

Learning to Navigate

Don't Just Steer, Chart a Course!

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Given 10-Nov-07; Tape #854

In 1911, it seemed as though all the great achievements in exploration had already been accomplished. Frederick Cooke had visited the North Pole in 1908, or maybe it was Robert Perry in 1909 (they are not sure); and adventurers were beginning to think that nothing more could be discovered, that there were no more "firsts" to be had. Yet there was one that dangled in front of the most daring of them all: to be the first to reach the South Pole.

Most assumed that the British, the great Empire of that time, would win that prize. They had all the money. They had all the logistics figured out for this sort of thing. By this time, they had already announced a planned expedition backed by the Royal Geographical Society.

However, there was a Norwegian man named Captain Roald Amundsen. He was determined to beat the British to the South Pole—and, to make a long story short, he did just that. Not only did he and his four companions arrive at the South Pole thirty-three days earlier than the British—December 15, 1911—but it took him only fifty-seven days to do it. The British, on the other hand, took seventy-eight days—January 17, 1912. Moreover, Amundsen's team returned to their base camp with comparative ease and in relative good health, while the British team, lead by Captain Robert Fountain Scott, struggled wearily and ultimately perished several miles from reaching their destination back on the coast.

The difference between the two expeditions lies in the differences between the two leaders, Amundsen and Scott. Scott was a British Navy officer, a scientist chosen for his task by his superiors and accustomed to a rather rigid chain of command, as well as a very rigid way of doing things. It was the British Navy's way and no other. Another thing that hampered him was his British pride. He seemed to have an overwhelming sense of pride in all things British, and he gathered most of his trekking ideas, his choice of food, supplies, and equipment from British sources.

Conversely, Amundsen was a professional explorer. He was an individualist. He was competitive, driven, and innovative—yet he was also respectful of tried and true techniques. He seems to have had a knack for foreseeing potential problems and working out solutions to them before he would begin the expedition. For instance, he spent a great deal of time learning from the Inuit peoples (Eskimos) of Northern Canada and Greenland about how they survive the bitter cold Arctic, and he adapted their methods to his Antarctic exploration.

For example, one of the Inuit innovations he applied was using light dog sleds. They were made of fairly light but strong wood. They were pulled by Huskies, which were used to that sort of weather. They had thick coats and undercoats of hair and could burrow down or be buried by the snow and would be usually okay. These dogs were, of course, smaller than a horse or other draft animal, and so required much less food. The use of sleds and dogs turned out to be a good idea. On the other hand, Scott decided to use ponies and motorized sledges that weighed two

hundred pounds each. The ponies would be pack animals, and the men would be on foot. Right here, you can see a big difference between these two men and their approach to this expedition.

Christians are in their own "Race to the Poles," as it were. Our expedition is the path to the Kingdom of God. How we approach, prepare for, and execute our spiritual journey will spell the difference between entering God's Kingdom and falling away. Are we doing what it takes to achieve that marvelous goal of the glory that is set before us?

Leadership expert John C. Maxwell, of whom you may have heard, is a former pastor of a Christian church. He then became a motivational speaker and writer on leadership, and he uses the examples of Amundsen and Scott in his books and presentations to illustrate what he calls his fourth law of leadership, the Law of Navigation. "Anyone can steer the ship, but it takes a leader to chart the course."

For this sermon, I will generally follow Mr. Maxwell's four points, but I will not apply them to leadership, necessarily, but rather to our wilderness walk toward the Kingdom of God. Fortunately, you have a hand up on any business leader, because Jesus has blazed the trail ahead for us. God, in His wisdom, makes us navigate over similar terrain to what Jesus had to go over to build within us the same character as His Son has. My question today is, "Are we learning to navigate through this life like Jesus Christ, the Forerunner?"

We will begin in Hebrews, which opens with an explanation of Christ's superiority. There is nothing and no one like Jesus Christ. He is the One who has always been with the Father. He is the One who came as a human being and sacrificed Himself on our behalf, who was raised from the dead into heaven, and now sits at the right hand of the Father, with all power of the universe at His command. He sustains it all even now. He is greater than angels; He is greater than anything of which we can think.

Paul says,

Hebrews 2:9-13 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels [with power and majesty, but was made a man], for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one [united], for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren [all going toward the same goal], saying: "I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You." And again: "I will put My trust in Him." And again: "Here am I and the children whom God has given Me."

