delay in helping those whom the Lord has placed in your keep, you will also be delaying your own destiny.
 - Often, it through selfless ministry, where you provide a blessing to others, that the Lord is able to then bless you.
 - Finally, God seldom intends for you to travel along your detour alone, but in the company of other kindred spirits, each trying to reach their own destiny.
- 4. THE FOURTH WAY YOU KNOW THAT YOU ARE ON GOD'S DETOUR IS THAT AS YOU NEAR THE COMPLETION OF YOUR DETOUR, GOD POSTPONES ITS COMPLETION.**
- After asking the cupbearer to put in a good word for him in Pharaoh's court, Joseph anticipates being released from his unjust imprisonment, but is forgotten.
 - Everything that Joseph interpreted regarding the dreams of the cupbearer and the baker came true (Genesis 40:20-22).
 - The cupbearer forgot to tell Pharaoh about Joseph once he returned to full service (Genesis 40:23).
 - God had a specific reason for postponing Joseph's release from prison, namely the moment of interpreting Pharaoh's dream (Genesis 41:14).
 - Similarly, God intentionally delays the moment of destiny for many of us, because He is correcting, preparing and maturing us for greatness.
 - After being released from Egyptian bondage, God delayed bringing the Israelites into the Promised Land to correct them of their disobedience and unbelief (Numbers 14:23-35).
 - Paul was delayed from journeying to Rome (Acts 19:21). He spent three years in Ephesus as a tentmaker (Acts 18:3; 20:34), as well as the rest of his third missionary journey during which, he wrote six letters, including Romans.
 - Nelson Mandela sought to change South Africa and move that country toward racial equality. But to reach that destiny, Mandela spent twenty-seven years in prison, where his ideas for national reconciliation matured.
 - We also must recognize that in order to live out the specific destiny that the Lord has in store for us, we will likely experience delays and setbacks, which God will use to fashion us into people who are ready for that destiny.



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SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS:

THE COST OF DOING WHAT'S RIGHT: I had a call last week from a broken-hearted young lady whose boyfriend said, "I'm not dating you anymore." The reason why? She wouldn't sleep with him. And so she lost the one she thought was going to be her husband, the love of her life because she took a stand for righteousness, and it cost her a relationship in the process. There have been people fired because they refuse to do evil on the job, or steal, or "go with the program" because they made a decision for righteousness' sake, and there was a price that had to be paid because of the decision. The point is that standing up for what is right sometimes leads to great loss or pain in the short term, but great gain in the long term.

TRAILWAYS BUS LINES: I was working at Trailways Bus Lines, and the people I worked with were engaged in something illegal—a scam—and this went on while I worked there. They pressed me to get involved with what they were doing. I refused. As a result, I often ended up cleaning the busses alone. Then the manager called me into the office a few weeks later and said, "We know about the scam, we know you weren't participating, and we want to make you the head of the shift." The irony of it all was that I didn't even want to be working there. I was working all night long from eleven at night to seven in the morning all in the name of trying to work my way through school. Even though I wanted a different job, God repositioned me in that job. In short, He joined me at the location I was in, rather than move me to a different one. The point is that when we are standing up for righteousness' sake and suffer for it, God will often join us in the midst of that suffering and see us through it.

THE PURPOSE OF PAIN : If you go to the gym and lift weights, you are experiencing a burden with purpose. If you work out with a partner or a trainer, their purpose in placing weight on you is to develop you. The purpose of lifting weights is to build muscle. Now, if someone took that same weight and threw it at you, the purpose would be to harm you. The same weight causes pain but not for the same reason. One pain is to develop you. Another pain is to harm

you. God allows trials or temptations in the life of the believer to develop them. Satan brings trials or temptations into the life of the believer to destroy them. Sometimes they are the same event. When you understand what God is doing, and when you understand what the devil is doing, then you understand the prayer for protection. If you are learning how to drive and the man next to you grabs the wheel, that's to help you stay straight. When you get in the car with someone who wants to hurt you, and he jerks the wheel, that's to cause damage or danger. The point is that knowing the purpose of struggle or pain helps us determine if we need to deal with our own sin or simply to trust that God has us right where He wants us.

QUOTES BY DR. TONY EVANS:

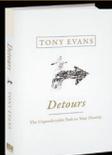
"When you are being persecuted, suffering or struggling because you're obeying God, your struggle is right where God wants you to be because you are being persecuted for righteousness' sake."

