You Can Not Walk Down Two Paths at The Same Time

Ron Kelleher

Pursuing God's purpose in our life demands that we decide on a course of action, commit to it wholeheartedly, and act!

I learned early on when hiking in the Boy Scouts that there are often multiple paths that ultimately lead to the same destination.

For example, one year, when our troop was camping in Yellowstone National Park, we often hiked over to the stables to ride horses. The walking trail that followed the road was about a mile from our campsite to the stables. One day, I noticed that our older staff members always hung back, leaving after everyone else but somehow still beating us to the stables.

So, the next day I hung back as well and discovered their secret. By crossing the Yellowstone River behind our campsite, it was an easy half-mile hike to the stables! But, to take the shorter route, I had to cross the river. It wasn't deep, but a misstep on the rocks could lead to a mid-day bath! At the very least, I had to be willing to walk around with wet shoes all day.

Then downriver, I spied a tree that spanned the river. Now the decision was, "Do I try to balance my way across the tree and keep my feet dry, or just accept wet feet?" Or "Do I take the safe route and keep following the path by the road?" Three paths all lead to the stables.

Many decisions in life are like this; there are two, three, or even more paths to get to where we want to go in life. But which one?

In our decision-making, we often play a game of "what if?" What if I take the path by the road? What if I cross the river on the rocks? What if I cross the river by balancing across the tree?

Unless I commit to just ***one*** approach, I never make it to the stables, and I don't get to ride a horse!

When I was teaching at the university, several students came to me dealing with similar quandaries. They kind of knew where they wanted to end up in life, but they had so many options that they couldn't decide which path to take.

- The job market is slow. Should I take this opportunity to get my master's degree?
- I want to start my own business, but should I work for a big company to learn the ropes before striking out on my own?
- I want to work in marketing, but should I start in sales to learn the business?

Perhaps you've dealt with a similar situation in your life. Or maybe you're faced with making a decision about which path to take in life right now.

6-Steps to Selecting Your Path

Authors Bill Denzel and Stephanie Shackleford offer excellent advice for those facing decisions about which paths to follow in their book, *"You on Purpose."*

1. Set Your Fear Aside

One thing is clear: unless you set aside your fear of making the wrong decision, you will certainly not achieve your desired outcome. As hockey Hall of Famer Wayne Gretzky: *"You miss 100% of the shots you don't take."*

2. Ask Yourself, What If?

Now is the time to play "what if" with yourself. Get them all out on the table. Write them all down. Think about what caused you to fear the outcome of each "what if." Is your fear of the "what if" real or imagined? What should you do to move beyond the what if?

3. Answer Your What If's

Now for each of your what-ifs, what is the worst possible outcome, the worst-case scenario? Most of the things we fear the most will never come to pass. Some are not as big a deal as we imagine them to be. And some we do need to deal with to move ahead. Regardless, we must face our fears if we are to overcome them.

4. Seek Wise Counsel

Now is the time to seek advice from trusted advisors. For me, it's my wife first as I trust her the most, and then a couple of close friends who know me well. None are afraid to tell me the unvarnished truth!

Proverbs 15:22 reminds us of the importance of having trusted advisors, *"Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed."*

5. Ask Yourself Different What If's

Now let's flip "what-ifs" around. What if the decision you make turns out just as you hope? What if it turns out even better than you hoped? Remember, God, is *"able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us." (Ephesians 3:20)*

6. Commit and Act!

Finally, as the good folks at Nike like to say, *"Just do it!"* Make a decision, commit to a course of action, and act.

> James reminds us that anyone who fails to make a decision *"is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways." (James 7-8)*

For those of you wondering what I did so many years ago, I decided the long safe road was out, and wet shoes were not appealing. So, I risked crossing the river balancing on the tree. The first day I was very tentative, but I made it. The next day, more confident because of my previous success, I sailed across the tree bridge. Once I decided which path to take, I committed and acted.

You cannot walk down two paths in life at the same time! Decide on your path, the path God chose for you and you alone, and act!