We are all together in this, Jesus Christ and us. He is leading us. He is the author, the Trailblazer, and the Forerunner of our salvation. He is the glorious leader. He has already done it. Now He is there, in heaven, for us as we go through the trek that He went through.

Hebrews 2:14-18 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

This works in several ways. First of all, God sent His Son in the guise of human flesh and perfected Him through human suffering so that He could be a fitting sacrifice for sin. Secondly, His humanity also established a pattern or model of the way that any human whom God calls can arrive at the same destination as Jesus did. Following that model and pattern, we can become born-again, glorified sons and daughters of God the Father, through Jesus Christ. Thirdly, His humanity enabled Him to sympathize with our weaknesses and help us along the way as only One who has made the trek Himself could do. Thus, in His humanity, He was a fitting sacrifice; He established a pattern and model for us; and He can sympathize with our weaknesses and give us help in our many times of need.

We can take great encouragement from this passage. He has already done the heavy lifting—all of it. Our part in the whole process, then, even though we might protest, is actually relatively easy. We might think that our life is so hard. "Oh! My life is so hard! I have to work eight hours a day, then come home to do the housework. It is such a terrible life." It really is not. Our lives, because of what Jesus Christ has done, are pretty easy in comparison.

Has any of you been crucified lately? Has any of you been personally tempted by the devil lately? Has any of you had to rebuke your chief disciple lately? Think about the things that Jesus Christ had to do. Has any of you had to walk around for three and a half years with no place to lay your head? I do not think so. We live in pretty posh surroundings in comparison to them at that time.

The second thing we can take encouragement from Him in is that we can always refer to and mimic His example. We know that if we do that, there is no way we can go wrong. It is always there. We can always read the book and find out how He approached a certain circumstance. Obviously, the things that He did were in a different environment, a different milieu, a different time and place, but the principles apply. How He approached anything can be figured out by what is in the book. We know that if He did it that way, we can follow it and be successful.

The third thing in which we can take encouragement is that should we falter and stumble, wander off the trail in one way or another, He is always available to throw us a lifeline and to haul us back to where we need to be. That is what it says there in the last few verses of that chapter, that He is able to be there to aid us when we need Him.

With these wonderful assurances behind us, with this great confidence that this gives us, we

can eagerly set out on our spiritual expedition to the Kingdom of God. There should be nothing to hold us back.

I want to give you those four points. First, I will give you John Maxwell's points that he gives under his fourth law of leadership, the Law of Navigation. Then, I will explain a bit about what Amundsen and Scott did to help illustrate the point. Finally, I will give the spiritual explanation of it.

The first Law of Navigation is, "Navigators draw upon past experiences."

Amundsen certainly did this, while Scott did not. Amundsen did a great deal of exploring in cold climates. As a matter of fact, he went through the Northwest Passage in either 1909 or 1910. He was an experienced person, used to this kind of adventuring. He had done a great deal of living and exploring Greenland and northern Canada, and he put the lessons he learned on those adventures to good use in Antarctica.

The Inuit, with whom he had good relations, taught him not only the use of sled dogs but also how to construct warm fur garments. However, the British under Scott used wool, and all suffered from frostbite. The Inuit taught Amundsen to use several loose layers of thinner clothing under the warmer fur garment to help prevent sweating. Sweating in the arctic regions can kill you, because it causes dehydration. Even though there is ice and snow—frozen water—all around you, those areas of the world are very dry. They are arid deserts in many ways. The Inuit idea of preventing perspiration has much merit.

A local coffee shop posed a question for which the right answer would earn a small discount on one's purchase. The question was, "What is the largest desert in the world?" The answer is Antarctica.

Another thing they taught him was to consume dried or lightly cooked local game meats. If you dry it, there is no need to cook it at all, and there is very little loss of nutrition. If you do cook it, and overcook it, you lose some nutrition and make it difficult to digest.

Scott seemed to have learned nothing from his British naval experience. It is thought that when the British landed on the coast of Antarctica, they were already beginning to suffer from scurvy, a disease caused by a lack of vitamin C. The British were known far and wide for having solved this problem by putting fresh fruits and vegetables on their ships. That is why they are called "Limeys": because of their use of citrus to ward off scurvy. Limes are a good source of vitamin C.