"In fact, if you never get negative repercussions because you are standing as a Christian, you're either not a Christian or you're not a good one. This is because the Bible says all those who make decisions based on their faith—that is those who desire to please God—are going to run into being treated in an evil manner from time to time."

"The most critical test you will ever face is the test for suffering when you didn't do anything wrong—when you did exactly what God told you to do, and now you're paying a price. And it's not fair because all you were trying to do was what He said."

"While God didn't keep Daniel from the lion's den, He did join him in the lion's den. God didn't keep Shadrach, Meshach or Abed-nego from the fiery furnace; it says there was a fourth person who joined them in the fiery furnace. So God, because He's taking you through a detour, may not cut off the detour, but He might jump in the car with you."

"The key to your situation is not *where you are*, it's *Who's with you while you're there*. So if you're suffering for wrongness' sake (I messed up in God's eyes) and not suffering for righteousness' sake (I did right in God's eyes), you need to make that which is wrong right again so that God can join you."

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MESSAGE THREE:

THE PROMOTION OF DETOURS**SUGGESTED PASSAGE:** GENESIS 41:1-16 (NASB)

¹ Now it happened at the end of two full years that Pharaoh had a dream, and behold, he was standing by the Nile. ² And lo, from the Nile there came up seven cows, sleek and fat; and they grazed in the marsh grass. ³ Then behold, seven other cows came up after them from the Nile, ugly and gaunt, and they stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile. ⁴ The ugly and gaunt cows ate up the seven sleek and fat cows. Then Pharaoh awoke. ⁵ He fell asleep and dreamed a second time; and behold, seven ears of grain came up on a single stalk, plump and good. ⁶ Then behold, seven ears, thin and scorched by the east wind, sprouted up after them. ⁷ The thin ears swallowed up the seven plump and full ears. Then Pharaoh awoke, and behold, it was a dream. ⁸ Now in the morning his spirit was troubled, so he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all its wise men. And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them to Pharaoh.

⁹ Then the chief cupbearer spoke to Pharaoh, saying, "I would make mention today of my own offenses. ¹⁰ Pharaoh was furious with his servants, and he put me in confinement in the house of the captain of the bodyguard, both me and the chief baker. ¹¹ We had a dream on the same night, he and I; each of us dreamed according to the interpretation of his own dream. ¹² Now a Hebrew youth was with us there, a servant of the captain of the bodyguard, and we related them to him, and he interpreted our dreams for us. To each one he interpreted according to his own dream. ¹³ And just as he interpreted for us, so it happened; he restored me in my office, but he hanged him."

¹⁴ Then Pharaoh sent and called for Joseph, and they hurriedly brought him out of the dungeon; and when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came to Pharaoh. ¹⁵ Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, but no one can interpret it; and I have heard it said about you, that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." ¹⁶ Joseph then answered Pharaoh, saying, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer."

MESSAGE GOAL:

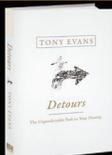
- 1 – The first goal of this message is to help Christians understand when God is preparing to move them off of their detour and back toward their destiny.
- 2 – The second goal of this message is to demonstrate how initial disappointment can be an indication of eventual delight.
- 3 – The third goal of this message is to help Christians recognize how God confirms what He has revealed He would do through witness and/or circumstance.

INTRODUCTION:

God has a destiny for our lives, and how He gets you there is seldom a straightforward process. He frequently takes us on detours, or delays, in our journey toward His plan, so that He might mature us for what is to come, so He might prepare the place in which we will eventually arrive. We might spend a great deal of time on these detours, and sometimes, we experience delays or even setbacks that seem bad on the surface, but are the means by which God works things out for His providential plan.

Once our preparation comes into alignment with His purpose, the time to come off the detour and head toward our destiny will have arrived. But how do we know when that is about to happen? In fact, there are three indicators that God is preparing to move you from detour to destiny. The first two might seem as though God is moving you away from where He wants you; God often will **disappoint** and outright **skip** over you as you near the place He wants you to be. We can see that great job coming nearer, but then suddenly, it's given to someone else. We feel like that girl or that guy might be the one we will spend the rest of our lives with, when suddenly, they end up marrying someone else.

