Navigating Life
Avoiding Hazardous Conditions
(Part 6)

Intro: Share about going halibut fishing in Homer. Turned back because of weather conditions. Every year I read stories/news about boats capsizing on the Columbia River bar (statistics about the bar) It is one of the most hazardous bars in the world. Our life journey is hazardous by itself, but we need to be able to avoid hazardous conditions as much as possible. We need to be able to identify what things will sink us/shipwreck our faith and lives.

Today I want to share with you 4 key conditions to avoid as we travel life.

I. Avoid Tolerating Sin

*I Tim 1:9* “Cling to your faith in Christ and keep your conscience clear. For some people have deliberately violated their consciences; as a result, their faith has been shipwrecked.” (NLT)

A. We must maintain a clear conscience

1. Without maintaining a clear conscience, we will crash our faith. We will shipwreck it. In other words, we will unintentionally destroy it. HOW?

2. God has created each of us with a conscience. A built-in moral compass of right and wrong. It’s in our DNA. Even before we understand the word of God, right and wrong is in us. We all have certain values we live by.

3. When we live in a way that is inconsistent with these internal values, we feel miserable. We have violated our conscience. This is why so many people feel miserable. They live contrary to what they really believe.

4. Maintaining a clear conscience is not about being perfect, it is about walking in God’s grace and forgiveness.

5. This is the role of the Holy Spirit in your life. The Holy Spirit works in our conscience to bring conviction. (Explain) Conviction NOT condemnation. *Rom. 8:1*

6. We must be people who stay tender to the Holy Spirit’s role in our lives. Therefore, when the Holy Spirit’s loving conviction is felt, we must respond
immediately to Him. How? Confess our sin, embrace His forgiveness and realign our lives back on His course. This is the beauty of the cross! (explain)

7. This is God’s path for happiness! Keeping your conscience clear. This keeps us from a shipwreck of faith and life.

B. We must avoid developing a seared conscience

I Tim. 4:1-2 “But the Spirit explicitly says...some will fall away from the faith...by means of the hypocrisy...seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron.” (NASB) What does this mean?

1. By tolerating sinful attitudes / behaviors / motives / thoughts / we are choosing to ignore the Holy Spirit convicting our conscience. The more we ignore it, the fainter and fainter His voice becomes.
2. If we continue on this course, our consciences get seared, as with a hot iron. (Visualize the imagery – cauterizing a wound) We no longer hear God’s loving conviction to get back on course.
3. Another way to visualize this is with a callous. Years ago, when I was doing physical labor, my hands were filled with callous’. Repeated friction eventually developed a callous. Blisters first, but eventually a callous develops. Now, I have office hands!
4. When the Holy Spirit first brings conviction in our lives, it may feel more like a blister. But if we continue to ignore Him, a callous on our heart and mind develops and we no longer feel any pain from our wrong behavior. We no longer feel any conviction from the Holy Spirit. We are seared!
5. This usually doesn’t happen with every aspect of our lives. Most often, it begins with a key area. Maybe it’s in your marriage / your thought life / bitterness and unforgiveness / your morality / your addiction /
6. The problem is that we can’t keep it at one issue. It becomes a domino effect. Once you shut the Holy Spirit off from one part of your life, we start doing this in others. This is why it will eventually shipwreck not only our faith, but our life. It is a hazardous condition to avoid.

II. Avoid Walking Too Close To The Line

Prov. 4:14-15 “Do not do as the wicked do or follow the path of evildoers...Turn away and go somewhere else...” (NLT)

Prov. 5:8 “Run from her! Don’t go near the door of her house!” (NLT)

A. We should not put ourselves in tempting situations

1. We can be our own worst enemy. We think we can handle things we can’t. We think we’re stronger than we really are. And we constantly make decisions that set ourselves up for failure!
2. We purposely put ourselves in tempting situations and walk way too close to the line... tempting fate! (Illustrate: If this is the line where I cross over from...}
right to wrong, why on earth would I walk so close to it? - show) “Don’t go near her door!” Going by her door is not a sin…BUT WHY???
3. Haven’t you noticed that there are days you just feel stronger than others. (Mentally / spiritually / internally) Maybe on that day you wouldn’t cross the line.
4. BUT, what about those off days / those dark days / you’re weary – tired – discouraged – feeling vulnerable – isolated – It doesn’t take much for us to cross the line on these days.
5. If you want to avoid the hazards, you have to quit sailing so close to the reef. We are all capable, under the right circumstances, to shipwreck. Satan is a master at waiting until the right moment in our lives.
6. Illustrate: If I walk right on the edge of this stage, even a child could push me off. If I walk 6 feet back from the edge, it would take a lot more effort.
7. Some of you are walking way to close to the line in areas of your life.

