

“Detours”

As I left church Sunday evening, I noticed the gas station/convenience store just down the road had part of their parking lot, including some of the pumps blocked off so they could reseal the blacktop surface. My first thought was that it sure would be an inconvenience for anyone wanting to patronize them, which made me think of what a pain in the neck any kind of closure or detour can be.

Whenever Vicki and I traveled with our RV, I don't remember there ever being a time when we were on an interstate that didn't have sections of “orange barrels” where new road construction or repairs were being done - sometimes the barrels went on for miles and miles, which made our progress quite a bit slower.

For my fellow Floridians, if you ever had occasion to travel Newberry Road near I-75, I thought they would never get done with the improvements they were making - seemed like it was years before they finished, but I must admit, even though it's still quite congested, their modifications helped. Like they say, sometimes the end justifies the means, but it's hard sometimes to wait for the end to come!

I can remember back in Ohio when we lived in the suburbs, there were numerous times they would close roads that were heavily traveled main arteries for months at a time, which of course caused no small amount of grief. However, that paled compared to when we lived in Arizona - if a main artery was closed (usually due to accidents or fires) you had to (seriously) drive 100 miles out of your way!

Merriman-Webster defines a detour as: *“a deviation from a direct course or the usual procedure.”* If you don't already know it, it should come as no surprise to you that our lives are full of detours - some are very minor, insignificant short lived ones, while others are the big, long lasting ones we think we'll never get around! Here's what 1 Peter 4:12 says: *“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.”*

God uses detours in our lives as seasons when He can rebuild, refine, and reinforce us so we are better able to handle all the “traffic” that might be coming our way - things we are totally unaware of, but He wants to make sure we are prepared for it! Hebrews 12:7 says: *“Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father?”* And v. 11 says: *“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”*

So the detours in our lives, as frustrating, discouraging or painful as they might be, are, in the spiritual realm, a training ground to better prepare us for what lies ahead of us. Stay the course! Follow the detour to victory! Amen!