While such disappointments can occur as a result of our own shortcomings (such as making rash decisions based on our own human wisdom instead of trusting God), often these disappointments are

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merely God setting the stage to be the hero. In this moment, He **surprises** you by bringing you to a destiny you had not expected, or in a way you had not considered. The one you thought you were going to marry married someone else because God had the perfect person waiting for you in the wings. The great job that was given to someone else becomes inconsequential, as God delivers you to an even more rewarding career or calling.

When God finally delivers you to the place He has purposed for you, He will confirm what He is doing through a series of witnesses or circumstances so His purpose might be known. This is why it is important to never lose trust in what God is doing, because if we stray from listening to His voice and start trusting our own understanding, we will miss that confirmation when it comes.

SERMON POINTS:

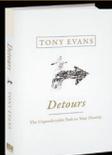
1. YOU KNOW YOU ARE GETTING READY TO COME OUT OF A DETOUR AND HEAD TOWARD YOUR DESTINY WHEN THE LORD DISAPPOINTS YOU WHEN YOU THOUGHT HE WAS COMING THROUGH FOR YOU.

- Joseph hopes that by interpreting the cupbearer's dream, he will put in a good word for him with Pharaoh when he goes back into his service (Genesis 40:14).
- When the cupbearer returns to Pharaoh's service, he forgets about Joseph, who remains in prison an additional two years (Genesis 40:23; 41:1).
 - It is in moments such as these that we might feel compelled to ask, "Why are you forgetting about me, Lord?"
 - This delay is not bad but good, because it means that the Lord is working the details of your destiny out.
 - The delay is also God's way of making sure you are clear WHO is working the details out. God wants the credit for delivering you to your destiny.

- God delays Joseph's release because of the timing of Pharaoh's dream (Genesis 41:1-7).
 - Pharaoh's dream is about a specific famine coming to the land and the preparation that is needed to endure it.
 - If the cupbearer had mentioned Joseph before Pharaoh had his dream, he may not have had enough reason to release Joseph.
 - Sometimes God will delay your destiny to bring you to a place where you have more than you can handle, compelling you to totally rely on Him and to give Him all the glory.

2. YOU KNOW YOU ARE GETTING READY TO COME OUT OF A DETOUR AND HEAD TOWARD YOUR DESTINY WHEN THE LORD SEEMS TO SKIP OVER YOU WHEN THE ACTUAL OPPORTUNITY COMES.

- While Joseph waits in prison, Pharaoh has two dreams (Genesis 41:2-7).
 - The first is a dream about seven ugly (or gaunt) cows that eat up seven fattened cows (Genesis 41:2-4).
 - The second is a dream about seven ears of scorched (or thin) grain that swallow seven ears of healthy grain (Genesis 41:5-7).
 - These dreams (and Pharaoh's desire to understand them) occurs unbeknownst to Joseph; God is working things out behind the scenes and would reveals to Joseph at the proper time.
- Pharaoh becomes greatly disturbed by these dreams and seeks to have them interpreted by his own "magicians."
 - His soothsayer priests cannot interpret the dreams (Genesis 41:8) because human wisdom cannot undermine God's providence.



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- The cupbearer finally remembers Joseph and tells Pharaoh that there is a man who interpreted both his and the baker's dreams correctly (Genesis 41:9-13).
- God sets up the perfect scenario for Joseph to solve Pharaoh's dream problem, which requires skipping over him until the right time.

God was using the second dream to confirm what was happening in the first dream and to express the urgency of the matter (Genesis 41:32).

- Joseph receives confirmation about his original dreams (back in Genesis 37:5-10), as Pharaoh makes him ruler over all Egypt, which later comes to fruition when Jacob and Joseph's brothers come under Joseph's rule and protection.

3. YOU KNOW YOU ARE GETTING READY TO COME OUT OF A DETOUR AND HEAD TOWARD YOUR DESTINY WHEN THE LORD SURPRISES YOU SUDDENLY WITH SOMETHING YOU DIDN'T EXPECT.

