

## Are You Driftin’

Hebrews 2:1

January 2, 2022

Welcome again to worship today. I’m so glad you are worshipping as we begin a new year.

I invite you to turn to page 8 in your bulletin.

Disaster struck almost immediately when a storm battered their boat with 50- to 70-mile-per-hour winds for three days as they left Hawaii on their way to Tahiti. They continued on anyway, thinking the vessel wasn’t that badly damaged.

By the end of the month, another storm had flooded their boat’s engine, and they discovered its sails and mast had been damaged enough earlier that they could no longer generate adequate wind power to keep the vessel on course.

Eventually, the two women and two dogs were found, 900 miles off the coast of Japan, thousands of miles in the wrong direction, and 5 months lost.<sup>1</sup>

They had drifted for five months in the Pacific Ocean. Imagine that.

Drifting can be a terrible feeling, when you go in a direction not of your own choosing, helpless.

Sometimes, we allow ourselves to drift. We put on a few pounds. We stop exercising as we should. These are usually the things we make New Year’s resolutions about.

You know, most Christians experience drifting from God instead of suddenly falling into terrible sin. A guy doesn’t simply wake up one day and say to himself, “Boy, today is a great day to start a raging heroin habit,” or, “You know what, I’m in the mood to commit adultery today.” That’s not how it happens.

Big sin is always the sum of a thousand tiny choices.

That’s why the author of Hebrews says:

*So we must listen very carefully to the truth we have heard, or we may drift away from it.*<sup>2</sup>

The Greek for “drift away” has two images to it. One is the imagery of being swept away by a raging river with certain peril, and the other is of a boat that is leaky. The writer of Hebrews warns his readers to avoid carelessness of drifting away from the truth of Scriptures in the way we live our lives. He tells us to give earnest attention to our spiritual souls.

To drift away results in dangerous “neglect” of the message.

These early believers were in danger of falling away from following Jesus. They had heard the words of the gospel, but those words had not sunk in. People raised in believing families and churches risk the same danger today. They hear the words and more or less agree, but mental assent to Christ’s leadership is insufficient to be Christ’s disciple.<sup>3</sup>

One of our greatest temptations as Christians is simply to drift away from Christ. We’re not actively running away, just slowly drifting along with the lazy, warm,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://thewest.com.au/news/world/women-lost-on-drifting-boat-in-pacific-ocean-for-months-tell-their-incredible-story-ng-b88643376z>, downloaded 12/29/2021

<sup>2</sup> Hebrews 2:1 (NLT2)

<sup>3</sup> Life Application Study Bible, Hebrews 2:1

comfortable current of the world. And the scary thing is we don't usually notice when we're drifting. We raise our heads and suddenly realize that we're a mile away from land.

I want to share with you 7 warning signs you are drifting from God. Now, instead of you having to write them all down, I've put them into the bulletin. Let's review them together.

First, You spend little, if any, time reading God's Word and praying: "I'm just too busy right now to read and pray."

Second, The gospel doesn't affect you like it used to: "I've heard it a thousand times before...it just seems a little old."

Third, You don't spend much time fellowshiping with other Christians: "I've worked hard, I'm tired, the last thing I want to do is go and be with other people."

Fourth, The sins that used to bother you don't really bother you anymore: "This show isn't that bad. It doesn't really tempt me too much."

Fifth, You find yourself quieting your conscience more frequently: "I know it was wrong, and I'll pray about it tonight."

Sixth, You keep promising yourself that you will stop: "OK, this is the last time I look at porn."

Finally, You find yourself making excuses for things: "I'm only chatting on Facebook with the guy; it's not like we're sleeping together."

The good news is if you find yourself drifting, you can put a stop to it! God loves to help us stop drifting. He loves to give us the power to change. If you find yourself drifting, there are three things to do.

If you feel disconnected to God:

First, Repent of your sins and receive the wonderful, complete, free forgiveness from Christ.

The Psalmist said of God:

*Though we are overwhelmed by our sins, you forgive them all.*<sup>4</sup>

Paul wrote in Romans 5:8

*But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.*<sup>5</sup>

Christ delights to forgive drifters.

Second, Return to the things you used to do, and don't let condemnation stop you. Go to God's Word, prayer, fellowship, fighting temptation and listening to the promptings of the Holy Spirit to your conscience.

Third, Tell a close friend of what has been going on. This is accountability. A close friend can walk with you back to the Lord without casting you off to your own devices.

In 2022, don't let yourself drift. Drifting is dangerous. Sometimes, it's lethal.

That's why today, we are beginning the new year with Wesley's Covenant Service, found on page 3 of your bulletin.

In 1663 Richard Alleine, a Puritan, published "A Vindication of Godliness in the Greater Strictness and Spirituality of It". In 1753, it was again published in John Wesley's "A Christian Library." Wesley used one chapter, "The Application of the

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<sup>4</sup> Psalm 65:3 (NLT2)

<sup>5</sup> Romans 5:8 (NLT2)

Whole,” on Monday, August 11, 1755, in what probably was the first real celebration of the Covenant Service in the Methodist movement.

