

DO YOU  
KNOW  
WHERE  
YOU'RE  
GOING?

Christian – but if that specific person or job won't lead you closer to fulfilling your destiny, you need to let it go. Sometimes the *good* things in our lives can stand in the way of God's *best*. "Do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight." (Prov. 3:5,6)

**3. Ask God to give you a sense of what He is doing in this generation and how you fit in.** God has a call on every believer's life. Often we tend to yearn for a "place of prominence" – desiring to be pastors, evangelists, or famous missionaries. Yet some of the most incredible testimonies come from believers who saw a need in their own back yard – then *did what they could to meet it*. Christians like Corrie Ten Boom, who opened her home to Jews fleeing Nazi persecution. Or Brother Andrew, who simply filled his little Volkswagen with Bibles and drove them into Eastern Europe! Ask God to open your eyes to the world around you and to show you what part He has for you to play in meeting the needs.

**4. Ask God to give you vision and some long-range goals regarding your destiny – and a strategy of how to get there.** If you have no idea about the call on your life, ask God for an understanding of the gifts He's given you. Start with *big* prayers – but be willing to begin with *small* steps. As we are faithful in little, God gives us more. If you feel called to Vietnam, for instance, you can start by working with people who are ministering to Vietnamese refugees so you can learn more about these people and their needs. And if God is calling you to another country, or to a specific ministry, ask Him how you need to be living *today* in order to be prepared for the future. Find out what your first steps need to be – and begin to take them.

### What Are You Aiming For?

There's an old saying with a lot of truth to it: If you aim at nothing, you're sure to hit it! We *cannot* afford to drift aimlessly. Our earthly lives will end sooner than we think

and we'll be accountable for how we've lived. We're all capable of drifting – yet the Lord is always faithful to show us the dangerous currents that threaten to get us off course.

I urge you to submit your life and future to God. Don't let the enemy tell you it's too late! If your heart has been stirred, ask God for a fresh revelation of His will for your life. Jesus is the anchor of our souls – the only One who can keep us on the right course. *Nothing* is worth the price of drifting.

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It seemed like the young woman seated next to me was headed for real danger. But in her condition, would she even listen to my warnings?

We were on a flight to Dallas from Nashville. I'd just settled into my window seat and a moment later, there was kind of a ruckus at the front of the plane as this pretty and somewhat brassy young woman elbowed her way to the seat next to me. I smiled, and turned my attention to a magazine. As the plane taxied for takeoff, she let out a loud stream of curses, gripped the armrests, and let everyone within ten rows know, "I *hate* flying. It scares me to death!"

A few minutes later, when the flight attendants were up and about, my seat-mate ordered a beer. "That will be \$3.00," the stewardess said. Not realizing there'd be a charge, the young woman dug frantically through her purse – but couldn't find enough money. The stewardess probably thought the beer would calm her down some, so she gave it to her for free. My heart was going out to this girl by that time. *She's so scared*, I thought. *And who knows what else is bothering her?*

As we struck up a conversation she told me her name was Betsy. She was in her mid-twenties. Within minutes, I realized Betsy was a young woman with no idea where she was going in life. In fact, she was probably headed for serious trouble. Excitedly, she told me how she had worked in a bar in a small town outside Nashville.

One night she gave her phone number to some guy from California who later called and offered her a job. Betsy couldn't remember meeting him, but it didn't seem to matter. "He's gonna pay me \$50,000 a year – and I never even went to college," she said brightly. "Isn't that fantastic?"

I hesitantly asked, "What kind of work will you be doing?"

"I'm not totally sure," she said. "It's a trucking company, and they want me to work in some kind of showroom or something. Take clients out to dinner. That sort of thing."

She didn't have the names of these men who were offering her \$50,000 a year – and she didn't even know the exact location of the small, southern California town where she was headed. But I did – it was in a sparsely populated area out near the mountains. None of this sounded right. After we talked for a while I began to voice my growing concern. But she brushed me off.

"Hey, don't worry. They sent me a round-trip ticket! If anything goes wrong, I'll be on the next plane outa there."

She showed me her ticket. As I looked at it my heart sank. "Betsy... this is a one-way ticket," I said. "They haven't told you the truth."