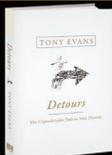
- Upon remembering Joseph, the cupbearer recounts Joseph's ability to interpret dreams (Genesis 41:9-13).
 - After human wisdom is proven unreliable, God sets the stage for His wisdom to prevail and His plan to proceed.
 - Sometimes, we can even get stuck on our detour because we spend so much time muddying the waters by relying on our own understanding.
- Once he is released from prison, Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dreams (Genesis 41:14-37).
 - Joseph cleans himself up before seeing Pharaoh; he recognizes the importance of the moment and prepares accordingly (Genesis 41:14).
 - Joseph gives God all the credit as the one who would be doing the interpreting (Genesis 41:16).
 - After interpreting his dream, Pharaoh is so pleased that he makes Joseph ruler over all Egypt underneath him (Genesis 41:38-45).

4. YOU KNOW YOU ARE GETTING READY TO COME OUT OF A DETOUR AND HEAD TOWARD YOUR DESTINY WHEN THE LORD CLEARLY CONFIRMS WHAT HE IS DOING BY WITNESS OR CIRCUMSTANCE.

- Joseph explains to Pharaoh that the reason he has two dreams back to back that mean the same thing is that

SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS:

IN A HOLDING PATTERN: My wife and I were on our way back from Denver, Colorado, and we got on a plane from Denver to Dallas. Our plan was a straight line—nonstop; to leave Denver and arrive in Dallas in an hour and forty-five minutes. Part way into the flight, the pilot came on and said, "There are storms in the Dallas area, and we have been re-routed. We won't be going to Dallas. We're going to be landing in Oklahoma City." Oklahoma City was not in my plans, I had not requested it, desired it or anticipated it, yet somebody else was in control. And that somebody just told me I wasn't going where I thought I was headed and, as such, we wound up landing in Oklahoma City. Not only were we in Oklahoma City, but we were stuck on an airplane, a place I didn't want to be stuck. The pilot kept coming on and saying, "15 minutes, 20 minutes, 30 minutes," and he did this for over two hours! Finally we were told we could leave Oklahoma City, and I could get back to my destiny which was Dallas. So the plane got on the runway, then suddenly, it slowed down again. The pilot said, "I am so sorry but new storms have shown up in the Dallas area, so we were not able to take off" Hours more went by. Then he said, "Things have cleared up in Dallas, we're going to take off." *Finally I'm going to reach my destiny which is Dallas*, I thought. The plane landed. The pilot came back on and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, I have some good news and some bad news. The good news is that we have landed in Dallas. The bad news is there are no gates available, and it will be another forty-five minutes before we can anticipate pulling up to a gate." Some of you feel like that's the story of your life; you planned to be "somewhere" by now. And yet you're in a holding pattern, and you don't know when this plane called destiny is going to land.



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FROM DISAPPOINTMENT TO DELIGHT: A man took his girlfriend out for dinner, and when they sat down, he laid an elaborate box on the table for her birthday. All the while they were eating dinner, she just kept thinking about this box, because it was a big box, and she wanted to know what was inside. She could hardly eat. The waiting to open the gift was killing her, but her boyfriend told her to open the gift after dinner. All she could think about was what was in the box. Finally dinner was over.

"Can I open the box now?"

"Yeah, you can open the box."

She opened the box and pulled out a pillow. "Oh, wow, I mean, this is a nice pillow... but it's a pillow." She turned the pillow over, thinking that something was taped to the backside. There was nothing. "Well, thank you."

It was obvious she was disappointed that she got a pillow. Her boyfriend got up, took the pillow from her, and laid the pillow on the floor. He got down on one knee, took her by the hand, and said, "Will you marry me?" She forgot about the pillow. The one who gave her the pillow became a lot more important. In our journey from detour to destiny, God often disappoints us because He is planning something bigger that will surprise us and delight us.

WHICH SCHOOL SHOULD I PICK?: During my last year of school in Atlanta, we drove up to Wynonna Lake, Indiana to check out a school. I felt like God wanted me to go to seminary, so we planned to go to Grace Theological Seminary. I had been accepted, and we checked out housing; everything was planned. But while in class one day in Atlanta, I met a gentleman named Doug McIntosh, who was the 6-foot, 11-inch center for the UCLA basketball team.

He also was a very committed Christian, who had decided to forego a professional basketball career and become a pastor. He went to Dallas Theological Seminary and got his degree. He was invited to become a pastor of a church in Atlanta, Georgia, and later, a biblical studies professor at the very school I was attending. To reiterate, I had already made

my plans to go to Grace Seminary. It was too late to apply to anywhere else.

