DRIFTING

SPEECH FOR

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Have you ever just closed your eyes and surrendered to the atmospheric current? Have you ever been lulled into a sense that you’re floating weightlessly…a state in which you seemingly close your eyes and for a moment, a minute, an hour or more, you don’t care where you wind up, or what might happen in your absence, or what kind of danger may lie ahead? You just… want… to … **detach**. We’ve all done it. We’ve heard songs about it and for those of us old enough to remember, we know “When this old world starts getting me down… all my cares just **drift** right into space….” It sounds like fun in a song, but few of us live “Up On the Roof” and all of us know deep down inside what it means to be grounded and to maintain our vigilance in our faith. It’s tempting to drift… it’s intoxicating to just do whatever you want to do with no cares or responsibilities or accountability, but it’s not real life. In reality, we live in a community made up of family, friends, neighbors, and most of all, our faith and our God.

Saint Augustine said, “Faith is to believe what you do not see; the reward of this faith is to see what you believe.” Many of us started out in our early years knowing the importance of going to church studying the Bible, and finding strength in its teachings, in relationship to one another, and in God, but it seems that lately there has been a slow yet increasingly apparent force that causes our men to drift from the church. Why is that? To have faith is to **find strength from within** and to resist the forces that conspire to make you less than who you really are. Honoring that strength in your faith is not a one shot deal. It’s a constant, renewable, genuine commitment to finding your way with God.

To drift is to surrender; to give up a conscious awareness. In another context, Howard Schultz, the well known businessman and CEO, said, ‘My biggest concern is that America is **drifting towards mediocrity** and that people don’t realize… they don’t recognize the sense of urgency and the fact that I don’t think this is a crisis anymore. I think it’s an **emergency**.” The act of drifting creates the bi-product known as **complacency**. The more we detach, the more we lose the ability to care for what matters in life and that is connection. Sometimes we don’t realize what’s going, what is at stake, and what is at risk of being lost until it’s **almost too late**.

(**Do you want to cite the sermon? If not, we can adjust this wording**). In his sermon on the same subject, “A Warning about Drifting,” Dr. Charles Stanley cautions us of what might happen if we’re allowed to drift too long or too far, especially from our faith. He alerts us to pay attention to what we are doing as we think we’re calmly transitioning to another place while free of obligations and cares… He reminds us that in the process we’ve “Drifted from the foundations that made us the greatest nation on earth.” We are made aware that
“Drifting is dangerous…it says, ‘I don’t care. I’m not in control.’” We may think we want to give up our God given power but think about it… **DO WE**? It’s a slippery slope from carefree drifting to abandoning principles and causes, and integrity to finding ourselves **WITHOUT**…. Without **faith**, without **hope**, without resources, and **without a PLAN**.

Why are men in particular drifting from churches? One aspect on which I think we can all agree is that as life goes on, it seems to get more and more complicated. It could be a function of us getting older and maturing, stepping into the role of head of the house or caregiver, or it could be what happens to us because of the conditions and the times in which we live. Let’s face it… the heat is on. There is more pressure in every aspect of life. It’s more expensive to function. People are working harder and longer hours while earning less money with less time to devote to nurturing their souls and their faith. Basic costs of living are going through the roof and even though we are more connected than ever before, in many cases we are **OVER-CONNECTED** because of technology. Each one of us has the ability to **KNOW TOO MUCH**. We are bombarded every minute of the day with information and interruptions. Our ability to concentrate and focus has been affected and our desires to keep in contact with what we know will nurture us becomes increasingly challenging. Come to think of it, as I am saying this to you, I realize that men are over-connected **except where it counts**… and that is right here in church finding their own relationships to God!! (**You can say that with a lot of enthusiasm and wait for the laugh**). I can see that it **DOES** seem funny at first, but it’s really not. And the pressure and the tension and the constant noise and input pushes us to drift…. away from the things and conditions and connections that actually **give** us strength and purpose in life, and that is each other, the church, and our own precious connections to God.

Perhaps some of us wish we could go back to a simpler way of life. …If only we were able to grab the clock and turn back time… but we can’t. And even when we see ourselves drifting as individuals… separating from family and friends… becoming isolated from our communities, we have to somehow find the courage and commitment to resist. In Hebrews 2:1-4, “**We must pay the most careful attention**, therefore, to what we have heard, **so that we do not drift away**.” God is our anchor. He keeps us grounded and when needed, we turn to His wisdom for guidance and courage. Honestly, ask yourself, “What do we gain by drifting?” When you think of it, paying attention is the **opposite** of drifting. We can’t drift if we are grounded in awareness and the desire to be accountable, yet so many men resist this.