The British did eat the local wildlife, but they did not like the fishy taste of the seal or penguins and cooked it until the fishy taste was gone. This means they overcooked it, and it caused them problems in terms of nutrition and digestion.

Something else that the British did that was not good was eat hardtack—biscuits—made of unenriched white flour and sodium bicarbonate, which provided no nutrition. The sodium bicarbonate gave them only sodium, and the white flour was just empty starch. Even the pemmican—pounded, dried beef put into a cake with the tallow—contained only that: beef and fat. Amundsen's recipe for pemmican, on the other hand, contained oats and peas, which also provided other vitamins, minerals, and roughage (which was quite necessary; otherwise they would get all bound up).

Christians, as Amundsen did, must learn from experience and apply the lessons to their journey. We tend to be forward-looking people, because our goal and hope is in the resurrection into the Kingdom of God; and since the resurrection—the Kingdom of God, the establishment of God's Kingdom—is still future, we tend to have everything looking in that direction. We tend to look a long way off. We talk about the faith chapter in Hebrews that mentions that Abraham looked for a city in the future. If our journey were simply linear—that is, we are all moving toward a certain time or place—then we could simply fix our gaze on that finish line and stride purposely toward it, not needing to care about what happened in the past. We could just look and say, "That is where we need to go," and go there.

However, our spiritual journey is far more comprehensive than just walking in a straight line toward the Kingdom of God. God's Kingdom is also a state of righteous character. It is a state of spiritual perfection, of grace, and of holiness that encompasses our whole life and being. To put it another way, the Kingdom of God is a real government to be established on the earth when Jesus Christ returns—but our goal is to also be transformed into the character image of Jesus Christ. Thus, the Kingdom of God is not only a time and place, but it is also a state of being.

Matthew 6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

What did Jesus say here? He gives us a two-part goal: Seek the Kingdom of God, and seek His righteousness. It is not only a time and a place: it is also the perfection of character that is the reflection and image of Jesus Christ. There is a future aspect to the Kingdom of God, and we all say, "Yeah! Let's all try to make it to the Kingdom of God!"—but there is also the very present aspect of the Kingdom of God about which we have to be concerned.

Colossians 1:13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed [translated] us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.

We have been already translated into that Kingdom.

Philippians 3:20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

That is right now! There is a present aspect to the Kingdom of God that we have to strive to fit into and reflect, and there is also that future aspect, as well. What we do now—in the present—is very important. For us, God's Kingdom both is and will be. This makes our physical lives very important. As well as we can, we have to reflect the high standards of God's Kingdom right now, because now, as we are told,

II Corinthians 6:2 For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

It is our day of salvation!

I Peter 4:17 For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?

Now is when we have got to make everything work. Now we have to make the journey. The Kingdom of God is the goal, but the Kingdom of God goes with us the whole way also, because it should be in us.

I know that sounds like Protestant Christianity, but there is a very real aspect to it. It is not the fullness of the Kingdom of God that is in us just now. The fullness of the Kingdom of God is a future reality. However, we have been translated into that Kingdom already, and we have to reflect it outwardly and do what we can with God's help to be all that we can be spiritually, as Jesus Christ is.

We cannot just look to the future; we have to be making the most of the present, and we do that by applying lessons learned from our past experiences. A Christian's life is 360—now, past, and future. We cannot let any of them fall too far into the background because we would lose our way.

Here is a positive example of looking to the past for help and guidance:

Hebrews 10:32-35 But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.

Paul draws their minds back to a time in the past—who knows how long past; maybe a few years, maybe a few decades—when they had been living lives of righteousness and faith, and had gladly sacrificed and done what they could to help the church, the apostle, and whoever else. As he said, they "joyfully accepted" the tribulations through which they went, because they knew that this was part of the path to the Kingdom of God. They once were faithful, but they had now slipped from their high-water mark to the point that they were in danger of neglecting their salvation altogether, as it says in chapter 2: "Why do you neglect so great salvation?" They were getting to the point that, as shown at the end of chapter 5, they needed the elementary instructions again. Martin Collins talked about this in the sermonette that these things can be lost if we do not work on them and keep them growing. Paul points backward to a time when they had been a good example to others and among themselves, and he tells them to get back to that point.

We could also go to Revelation 2 and the letter to the church at Ephesus, in which Jesus tells them to return to their first works. "You have lost your first love. Go back to that former good example. Remember it. Get that feeling back. Get that belief back. Do the same things." They could return to it. They had done it before; they could do it again.