But Doug McIntosh passed me in class one day and said, "Have you ever thought about applying to Dallas Seminary?" I told him my plans and said no, but he said, "If I pay your application fee will you at least apply?" I politely accepted his offer, but I had already made up my mind. I knew my destination. Three weeks later, I got a response from Dallas Seminary: "You have been admitted to Dallas Seminary." So, I took some time to rethink my rock-solid plan. Doug said, "Go to Dallas," and then I got accepted, in spite of submitting late. I got Doug's witness and confirmation of that witness with an acceptance letter, so we changed our plan and moved to Dallas. Now, we can look back on an amazing forty-year ministry and say how glad we are to have recognized God moving us from our detour to our destiny.

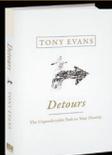
QUOTES BY DR. TONY EVANS:

"When your preparation meets Gods purpose, and when your timing connects with His timing, you are moving from detour to destiny."

"God doesn't want to share the credit with you. He doesn't want to share the credit with the people you know, the contacts you have, the money you have, the clout you have, the notoriety you have, the power you have, the background you have, or the prestige you have."

"I know you know this statement. Let me correct it because we've all said it and it's wrong: 'God will not put more on you than you can bear.' First, the Bible doesn't say that. In fact, there is a time when God will put more on you than you can bear because He wants to strip you of you and break you down of your self-dependency, your self-sufficiency and your independence. He will tear you down until you have total dependency on Him."

"Luck, chance or fate are not Christian words. You cannot have a Sovereign God who's in control and have luck, chance or fate because that means nobody was controlling the events. And since we have a sovereign God who the Bible says has



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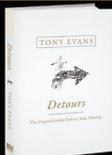
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full knowledge of every hair that drops off your head, there can be no such thing as luck, chance or fate.”

“One of the reasons that we stay on a detour we should be off of by now is we keep introducing human wisdom. Once you introduce human’s wisdom, have cut off God’s way.”



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MESSAGE FOUR:

THE DETOURS OF PROVIDENCE**SUGGESTED PASSAGE:** GENESIS 50:15-26 (NASB)

¹⁵ When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong which we did to him!" ¹⁶ So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father charged before he died, saying, ¹⁷ 'Thus you shall say to Joseph, "Please forgive, I beg you, the transgression of your brothers and their sin, for they did you wrong.'" And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." And Joseph wept when they spoke to him. ¹⁸ Then his brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." ¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? ²⁰ 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. ²¹ So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

²² Now Joseph stayed in Egypt, he and his father's household, and Joseph lived one hundred and ten years. ²³ Joseph saw the third generation of Ephraim's sons; also the sons of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were born on Joseph's knees. ²⁴ Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you and bring you up from this land to the land which He promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob." ²⁵ Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, "God will surely take care of you, and you shall carry my bones up from here." ²⁶ So Joseph died at the age of one hundred and ten years; and he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt.

MESSAGE GOAL:

1 – The first goal is to define the providence of God in such a way so that believers will understand that there is no such thing as luck, fate or chance.

2 – The second goal is to demonstrate that God uses both the good and the evil that people do in His well-orchestrated plan of fulfilling His destiny for our lives.

3 – The third goal is to encourage believers that, although they cannot see everything that God is doing in the background, they can trust that He is faithful to get us to the place that He wants us to be.

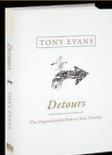
INTRODUCTION:

We use words like luck, chance or fate to describe things that seem to happen without purpose or explanation. The problem with using words like these is that they fail to acknowledge a larger truth. God is completely sovereign, which means that His rule affects everything and everybody. His authority is supreme and cannot be thwarted or challenged. As such, when He wills to do something, there is nothing in this universe that can stop Him.

Furthermore, that same sovereign God has a specific plan for your life. It is planned to the very detail and has taken all factors into consideration. So because the God who has planned the details of your life is sovereign, the things that happen in your everyday life are a part of that plan. They do not happen by chance or luck; they happen as a result of His providence.