The act of drifting, no matter how distracting or destructive it ultimately might be, can be found in every aspect of life. It tempts us. It lures us into a false desire for inaction and complacency. It numbs us. It plays with our minds and it inhibits our self-expression. We are surrounded by the “drifting drug” everywhere we look. Drifting forces us to say, “I don’t care.” To drift is an excuse to surrender your power and your voice to laziness, inaction, and possible self-destruction.

Crises will come… and they will possibly be big, demanding, and maybe even overwhelming. We’ve seen it happen with natural disasters. We have felt the urge to drift when we get into financial problems. We can certainly understand the necessity to want to run away… to drift… when political and civic issues threaten to attack our families, friends, and our communities. But running and hiding and drifting are **NOT** the answers. When times are challenging, when circumstances threaten our foundations, when temptations lure us to distraction… **THAT’s** the time to do the exact opposite of drifting… **THAT** is when we must find the strength to connect to one another, honor our fellowship and celebrate the collective spirit of our community. When all else fails, we have ourselves, our faith, and each other.

Once in a while we all need a breather but even in times of rest we need to remain conscious and clear about some basic facts- drifting is easy, but the longer you do it the closer you may come to “the rapids.” Everything we do is learned behavior and all take practice and repetition. It is just as ingrained in us to do the good, right, fulfilling option as it is to check out and drift. We can drift partially and we can find ourselves completely lost at sea. We may also find that we can be present, aware and engaged at work or with some temptations, but are we as present with our families, and church communities? What would it take for you to shift your perspective and discover that a life adrift is not fulfilling?

The first step is to be willing to wake up and be aware. Start asking yourself, “Do I want to wake up? Does it even matter if I want to, do I know that I must wake up in order to live a life of faith and purpose?” I want to say here that by waking up, I do not mean that each man in this room has to commit himself to saving the world. What I mean is that I am inviting each one of you to be observant, engaged, interested and dedicated to living a Godly life with the intention to leave this world in better shape than when you got here. So many of us stray from our natural need for the healing and supportive word of God. So many resist the importance of prayer and accepting the presence of God in every corner of our lives. You **KNOW** He is there… all over the place… **RIGHT**? You’ve heard the expression, “Resistance is futile?” It’s true…. if you are sitting in this room you know what it means to be a person of faith. You know the power of prayer and you also know… and you don’t have to declare anything out loud… but you **KNOW** what it means to have God present in your life. I’m also pretty sure that each one of you can pick out a time when a miracle happened in your life. It might have even been a small one, but still a miracle. That didn’t happen when you were drifting. That happened because you demonstrated… even privately, that you **BELIEVE**. Believing and drifting do not coexist easily. Pick **one**. I choose life, community, faith, and fellowship. How about you?

As I said earlier, we are all being attacked from all sides with real reasons to be stressed, to be overwhelmed, and to want to be lazy and just “check out.” But the truth is that times like these are the **BEST** times to come back to the church and all it holds for you. Church is not called a “sanctuary” for nothing. The definition of a sanctuary is “a sacred or holy place.” It also means “a place where someone can seek refuge.” Refuge means shelter or protection from danger or trouble. Make no mistake… Drift long enough and you **WILL** find trouble!! (**Say that with exaggeration and wait for the laugh**).

I invite you to find it within to return to your Godly roots. Remember what it feels like to experience submission to a higher power… **THE** higher power. Dr. Stanley suggests that we admit we are drifting. Think about what you are doing. Be aware of your desire for isolation and take notes. Really. Remember- we may not know what our will is, but we must trust God to steer us until we get where we need to go. We can all be senior to the pull that tries to take us away from the essence of what feeds our souls. With desire and the intention, we can grow this ministry in numbers and in spirit. There is strength in numbers and the more men that come back to our fellowship, the more powerful our bond will feel. Being a part of this ministry requires discipline and commitment, but with that comes a feeling that we belong together in faith and fellowship.

Remember, as wise men have said before us, “Drift towards God’s love. That will never change. It’s something you can count on, but you have to be willing to work to have that constancy in your life. God will steer you where you need to go, but you must be a willing, responsible, and open to receiving His blessings.

In closing, I will leave you with this thought. While men have drifted from the church to “get away,” has anyone realized that God, in his wisdom, created the act of drifting so that they can come back? We won’t know light if we have not seen the darkness to help us distinguish. We won’t appreciate the blessings in life if we haven’t suffered and lost, and we certainly would not appreciate the joy of returning to the church if we haven’t drifted… even a little. Spread the word… it’s time to come back to experience a connection like no other. It is possible to be real men of strength, integrity, discipline, and **FAITH**. We are here with open arms. Thank you!