A different example:

I Corinthians 11:20-22 Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you.

Then, Paul goes on and corrects them and tells them, "This is the way that you need to be doing it next time. Do not let me hear again that you had this riotous party before taking the Passover. That is not the way that it is done." He provides a bad example from their past and says, "Do not repeat this. This other way is the way that it is done."

A Christian will succeed at times, and he will fail at other times. The bottom line, though, is that he must always learn the lessons that either experience—good or bad—teaches and put them to good use. You cannot just forget it; you need to think it through to extract whatever lessons there might be, and then you can put it behind you. Whatever the experience is, we have to analyze it to get the lesson from it.

I Corinthians 10:6-12 Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters, as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

Not only do we have our own personal positive and negative examples from which to learn, but we also have the positive and negative examples of others. God made sure that these were recorded for us so that we could learn from them. They are to give us added instruction, correction, and hope.

Romans 15:4 For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

These things are in the Bible for us to learn from. They are not just a bunch of bedtime stories; they are actual experiences of actual men and women who lived and died by these decisions and events through which they went, and we are to take their lessons and learn from them. We can learn valuable lessons from the examples of the heroes or zeroes of faith. A great deal of successful Christian navigation towards the Kingdom involves applying principles learned by experience, whether ours or theirs.

The second point of the Law of Navigation is, "Navigators examine the conditions before they make commitments."

Amundsen and Scott differed in this point also. Unfortunately, Scott makes the bad example. While both of them had experience in frigid climates, Amundsen considered not only the obvious conditions, but also the effects that those conditions would have on the men, animals, supplies, and equipment. He did not just take the temperature out there and say, "Oh, it is going to be cold." He asked himself, "How is the extreme cold going to affect the animals, the men, the machinery, the fuel, or the food?"

For instance, beyond accounting for the nutritional needs of the men and the dogs, Amundsen realized that the brutal temperatures, the wind, and the aridity of the region would sap a person's or animal's strength very quickly. It was just too cold, too dry, and too windy. What he did was make a hard and fast rule: Six-hour maximum work days for both men and animals. No matter how close the race to the Pole would get, they could only work six hours in any twenty-four-hour period. He said, "Men and animals need, in these conditions, the eighteen hours remaining in the day just to recover." Thus, they had only six-hour days in those conditions. Working the dogs or men any longer than that would court disaster. He stuck to his rules.

Conversely, Scott decided to rely on technology. He was going to rely on his motorized sledges and his ponies. Of course, he wanted his men to pull these sledges, as well. Both these choices were seriously flawed due to the extreme cold. Evidently, Scott never imagined, never tried to foresee what would happen to these ponies and men in their exhaustion and the sledges in this brutal cold. The sledges' motors froze within a few days of the start of their journey. When they got to the coast of Antarctica and they started sending out teams to put supply depots inland at various places so that they could re-supply as they went along. However, the motors froze as they were setting these depots up, and Scott never actually took them with him on the trip, as far as I can find out. What good is taking a motorized sledge if the motor cannot turn over? The motors are not going to work.

They had to use the ponies and the men for pulling these sledges—but upon reaching the mountains, the ponies died. They could not take the stress. It was too cold, too rugged and there was not enough nutrition. They died. (Then the British ate them, by the way. That is how bad things became.) The men, then, were forced for the remainder of the journey to haul the two-hundred-pound sledges themselves, harnessed like animals in front of the things.

In addition, Scott did not realize that the leather seals that he used on his fuel cans quickly deteriorated in the cold, dry air, and the fuel evaporated. They did not use this fuel only for

their motors; actually, by the time that they started, they did not use the fuel for their motors at all. They used the fuel for fire—for warmth, for melting snow, for cooking their meals. Then they found that because of these leather seals—these gaskets that they used on their bottles or cans—a quarter to a third of their fuel evaporated. On the return trip, they ran out of fuel and died. They actually probably died of dehydration as well as starvation; they could not melt snow for drinking water. Obviously, this was a major factor in their demise.

This brings up another aspect of our Christian walk:

Luke 14:26-33 "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it—lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple."

The big one I want us to take out of this is that we must count the cost. We must be able to look out there and figure out what it is going to take. Are we able to finish?