That is not to say that the Lord does evil nor does He approve of it. However, He does use it. The evil that happens because of the actions and decisions of human beings gets used for ultimate good. God's plan provides each of us with a great degree of freedom, to include the freedom to good or bad things. Rather than simply prevent us from doing evil, He took our evil intentions and used them to fashion a greater destiny for each and every one of us, which includes the many detours we take along the way. All of those stops, setbacks and standstills have already been factored into His larger plan in delivering us to the place He intended for us all along.

We may not understand how He does it. We may not see all the moving pieces that are part of that grand working. But because He is sovereign, and He greatly desires the best for us, we can put our total trust in what He is doing, even when it looks like chaos or it makes little to no sense. Therefore, the twists and turns we experience in this life are a part of a larger, well-thought-out plan to bring us into our own destiny.

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SERMON POINTS:**1. PROVIDENCE IS THE WAY GOD ARRANGES THINGS TO ACHIEVE HIS SOVEREIGN PURPOSES.**

- Beyond the message of the gospel itself, the first thing of importance we need to know about in regards to our Christian experience is God's **sovereignty**.
 - Sovereignty, as it relates to God, is absolute rule and control over everything created.
 - Whether good or bad things happen, they both occur under God's rule.
- The second thing of importance we need to know about in regards to our Christian experience is God's **providence**.
 - Providence establishes all activity as both under His rule and part of His design.
 - Both big and small activities, as well as both good and evil activities, are used in God's ultimate plan.
- Because God is sovereign and God arranges all things for His purposes, there can never be any such thing as luck, chance or fate.
 - Luck or chance occurs completely at random; there is no purpose to their occurrence.
 - What seems like luck or chance (good or bad) is not actually random at all, but events that God knew in advance would happen, which he factors into the larger plan.

2. GOD USES BOTH THE GOOD AND THE EVIL THAT HUMANITY COMMITS TO ACHIEVE HIS WILL AND TO BRING ABOUT HIS PRESENT RESULTS.

- Instead of seeking revenge or justice, Joseph recognizes God's sovereignty in his brothers' actions against him (Genesis 50:19-20).
- The rule of God trumps every evil act that Joseph's brothers commit, which is the catalyst that sets Joseph off on his twenty-two-year detour to destiny.

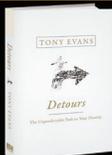
- While we may find life complicated and difficult to navigate, the foundation of it all is that God is sovereign, and he has complete control over its results.

3. GOD HAS MADE RESTRICTIONS OR RULES, BUT WITHIN THOSE RESTRICTIONS, WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN GREAT FREEDOM.

- Our freedom means that we can make both good and evil choices.
- When we choose to violate God's restrictions, just like in football, there is a penalty associated with that violation, whether it's judgment against sin or consequences for bad choices.
- Even when we choose evil, God does not stop being sovereign.
 - God's providence means that both our good and evil choices become part of His righteous plan.
 - Pharaoh commits evil by hardening his heart against God and His people and so God further hardens his heart to fulfill His plan of deliverance.
 - Even when Satan goes after Job, he still needs permission to do so and is free to do what he wants, with the restriction that he cannot take Job's life.

4. WE CANNOT SEE ALL THE INTRICACIES OF GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL WORK. EVEN WHEN IT SEEMS LIKE HE'S DOING NOTHING, GOD IS ALWAYS WORKING IT OUT.

- Joseph cannot see all that God is doing, but he recognizes that all that had happened to him was for God's greater purpose.
- Jacob believes that Joseph and Benjamin are dead and that Simeon is doomed because he is unable to see all that God is doing in the background (Genesis 42:36).
- God connects every act of every person with His own perfect plan in order to accomplish His destiny in each of our lives.

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- Romans 8:28 confirms that God is always working it out: "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."
- God does not show us the whole picture so that we learn to walk by faith, willing to be led by God.

SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS:

MATH IS HARD: Certain fields of mathematics—geometry, algebra, calculus—are considered by some to be rather sophisticated or even complicated. Explaining the complexities of these fields are beyond many of us. But even if the finer points of mathematics are too much for the average person, they rest on one simple principle: one and one equals two. All the higher principles rest on that foundational one and if you don't get the simple one right, all the others will fail to make sense. Life feels like math some times. It can get so complicated, where the things that happen just don't add up. But if you start with the foundation that God is sovereign and that He providentially arranges things in order to accomplish His goal, you have laid a foundation through which to look at the complexities of life that come your way.