She didn't seem worried. As she got up to go to the ladies' room, she confidently told me, "My boyfriend's uncle works for the airlines and he can get me a ticket home *anytime!*"

While she was gone I prayed as "red flags" started waving in my spirit. For all her bravado, she was really naive. And I liked her. I knew there was a lost, hurting little girl inside her and I wanted to help. She certainly wasn't

acting wisely. Nobody in the world knew where she was going, or who she was going with – not even Betsy herself!

When she returned she told me she'd followed up her beer with a few tranquilizers. "I'm feeling much better now," she said.

I was feeling worse all the time. I wondered how she might react to me – a stranger on a plane – if I told her what I thought. I couldn't know *for sure* that she was headed for danger and I didn't want to overreact, but I felt the Holy Spirit telling me to speak directly. So I did!

I encouraged Betsy to think things through. Not to take extra risks. I got a little bold and reminded her how some women fall for come-ons like this and are never seen again – not alive or in one piece anyway. I told her, "Young women like you disappear every day." After all, they'd already lied about her ticket. And who hands out a \$50,000-a-year job to someone with no professional training? Something was fishy.

But Betsy was determined. When we finally landed in

Dallas, she told me someone from the company named "Bernie" would meet her to escort her on her connecting flight to California. All she had was his description. I walked to the gate with her to meet this "someone" so he'd know I'd seen his face. I intended to get more information and make him feel somewhat accountable.

No one met Betsy at the gate. So that's when I decided to pour it on. I told her she could turn around right then and head back to Nashville. She'd been lied to at least twice. I'd already given her some pocket money, but I took it a step further. I told her she could come home with me and at least think things over.

"This is the break I've been waiting for," she said, shrugging her shoulders. "I've got to go or I'll never know if I missed my only chance to make it big."

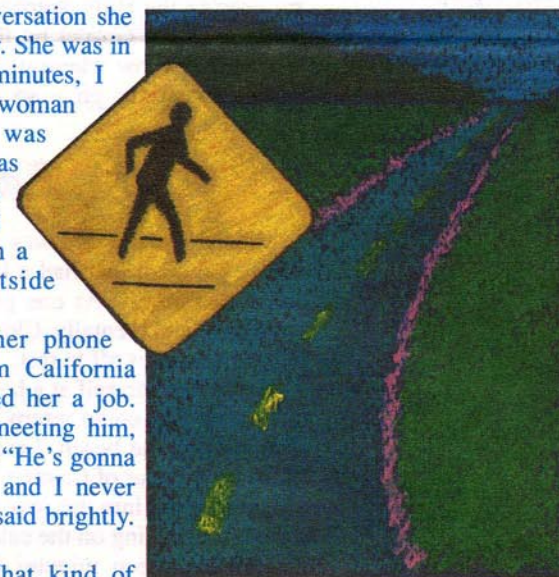
Nothing would shake her. She had her mind made up.

"If I get in trouble, I can always get out of it," she said confidently. As she got onto the plane for California, I prayed. I'll probably never know the outcome of her story.

### Drifting Towards Danger

After that, I prayed for Betsy many times. I'd told her to call me anytime night or day if she needed help. She never called. I tried to get the phone number of the trucking company to call her, but there was no such company listed in the city she'd mentioned. I couldn't help but wonder why she refused to read the signs of danger all around her. Why couldn't she admit it was time to at least re-evaluate things – and maybe turn back? After all, there were so many indicators that this "big break" wasn't all it was cracked up to be. She could have easily admitted she'd made some wrong choices, even though that would have been humbling. She *could* have turned back – except for one thing.

She'd already run so many "stop signs" she'd become numb to the truth about her circumstances. So she kept getting herself in deeper. It's easy to shake our heads and wonder how someone can be so blind. It's easy to say, "Well, she didn't know the Lord. She didn't have spiritual insight to





begin with." But the truth is, many Christians wind up in similar situations. We ignore those inner "checks" and nudges from the Holy Spirit that God faithfully sends as He tries to correct our course.