This is not something that we only do just before our baptism. It is required before baptism so that we have an inkling, at least, of what we are getting into, but we must also do it on a regular basis after we are baptized. We must continue to count the cost. Things change. Events change. We change. Are we still able to finish the job?

If we do this often enough, it becomes a prod on us, and we make sure that we are able to finish the job. We need to take stock of conditions on a regular basis—conditions in the world, in the church, and, most importantly, in our own personal lives. We have to stop every once in a while, take a look around, see where things lie, and make some evaluations. Where are things going? What am I doing? What do I have as resources? Can I make these resources last? Can I build my resources? What will it take for me to build my resources? Do I need to change something so that I can begin to build my resources? Is something holding me back?

I could go on, and on with questions like this. Are we prepared, not to just finish this course, but are we even prepared to meet the next challenge that will surely pop up? It is a given that, as a Christian, we are going to have trials. Have we taken stock of our ability to meet them?

II Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.

The most important condition to check before we make any additional commitments is our own spiritual devotion. How faithful are we? How dedicated are we? How devoted to this way of life are we? Have we slacked off? Are we drifting back into the world? Are we continuing to overcome our faults? Are we growing in grace and knowledge and righteousness? Are we producing good fruit when serving others? Are we physically and spiritually prepared to face the worsening times ahead, because we know it is only going to get worse?

In Mark's version of the Olivet Prophecy, he says,

Mark 13:32-37 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning—lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!"

This is being aware, taking stock. Jesus stresses being mindful, being aware, watching, and praying. This means being "up to snuff" on current and near-future conditions. We have to be aware of what is going on in society. We have to be aware of what is going on in the church. We have to have our sensors fully activated to understand what is going on, to catch the trends, to see where things are drifting, to see where things are falling rapidly down the tubes. If we have our eyes closed, if we are sleeping, we are going to miss all that. How much do you miss when you go to sleep and wake up six, seven, or eight hours later and get up and turn on the news? A lot of things happened overnight while you were sleeping.

You do not want to be like the foolish virgins who went to sleep. You want to be like the wise ones who had enough oil and tried to stay awake and were trying to be ready for the coming of the Bridegroom. It is all part of counting the cost, examining ourselves, and being aware of conditions; being able to zig when God zigs and zag when God zags, because the most important thing that we need to be aware of is what God is doing. You are not going to be on the same page as He is if you fall asleep.

A Christian's life is lived with eyes wide open. Remember the sermon series I gave on Balaam? That was one of the things that happened when God's spirit came upon him. His eyes were opened, and He began to see things as they really were. This is not just seeing what is going on, because anybody can see what is going on, but also realizing what it means and where it is headed. That is where God's Spirit comes into play: He gives us the ability to see where everything is moving. We may not get it completely right, but if we are living, watching, heeding, counting the cost, examining ourselves, we will be on the same page, and we will be pretty close.

That, with Christ's help, we will be all we need to be: close. We should be perfect, but we are

human. We just need to be as close to the mark as we can, and we can do that by staying close to God in a very intimate relationship with Him.

A Christian not only has to chart as direct a course to the Kingdom of God as possible, but he also has to be aware and ready to navigate around potential disasters as he sees them develop. It is hoped that he will see them far enough in the distance to avoid them or prepare for them.

The third Law of Navigation is, "Navigators listen to what others have to say."

Amundsen was a rather prickly and intolerant leader, but he did listen to advice when it was presented to him properly. Remember the deteriorating leather seals for their full containers with which Scott had such a problem? The Norwegians did not have this problem. Amundsen did not have this problem because he accepted an innovation from one of his team members. This team member knew from past experiences that using a leather seal would allow evaporation. What he did was devise a bung that hermetically sealed the container. I do not recall the material used, but it sealed the containers, which prevented evaporation from occurring, and saved their lives.

Scott, a product of his military background—hierarchy and discipline—was rather set in his ways. He had commanded other scientific expeditions in the past, and, evidently, there was no give in his methods and his means. He was not open to innovation or other people's advice. He could not be talked out of his intentions to use the heavy sledges. In fact, he argued that he always had planned to have his men haul them, in order to conserve the fuel. He was going to take them anyway, although they weighed 200 pounds plus all the supplies and equipment strapped on them. He felt that having the men haul them was more noble and less cruel than using the animals. His intransigence on this point played a big role in dooming his party. When you combine the weight of the sledge, the evaporation of their fuel, and the weariness that it caused the men while pulling them, it was a disaster.