FOOTBALL BOUNDARIES: In football, there are sidelines and goal lines. Those are sovereign boundaries; they do not move. You can't negotiate them, and you can't make them wider or narrower. They are fixed standards by which the game of football is played and they're non-negotiable. If you step on the side lines, you're out of bounds. But within the boundaries, you are free to call your own play. You can call a bad play and lose yardage. You can call a good play and make yardage. You are free to call the play, but the play has to be within the lines. In other words, the sovereign boundaries of football restrict how free you are without denying your ability to be free. God is sovereign. He has created boundaries, but He's also created freedom. That freedom allows you to make a good play or a bad play—to be right or wrong. Just don't cross the boundaries.

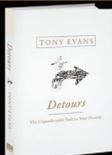
A DOG ON A LEASH: Most people who have a dog, probably have a leash for it. That leash grants it a degree of freedom depending on how long the leash is. But there comes a point when the dog wants to go too far. It tries to go beyond the length of the leash, so it pulls in a particular direction that you may not want to go. If the dog continues to pull hard on the leash, it will experience resistance and even pain in its neck. In a similar way, the people who mess with you every day are like that dog on the leash. Maybe it's a boss, maybe it's somebody at church, or maybe it's a family member. They have been given a certain freedom to give you grief, badmouth you or make your life miserable. But they cannot go beyond the length of the leash; a sovereign God is protecting you and your destiny from any resistance you might encounter.

THE FACE ON A WATCH: If you wear a watch, and someone else asks you for the time, you would look at the face of your watch because it shows the time. But the only reason you can see the correct time on the face is because, underneath it, a series of very tiny gears and other mechanisms continually move and function to make sure that the face shows the correct time. In other words, what you see exists because of what you can't see. Even if you don't see what's underneath or understand how it all works, you trust that those tiny moving parts will always tell you the truth. When you're dealing with the providence of God, you'll never see all that there is to see. In fact, what you do see, often doesn't make a lot of sense. That's because God is always doing more than one thing at a time. He's dealing with fifty-million things at the same time, and even though we may only catch a small part of what He's dealing with, we should trust that He's taking care of everything.

PROTECTING THE PRESIDENT: I remember in 2003, President George W. Bush came and talked to Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship about the Faith-Based Initiative. So, in preparation for his arrival, I asked the Secret Service if we could have the kids stand out on the lawn as the motorcade approached so that they could wave at the president.

They said, "No, that's not a good idea."

I said, "Why not?"



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They said, "If anything were to go wrong that impacted the safety of the President, like an attack on the motorcade, we are instructed to get the president out of the area by any means necessary. We are even instructed to run over anything and anyone to ensure his safety. As such, we do not want to have children near the motorcade, should something like that happen, because we would even have to run them over to protect the president."

Now if a president (in the name of national security) can run you over because of the importance of keeping that man safe, the sovereign God of the universe can easily "run over" any situation that gets in His way so that He might protect the destiny He has planned for your life.

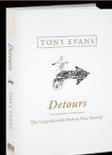
QUOTES BY DR. TONY EVANS:

"Because God is sovereign, He is never caught by surprise. He never says, 'Oops, that one got away from Me.' He doesn't do that because if He's controlling the big and the little. That means He's not surprised by anything. What shocks you was long-known by Him."

"God is sovereign; nothing happens outside of His rule. But within that sovereignty, He created freedom, which means we get to choose. You're free to say *yes* or *no*—to go or stay. Freedom means I can be good or bad, I can be righteous or unrighteous, I can be evil or not. We've all done both because we are free!"

"When luck or its siblings—chance, fate or happenstance—are embraced as something to rely on, call upon or hope for, you have now created an idol because luck becomes the thing that you're looking toward in making things work out for you. Many people are hoping to 'luck' their way into destiny, hoping

that enough positive forces will happen around them that will produce this amorphous concept that will bring about the good life. Well, today, I want to change your vocabulary. I want to walk you away from the thing called *luck*. I want give you a new word, or perhaps the right word. The word I want to talk to you about is *providence*."



DETOURS: THE UNPREDICTABLE PATH TO YOUR DESTINY BY TONY EVANS

Tony knows a thing or two about detours. One of the things he knows for certain is that God works through detours to bring about His blessing in order to deliver you to the place He has created just for you. How do you find the destiny God has designed for your life?