Instead of heeding His warnings, we often press on – toward worldliness, wrong choices, bad relationships, and sin – even when we've lost that guiding sense of inner peace. Sometimes we get lax and skip fellowship, prayer, and studying God's Word – ignoring the coldness that's growing within. Like Betsy, a lot of us say, "Hey, I can handle this. As soon as things *really* go wrong – I'm outa here!" Meanwhile, we get ourselves in deeper and deeper.

There's a problem with our "plan of retreat" though. Whenever we get off-track with the Lord, we start to get numb to His Spirit. If we're involved in sin or spiritual laziness, our discernment starts getting dull. With dulled spiritual senses it's hard to tell when we've crossed into the danger zone. We get numb and can't tell when it's time to turn back.

I once read a story about a bird who landed on a piece of wood floating in a wintry river. It just so happened that it was the Niagara River, and this little "raft" he'd landed on was headed downstream for Niagara Falls! But the bird wasn't at all concerned. After all, he had *wings!* So he sat there, chirping and enjoying the misty, cold morning. The bird knew that as soon as the rapids got too wild, he could spread his wings and fly away.

As the drifting wood got closer to the falls, the bird didn't budge. He had plenty of time – no problem! Sure the rapids got pretty wild, but that just made the ride more fun! Then at the last possible moment, only seconds from the falls, he knew it was time to get out of there – fast! But when he tried to spread his wings, to his surprise they wouldn't move. The icy mist had settled on his feathers, and they were frozen.

### Turning Toward God

It would be easy to apply a story like that only to situations where we've *obviously* drifted out of God's will. But often we make one seemingly insignificant wrong choice after another, ignoring the warning signs. We thought we could "handle" temptation – but didn't count on our growing numbness to God's warnings.

But some of us have not drifted into blatant sin – instead we've just been cruising along enjoying God's blessing and favor. We've followed the simple everyday plan for our lives, but forgotten there's a larger job to be done.

Maybe God has been trying to show you areas of your life – habits, relationships, sins – that need to be yielded to Him. The good news is: God calls you to turn your heart toward Him no matter how far you've let yourself drift away.

Betsy believed she'd gone too far to turn back. But this is only true when our pride is involved – never when God's heart is involved. Through the prophet Isaiah the Lord has said, "Come now and let us reason together.... Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool." (Is. 1:18)

But there's another side of the coin when it comes to knowing where you're going in the Lord. Obviously, it's important to turn away *from* sin, but it's just as important to know what you're turning *toward*.

I believe God is concerned about every Christian. He's been working in our lives to make us more like Him – and not only so we can enjoy blessing and fellowship with Him, as great as that is. God has a specific purpose for each of us. When we get comfortable with God, it's easy to forget that there's a whole world filled with broken, lost people – people *we're commissioned to reach!* And for them time is running out.

Christian leaders all over the world are gearing up right now for the critical time that's upon us. Around the globe, Christians are hearing the Holy Spirit's call to work together to reach the world with the Gospel by the year 2000 or shortly thereafter! We need to know where we are going – or should I say where *God* wants us to go – so we can fulfill our destiny in this generation!

### It's Easy To Drift

About a year ago, I was working very, very hard on a major ministry project that had a killer deadline. (That's why they're called **deadlines!**) At one point, I became totally exhausted – physically and mentally. Close friends and counselors suggested I take a few days off to rest.

So I found myself at a beach-side hotel, resting and trying to recuperate so I could return and finish this crucial project. One afternoon on the beach, I rented one of those rubber rafts. Just \$4.50 for an hour of floating in a heavenly blue ocean! I paddled a little way out into the cove, lay back, and shut my eyes. It was great! Just rocking on the calm water...

Ten or fifteen minutes later, my eyes popped open. The current had taken me a long way from shore. I was enjoying it so much, drifting, lazing in the sun, smelling the fresh, ocean air – that I hadn't noticed where I was going.

But I knew I'd probably reached the point (I was a *long* way out!) where I had to stop relaxing and get back to shore. Dragging my raft as I swam against the current was hard work – *not* worth the short time it took to drift that far. But I finally made it back where my feet touched sand again.