Luke 6:27-28 "But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you."

Luke 8:8 "But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold." When He had said these things He cried, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

Luke 8:18 "Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him."

Luke 8:21 But He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it."

Luke 9:35 And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!"

Luke 10:23-24 Then He turned to His disciples and said privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see; for I tell you that

many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it."

Luke 11:28 But He said, "More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

Luke 11:31 "The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here."

Luke 14:35 "It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

Luke 16:31 "But he said to him, `If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'"

Luke 18:6 Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said."

I am sure you got the theme of these verses. "Listen!" "Hear!" "Take in what I tell you and do it!" This is just a small sampling, from one book, of the many times that Jesus exhorts us to hear or listen to Him or one of the prophets. Taking good, sound, faithful advice is so important, because it helps us to avoid pitfalls and mistakes that could doom us.

Here is something from the wisdom chapter of Proverbs:

Proverbs 2:1-22 My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, so that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding; He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly; He guards the paths of justice, and preserves the way of His saints. Then you will understand righteousness and justice, equity and every good path. When wisdom enters your heart, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul, discretion will preserve you; understanding will keep you, to deliver you from the way of evil, from the man who speaks perverse things, from those who leave the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness; who rejoice in doing evil, and delight in the perversity of the wicked; whose ways are crooked, and who are devious in their paths; to deliver you from the immoral woman, from the seductress who flatters with her words, who forsakes the companion of her youth, and forgets the covenant of her God. For her house leads down to death, and her paths to the dead; none who go to

her return, nor do they regain the paths of life—so you may walk in the way of goodness, and keep to the paths of righteousness. For the upright will dwell in the land, and the blameless will remain in it; but the wicked will be cut off from the earth, and the unfaithful will be uprooted from it.

This needs no comment whatsoever. Just listen to God's instruction. Put it into practice, and it will guide and protect us all the way to the Kingdom of God.

I want to add one more idea to this.

Titus 2:1-10 But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things—that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed. Likewise exhort the young men to be sober-minded, in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you. Exhort bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back, not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.

II Timothy 2:2 And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

The ministry has been set in the church of God to teach and to equip the called for service, for unity in the faith, and growth into the image of Christ (Ephesians 4). We ministers give advice and exhortation along these lines every Sabbath. That is our job. That is what we are supposed to do: teach, equip, and help you make ready for what is coming.

Notice, however, that the instruction is not to stop there. Those who hear and learn are supposed to pass it on. It says there in Titus 2 that the older women are supposed to teach the younger women. That was just one example that he pulled out of his hat. He also wants the older men to teach the younger men. Also, of course, as Paul said here, he wanted Timothy to teach men who were faithful so that they could go out and preach it elsewhere, whether in that church or other churches of God. The instruction is not just for us. It is for the next generation; it is for others who come into our fellowship; it is for anyone, because it does not stop with just teaching.

It says that we are to adorn the doctrine of God. What does that mean? It means that we are

supposed to make God's way look beautiful to anyone who sees us. When we walk and we talk and we do whatever we do, others will see us, and they will see God reflected in us. That is how we adorn God's way. It is beautiful in its own right; however, when it is properly done, it provides an incredible witness and teaching vehicle.

A successful Christian navigator, then, is not to despise instruction, thinking that he knows it all already, but his ears are open to sound advice that will make the way smoother to the Kingdom of God for himself and those who come after him, and/or meet him.

Point four of the Law of Navigation: "Navigators make sure that their conclusions represent both faith and fact."

Amundsen wrote in his journal, "My plans made the Pole the first objective." That was burned into his mind. He was going to make it to the pole, and he was going to be the first one to do so. He had this drive to be the first—but he was not so shortsighted that he thought only of reaching the pole. Remember, the word *plans* is in there. He also realized that reaching the pole was only half of the journey. He had to get back to civilization, too. What good would be reaching the pole if one does not survive the return trip? He was a glory-seeker. He did want the adulation that would come for being the first one there. He wanted his name in the history books. He wanted to enjoy it a little bit. When he decided he wanted to be the first one to reach the South Pole, he planned not only the pole, but also base camp beyond the pole.