Wesley found the service rich and meaningful, as expressed in his Journal. In April 1756, he wrote, “Many mourned before God, and many were comforted.” Later in October: “It was, as usual, a time of remarkable blessing.” Then January 1, 1775: “It was an occasion for a variety of spiritual experiences... I do not know that ever we had a greater blessing. Afterwards many desired to return thanks, either for a sense of pardon, for full salvation, or for a fresh manifestation of His graces, healing all their backslidings.” In London, these services were usually held on New Year’s Day. The heart of the service, focused in the Covenant Prayer, requires persons to commit themselves to God.

We are going to share it today as we begin 2022, then go into Holy Communion.

## **WESLEY’S COVENANT SERVICE AND CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION**

### **INVITATION**

Commit yourselves to Christ as His servants. Give yourselves to Him, that you may belong to Him. Christ has many services to be done. Some are more easy and honorable, others are more difficult and disgraceful. Some are suitable to our inclinations and interests, others are contrary to both. In some we may please Christ and please ourselves. But then there are other works where we cannot please Christ except by denying ourselves. It is necessary, therefore, that we consider what it means to be a servant of Christ. Let us, therefore, go to Christ, and pray:

**Let me be your servant, under Your command. I will no longer be my own. I will give up myself to Your will in all things.**

Be satisfied that Christ shall give you your place and work.

**Lord, make me what You will. I put myself fully into Your hands: put me to doing, put me to suffering, let me be employed for You, or laid aside for You, let me be full, let me be empty, let me have all things, let me have nothing. I freely and with a willing heart give it all to Your pleasure and disposal.**

Christ will be the Savior of none but His servants. He is the source of all salvation to those who obey. Christ will have no servants except by consent; Christ will not accept anything except full consent to all that He requires. Christ will be all in all, or he will be nothing.

Confirm this by a holy covenant. To make this covenant a reality in your life, listen to these admonitions:

First, set apart some time, more than once, to be spent alone before the Lord; in seeking earnestly God’s special assistance and gracious acceptance of you; in carefully thinking through all the conditions of the covenant; in searching your hearts whether you have already freely given your life to Christ. Consider what your sins are. Consider the laws of Christ, how holy, strict, and spiritual they are, and whether you, after having carefully considered them, are willing to choose them all. Be sure you are clear in these matters, see that you do not lie to God.

Second, be serious and in a spirit of holy awe and reverence.

Third, claim God’s covenant, rely upon God’s promise of giving grace and strength, so you can keep your promise. Trust not your own strength and power.

Fourth, resolve to be faithful. You have given to the Lord your hearts, you have opened your mouths to the Lord, and you have dedicated yourself to God. With God's power, never go back.

And last, be then prepared to renew your covenant with the Lord. Fall down on your knees, lift your hands toward heaven, open your hearts to the Lord, as we pray:

**COVENANT PRAYER**

**O righteous God, for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, see me as I fall down before you. Forgive my unfaithfulness in not having done Your will, for You have promised mercy to me if I turn to You with my whole heart.**

God requires that you shall put away all your idols.

**I here from the bottom of my heart renounce them all, covenanting with You that no known sin shall be allowed in my life. Against Your will, I have turned my love toward the world. In Your power I will watch all temptations that will lead me away from you. For my own righteousness is riddled with sin, unable to stand before You.**

Through Christ, God has offered to be your God again if you would let him.

**Before all heaven and earth, I here acknowledge You as my Lord and God. I take You, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for my portion, and vow to give up myself, body and soul, as Your servant, to serve you in holiness and righteousness all the days of my life.**

God has given the Lord Jesus Christ as the only way and means of coming to God.

**Jesus, I do here on bended knees accept Christ as the only new and living Way, and sincerely join myself in a covenant with Him. O blessed Jesus, I come to You, hungry, sinful, miserable, blind, and naked, unworthy even to wash the feet of Your servants. I do here, with all my power, accept You as my Lord and Head. I renounce my own worthiness, and vow that You are the Lord, my righteousness. I renounce my own wisdom, and take You for my only guide. I renounce my own will, and take Your will as my law.**

Christ has told you that you must suffer with Him.

**I do here covenant with you, O Christ, to take my lot with You as it may fall. Through Your grace I promise that neither life nor death shall part me from You.**

God has given holy laws as the rule of your life.

**I do here willingly put my neck under Your yoke, to carry Your burden. All your laws are holy, just, and good. I therefore take them as the rule for my words, thoughts, and actions, promising that I will strive to order my whole life according to Your direction, and not allow myself to neglect anything I know to be my duty.**

The almighty God searches and knows your heart.

**O God, You know that I make this covenant with You today without guile or reservation. If any falsehood should be in it, guide me and help me to set it aright. And now, glory be to You, O God the Father, whom I from this day forward shall look upon as my God and Father. Glory be to You, O God the Son, who have loved me and washed me from my sins in Your own blood, and now is my Savior and Redeemer. Glory be to you, O God the Holy Spirit, who by Your almighty power have turned my heart from sin to God.**

**O mighty God, the Lord Omnipotent, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, You have now become my Covenant Friend. And I, through Your infinite grace, have become Your covenant servant. So be it. And let the covenant I have made on earth be ratified in heaven. Amen.**