B. Avoiding is better than resisting
1. There are times in this life when you have to fight! There are times when we have to go to war and resist the godless influence / the fleshly temptations / the demonic assaults. BUT, if God isn’t leading me into these situations, I don’t want to purposely put myself there!
2. It takes a lot less energy to avoid than to resist. Illustrate: I recently went to the doctor and had that post 40 physical / blood work / etc… I found out that my cholesterol level is borderline. So now, I’m thinking…”What unhealthy thing can I cut out of my diet? CHIPS! I love chips.
3. The problem with this…the pantry is full of chips! One whole shelf of chips. The altar of chips! They call to me. I walk in to get the rice and there they are…saying “eat me!” If they were removed, I could avoid them.
4. We have satellite TV. We don’t have any of the movie channels though, and I’m glad. WHY? There’s less for me to resist. Every once in a while they have free preview weeks –skinemax explain) It’s just easier to avoid than it is to resist. I don’t want to work that hard at home!
5. Maybe you’re struggling so much because you should be avoiding instead of resisting. Is there a co-worker you need to stop having lunch with? Movies channels you should cancel. Locations that you should stay away from. People to stay away from?
6. Where are you walking too close to the line? Where are you making yourself vulnerable to a hazard?

III. Avoid Drifting Away
Heb. 2:9 “…we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.” (NASB)
A. Drifting off God’s course is hard to notice
   1. Drifting away happens over a long period of time. Example: I’m going elk hunting in a week, so let’s talk about bullet drift. If you’re three inches to the left at 100 yards, you might be OK at that distance. BUT, at 300 yards, you won’t hit a thing. The longer the bullet travels, the further off target it goes.
   2. Example: If you’re 2 degrees off with your GPS reading, it might not matter after only a few miles, but traveling for 1000 miles being 2 degrees off takes you hundreds of miles off course. (airplane)
   3. Unless you pay close attention to your course, you can’t tell if you’re drifting because it’s so subtle…it’s gradual. Then you wake up one day and say; “How did I get here?” “This isn’t where I want to be!”
   4. This is also why we notice these things as we get older. If you’re a few degrees off course when you’re 20, you can hardly notice it and you’re thinking; “What’s the big deal?”
   5. If you’ve been traveling a few degrees off course for 30 years…now you’re 50…Now it is a big deal because you’re off the map!

B. We must pay attention to our life course
   HOW? What does this look like?
   1. Observation
      * Prov. 4:26 “Watch the path of your feet…” (NASB)
      * God expects us to know where we’re going. He expects us to be observing the path we’re traveling.
      * Unfortunately, most of us run so fast in life that we never slow down long enough to even observe what path we’re on. The only time we stop and ask this question is when there’s a major blowout.
      * What kind of life path are you on? (I’m on a life path where I work 60 hrs a week / every weekend soccer / every evening practice / haven’t had meaningful conversation with spouse in months / stress level through the roof / can’t sleep / making small compromises in many areas)

   2. Evaluation
      * How’s that working for you?
      * Ps. 139:23-24 “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” (NIV)
      * Will we let God evaluate our course? Will we allow Him to scrutinize the way we’re living life? Sure, we can evaluate our lives to a point, but we need God’s perspective.
      * Are you willing to let God tell you where you need to change course? To show you where you’re drifting?
• Often God will speak through other godly people. If you’re brave enough, ask some of your closest friends if they think you’re off course.

3. **Continuation**

• We all need to be able to make mid-course corrections with life and keep moving forward. To be able to get new coordinates from God and readjust the way we’re living so that we’re on course.

• Over the years God has: readjusted the course of our marriage / parenting / my priorities / my schedule / my attitudes / and given us new coordinates to walk by so we can continue on.

Drifting doesn’t seem that dangerous, but it is a hazard God wants us to stay clear of. The longer you let it go, the farther off course you become.

**IV. Avoid Traveling Alone**

*Ecc. 4:12 “A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back to back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple braided cord is not easily broken.”* (NLT)

A. We travel alone because we believe the lies. (lies that isolate us)

1. I should be able to handle this myself. I’m supposed to handle this myself. I’m a failure if I can’t handle it myself. What’s wrong with me?


3. Nobody will ever fully understand me.

4. If I let people in, they will hurt me / not accept me / my struggles make me unacceptable. Therefore, I keep them private.

5. I must maintain an image in order to be accepted by others.

• All these lies are barriers to developing the relationships that help protect us and help keep us on course.

B. We travel together because we have embraced the truth

• This is God’s design so we can avoid the hazards in this life. No one is to travel alone. We travel best together!

• Safety in numbers was God’s idea not mans. If we embrace God’s truth, it fosters relationships.

1. I’m not supposed to be able to handle life alone. God didn’t make me this way. This doesn’t make me a failure, it makes me normal.

2. My struggles are not unique. They’re just like everyone else’s.

3. Because of this, many people out there will be able to fully understand me.

4. If I let people in, they could hurt me, but by far, most will love and respect me more because of the honesty / identification / commonality.
5. Maintaining an image only keeps me from others. It is my transparency that
draws people to me and connects us heart to heart with each other.
- If you’re traveling alone in this life, you’re an accident waiting to happen. It is
simply impossible to avoid all the hazards of this life by yourself.
- This is the value of belonging to a church / to a group / to a team of people
where you get to travel together. If you don’t have this, you can experience
that right here. I believe this is why God brought you here. It’s not an
accident. It’s part of His plan to help you navigate life.

If we’re going to steer clear from the hazards in this life, we have to avoid 4 common mistakes
people make.
- Avoid tolerating sin in our lives (Holy Spirit functions as our compass / tolerating sin
damages the function of our moral compass.
- Avoid walking too close to the line. Some of you are flirting with disaster.
- Avoid drifting away. Some of you are just a few degrees off.
- Avoid traveling alone. Some of you are vulnerable