By using his dog team, he spent the early parts of 1911 running supplies southward deep into the Antarctic to set up and mark depots to sustain his party along the way. He put them so many miles out and then went so many more miles out again to set up another depot. He did this several times, so that they would not have to carry so much and so that once they reached the pole, they could come back along the same route and have supplies for their return trip.

Another thing that he did was to chart a new and more efficient route to get there. (We cannot do that in our journey because Jesus Christ went the most efficient route.) It was smart on his part that he looked at the route and said, "The ways that these other guys are going is not efficient enough. It is not straight enough. It is too difficult. I am going to find a different way that gets us there faster and without as much exertion," and he did.

You might say that he had faith that he would reach the pole, but he also understood the harsh realities of the Antarctic. He had both faith and fact, and he did not allow the facts of the conditions there to dissuade him but to make him work to make sure that he would accomplish that in which his faith was.

Scott was not so realistic. Not only did he not set up supply depots as far south as the Norwegians did, but he also failed to mark them plainly enough so that he could even find them on their trek. They wasted a lot of hours just trying to find their depots, which were almost invisible on the white snow and ice. In addition, he had originally planned a four-man crew to strike out for the pole, but at the last minute, he included a fifth man, straining the already meager supplies. He may have believed in his ability to succeed in his quest and the storied ability of the British to shoulder hardship, but he lacked a realistic understanding of the Antarctic's extremes. He had faith, but did not have facts. You need both.

The Protestant approach to Christianity is heavy on faith and belief but very short on facts and reality. Belief is wonderful and is absolutely necessary to salvation. However, the reality is that little or no character is built by faith alone. It must be coupled with works—actual, real, concrete activities. We do not live in a vacuum. When we are called, when we say that we believe and have faith in Jesus Christ and we are justified, life does not end there. Life goes on. We can continue to believe, but if we do not act, grow, or work, what good are we? We would be like the one who had his talent given to him and then hid it in the dirt. He did not do anything with it. He needed to work. He needed to give Christ something that He could see, some evidence that he had done something with the faith that he had been given.

It is just as true in the Christian journey to the Kingdom of God as it is in any endeavor. If we want to go to the store, believing that we will get there does not make it happen. We have to get up off our duff and walk or drive to that store. That is how it works. We cannot wish ourselves to the store. We have to do something to achieve any goal; it does not matter what it is. You can believe that you can reach any goal, but if you do not get up and move toward it, it will not happen. There has to be work. There has to be activity. There has to be practical, real, concrete movement toward that goal.

This, now, is the famous controversial passage about faith and works:

James 2:14-19 What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!

Just believing gets you only to the level of demons, I guess.

James 2:20-21 But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?

Did that not prove that Abraham was an upright righteous man who would follow Him in whatever He said?

James 2:22-23 Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works his faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God.

Faith and works shows righteousness, which means that we are God's friends too. The relationship is there, because you cannot build true faith by works without that relationship with God. Thus, it proves our relationship as well.

James 2:24-26 You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

James explains in his imitable way that faith and works are a team. They must be done in tandem to produce righteousness. They must be used like two oxen harnessed to an old-time plow, to plow a field of righteousness. Faith alone is lifeless, James says, and accomplishes nothing profitable; but when it is linked—harnessed—with works, faith produces tangible proof of growth and proof of the relationship with God. In our example of our two men striking out for the South Pole, Amundsen had faith with works, while Scott, unfortunately, lacked the necessary works to complete his mission.

Acts 6:8-10 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke.

Acts 10:34 Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him. The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all—that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree."

Notice that their faith was manifested by the things that they did. Modern Christianity says that a Christian is A, B, or C. God's word declares, however, that a Christian does X, Y, or Z. Christianity is something that you do and something that you are. Christianity is a religion that works. It takes in the principles, and they come out as actions, as words, as something we can hold onto, as something that can be built. A successful Christian navigator through life combines firm, unyielding belief with dedicated service and vigorous spiritual productivity through overcoming and growth.

It is unfortunate that Amundsen's achievement, as spectacular as it was, was overshadowed at

the time by the tragedy of the Scott party's demise. Their deaths overwhelmed the press to the point that Amundsen was almost forgotten. Now, though, he is credited and lauded with having organized and led an almost flawless and efficient expedition to the South Pole. He was not just the man at the helm, but he was also a trustworthy navigator.

We will finish in Matthew today:

Matthew 7:13-14 "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

God has called us to learn to navigate the narrow, difficult way—but we do have what it takes.