I figured I had some time left on my rental, but I didn't know how much because I didn't have a watch on. It was hard to relax because I was anxious about paying a late charge. So I



just lolled around in the cove, asking people what time it was every few minutes. I thought, *If I ever do this again I'll wear a watch and bring some rope to anchor onto the rocks so I won't drift every time I start to relax.*

A day or so later, I returned to the realities of ministry work and my stiff deadline – but God had spoken some neat things to me from that incident.

### The Enemy's Voice

Since drifting is always subtle, the enemy loves to help us progress along this silent, deadly route. We hear the enemy's voice continually saying to us, "Oh, come on. You don't *really* have to live a holy life. You don't have to sacrifice anything. You're saved, right? Isn't that good enough?" Something inside of us responds to that voice. It's our love of ease and comfort. We want to float along, enjoying "the good life."

When we join forces with this voice, we can numb ourselves to the voice of the Lord. It's true, our eternal salvation doesn't depend on good works or earning spiritual merit badges, but we also need to balance that with the fact that faith without works is dead.

Yes, God wants to bless us and keep us out of legal bondage. But He also wants us to be His disciples, willing to go anywhere and do anything He says.

### Letting Go Of Blessings

Ironically, sometimes the very thing the Lord has given as a blessing is the thing that ends up weighing us down. What was a blessing in one season of life may be a hindrance later on. We need to know when to let go! "Lord, you know I can't sell the red Firebird *You* gave me and go to the mission field!"

Sometimes it's not a material blessing, but a *spiritual gift* the Lord wants us to lay down. "Jesus, you can't *really* be telling me it's time to give up leading this youth group and take a new step, can you?"

As I was swimming back to shore that day at the beach, I had to work *twice* as hard because I was dragging that dumb raft with me! I didn't want to let it go because it would cost over \$25 to replace it. But if my life depended on it, I would have cut it loose in a second!

Maybe God is asking you to lay something down so you can serve Him more fully. He may require you to lay it down for a season – or maybe forever. But whatever it costs to stay on the cutting edge of God's will for your life – it's worth it! No price is too high. This is not a time when any of us can drift along on blessings. We can't kick back in the sun and ignore the currents and times that are carrying us along.

I believe God is saying, "My child, when I ask, will you let go of even the things I've given you – the comforts *and* the gifts? Will you cut them loose and give them to Me? Can you

see how they might be pulling you away from Me?" In Ephesians 5:15-17, Paul tells us to be careful how we live: "Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil." He also reminds us "not to be foolish – but understand what the will of the Lord is."

### Redeeming The Time

We must constantly be reading our "spiritual watches" so we know what time it is in *our lives*, as well as what time it is in *the world* around us. It was silly of me to not have a watch on when I said I'd return that raft in an hour. How was I supposed to keep that commitment? But it would be even sillier – or should I say more dangerous? – to make a commitment to God to fulfill my destiny and not be able to discern His perfect timing in the choices I make.

Remember, when we become lackadaisical in our choices, we never drift aimlessly *toward* God. We always drift *away* from Him, even when our "intentions" are good. The captain of a ship needs a good compass and some navigating skills if he expects to reach the desired destination.

### Where Are You Going?

Like Betsy on the plane or my episode on the beach, we can be drawn forward by the adventure or enjoyment of the moment without counting the cost of where we might end up.

Where do you want to be ten years from now? What do you want to be doing for the Lord? Will the choices you're making today help or hinder you in reaching your ministry goals?

We don't have the luxury of making life decisions without consulting the One who has ordered our lives! Be alert and seek God. Bring your life before Him and allow it to be tested by His Holy Spirit.

**1. Ask God to review your life area by area. Ask Him to show you anything displeasing to Him.** Often we're "blinded" by our sins. If we've allowed certain attitudes or actions to go unchecked, they may have hardened our hearts so we're unable to see the truth about ourselves. We must be willing to ask God to reveal any hidden sin in our lives. Go to Him and say, "Search me, O God, and know my heart... see if there be any hurtful way in me." (Ps. 139:23,24)

**2. Ask God if you're headed towards Him or away from Him. Find out if you need a course correction.** We can't rely on our *own* understanding about the crucial choices in our lives. You might have a job with a great "future," or be thinking about getting married to a wonderful

