

This Way



One day, Moses was taking care of sheep and goats for his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, and Moses decided to lead them across the desert to Sinai, the holy mountain. There an angel of the LORD appeared to him from a burning bush. Moses saw that the bush was on fire, but it was not burning up. "This is strange!" he said to himself. "I'll go over and see why the bush isn't burning up."

When the LORD saw Moses coming near the bush, he called him by name, and Moses answered, "Here I am."

—Exodus 3:1-4 (CEV)

Prologue

"If you're going to ticket me, then ticket me!"

I scrambled out of the car, slammed the door, and kicked the rear tire. Squinting into the harsh glare of a flashlight, my first words were louder than necessary, "If you're going to ticket me, then ticket me! I just want to get home." Not giving the police officer a chance to respond, I continued, still annoyed, still defiantly frustrated, "I'm tired. Really—I just want to get home!"

"And I just need you to slow down, ma'am. I actually stopped you, because I really just needed you to slow down and stop—at the sign back there. You're in a school zone. It's dark. There's traffic."

The officer was right. Traveling home from the gym, I'd failed to stop at a busy corner. Distracted by a young mother's ever present to-do list, I'd rolled through an intersection, the middle school on my left, a railroad crossing on my right. Fortunately a man with a badge had cared enough to give me a much deserved warning and an undeniable lesson: road signs are an important part of safe travel.

Road signs are everywhere: SPEED LIMIT 25, SCHOOL ZONE, STOP. Yet even with signs telling us what to do and how best to do it, we still miss the signs, overlook and ignore them. But signs in life surround us for a reason and I've gotten costly reminders of their importance. A patrol car's red and blue flashing lights have refocused my attention on the speed limit—more than once. Traffic cameras have reminded me to slow down in a school

Signs in Life

zone—twice. And a police officer has re-emphasized the importance of coming to a complete stop at a busy intersection.

In addition to traffic signs, I have also overlooked and ignored directional signs. I live in Monroe, Washington, about an hour's drive from Seattle. On a trip into the city, I programmed my car's navigation system to get me from the freeway to a waterfront restaurant. After three turns, I decided I knew better than my digital guide. I didn't. I made wrong turn after wrong turn and silently cursed the afternoon's traffic. The delay cost me time and patience and taught me a second undeniable lesson: road signs are not just an important part of safe travel, but there are consequences when ignored and overlooked.

So why don't I follow the signs, block after block, turn after turn? Why don't I heed the high resolution images on my car's high definition screen? The signs were all there: a black and white sign alerting me to the speed limit, a red sign reminding me to stop, a yellow sign warning of the school zone. There were signs telling me of the exit ahead and the turn on my right. Still I ignored some, skipped others, and overlooked many. Why did I, *why do I*, ignore the help?

And if I struggle to get around the block, how will I ever survive the bigger journey? How will I navigate life? Not the quick trip to the grocery store, but the longer journey through adulthood? Not only the daily commute, but the more onerous trek through times of trial? Not just the trip into the city, but the turn into temptation? What about my travels as a wife and mother, sister and friend? What about my travels with God?

I really do want to follow God more closely, but I've repeatedly ignored the spiritual guidance that could've helped me in my quest. Too many times I thought I knew more, knew better. At other times I overlooked God's directional signs and tuned out the audible instructions coming from life's metaphorical console. And then there were those times I just didn't pay attention.

I'm not alone. People long ago and people today, we've all sought to follow God more closely. The Bible shares example after example, stories that also remind us of our propensity to miss the signs. We question where we're going. We complain about our

circumstances. In a story that spanned four decades, God led His chosen people, the Israelites, through the wilderness with a pillar of smoke by day and a pillar of fire by night, huge THIS WAY signs. Their leader, Moses, even encountered personal signs when he saw a burning bush and heard the voice of God. All these signs were important as God directed and redirected Moses and more than 600,000 Israelites on a journey that would take them from Egyptian slavery to the Promised Land.

God's been active in all our lives, directing and redirecting. Through Bible stories and our own personal experiences, we see the signs. Through Bible stories and our own travels through life, we learn that God doesn't just issue a citation and move on to the next offender. He steers us toward Him and His divine purpose, toward that promised place He has for each one of us. The man with the badge cared enough to warn me and cite me. God cares enough to guide me and direct me. And when I mess up? When we mess up? He forgives and redeems, redirects and refocuses—just as He did with Moses and the Israelites. And that's a good thing, because I don't know about you, but I need help and guidance. Often.

So here's what you also need to know. I battle weight issues. My walk is a nagging reminder of past knee and hip surgeries. I place way too much importance on mascara and hair gel. My driving record lists way too many infractions. I get dazed and confused in places unfamiliar to me, also in places I know well. I can obsess over the smallest details, especially the insignificant and inconsequential. I make mistakes. I wander off. I overlook the signs and miss the turn.

Moses and the Israelites made mistakes, too. On their journey to the Promised Land, they overlooked signs and missed turns. Their story is similar to my own in many ways, but strikingly different in others. I've never known the brutality of slavery, never been forced from my home. I've never had to walk through a desert, never been nomadic. I've never been a camper for goodness sakes! Still God's traveled with all of us wherever we've been and wherever we've been going.

Signs in Life

“Our travels with God are part of His story,
His purpose, travels that begin right now.”

—Robin Dugall

Signs in Life tells of my journey and the divine signs I’ve encountered along the way. In my travels, there have been directional signs, mileposts, and cautionary signs. There have been exit signs and speed limit signs. There have been signs that were seen and others that were heard. All have helped me follow God and find His purpose for my life. By sharing the signs in my life, I hope you’ll be able to see the signs in yours. I might be speeding through a stop sign—again!—while you’re navigating a busy street, but our journeys are very similar. I think we all want to be part of a greater purpose. We all want help and guidance in our understanding of God and His plans for us. And when we miss the signs, real and divine, we want to know that God will redirect and refocus us, that He will get us back on track. My pastor, Robin Dugall says, “Life with God is not just about a heavenly destination. Our travels with God are part of His story, His purpose, travels that begin right now.”

Whenever we got in the car, I used to tell my boys, “Buckle up. We’re going for a ride.” In life we’re all going for a ride. Our travels with God are an adventure in discovery and growth, an opportunity for each one of us to repeat the words of Moses, “Here I am.”

THIS WAY. This is my story, the signs in my life. So far.

Deanna Nowadnick