

Forks in the Road

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Faced with a choice. Forced to make a decision. Approaching a fork in the road. Should I go this way, or that one? If I start walking that way, will I regret it when it's too late to change course? If I take the other one, will I be comfortable without ever getting what I truly want? What if I'm wrong? What if I'm being tested? What if making that choice is what people who don't know any better would do, and I end up with a chaotic circumstance of endless pain and suffering? What if I only get one chance to choose, and never get to choose again?

Welcome, wanderer. Keep on wandering. Do not be afraid. Do not turn around and give up on your search. When you feel yourself approaching a fork in the road, remember this phrase:

"There are many paths up the mountain, but the summit always looks the same. Fear not, for there are no forks in the road".

Do you dislike forks in the road? I dislike them too.

I think we dislike them because we fear that we will end up regretting our choice. We fear that someday, we will look back, think of what might have been, and realize that we made the wrong move. Maybe we will ruin our entire lives by choosing this path over the other. Maybe, on our death beds, we will think of what might have been, and mourn the loss of a life we never had.

So you must be smart, you say, and pick the right path. Every decision you make must be right. But how will you ever know? And how can I help you figure it out?

It would be nice and peaceful to step out of the moment and appreciate the paradox. We hate forks in the road, but whether we realize it or not, we encounter them every waking second of our lives:

Should I get out of bed? Should I go to class? Should I call in sick? Eggs or pancakes? Sausage or bacon? Juice or milk? Sociology or Psychology? Business or engineering? Friend's birthday party or crush's night out at the club? Los Angeles or New York? "Sleepless in Seattle" or "You've got Mail"? Stay in the relationship or break up? 110 or 405?

We wander through 99% of them without thinking of the consequences. These forks might as well be invisible. Whether our decision was right or wrong is inconsequential, for we pretend that they don't exist. Some of these forks have major implications and significantly alter the course of our lives. They lead to unwanted destinations that we spend decades complaining over and we still leave them up to the subconscious mind.

We forget that we want to be healthier. We forget that we want a better job. We forget that we have dreams and goals and aspirations to go after without letting fear keep us where we are. We decide to give up on improving ourselves, facing our fears, and go after what we really want.

Soon after we bury the consequences of those decisions in the depths of our subconscious, we spend two hours trying to decide what we are going to do on a Saturday evening. Then we go to work refusing to question whether our career choices actually represent our true desires. Then we cuddle with our significant other and refuse to question if our relationship actually makes us happy. We walked through these forks without thinking about the pain that they would cause us, or the time that we're wasting while we choose not to think about their implications on the course of our lives.

Then we approach the dreaded "forks in the road". These are the forks that we torture ourselves over. These paths do not represent easily recognizable outcomes. We have no idea which is "good" and which is "bad". We have no clue which is "right" and which is "wrong".

Is your fork in the road real? Does it reside in an imaginary point in the future? Are you dreading a fork in the road that you're secretly hoping for?

There are aspects of both that attract us, and aspects of both that scare us. The problem is that once the choice is made, it will be irreversible, and we will be forced to live with the consequences forever.

And the clock starts ticking. And the moment will arrive. Or will it?

Are you dreading a fork in the road that you're secretly hoping for?

Are you torturing yourself over which college you will go to before the first acceptance letter arrives? Are you losing sleep over which job you'll take before the first interview even takes place? Are you walking in circles over which person you should marry before the first date even happens?

It's very likely that one of those paths will close up before you even get to it. You never now, you might only receive one acceptance letter, or one job offer, or one request for a second date. There might be no fork in the road to obsess over. There might be no choice to make at all.

Maybe none of those options materialize into a path. Maybe change will not happen like you expect it to. You don't know any of those things – yet you still torture yourself. And so, I ask again:

Are you dreading a fork in the road that you're secretly hoping for?

It's entirely possible that this fork you dread is blinding you from the one that is available to you now, and could lead to the promise land you keep praying for.

All you want is change. But you're scared to provoke it on your own. Thus, you wish that it will be forced upon you by the forces of the universe.

Perhaps this fork represents a choice between radical change and status quo. It's not between two things you want. It's between one you want and one you don't – but the one you want has dangers inherent in pursuing it, and the one you don't is safe and predictable (or so you think).

It's not a choice between two different paths. It's a choice between overcoming your fears and surrendering to them. If you stop to think for a minute, you'll realize that what you want is as clear as sunshine. You're just worried that something will go terribly wrong if you decide to go for it.

Your choices are yours to make, for it is your life that they affect. All I can say is that safe, predictable, and conservative choices are an illusion. In my experience, they are more dangerous than the radical ones.

More importantly, they have ZERO chance of bringing you what you want. At least the radicals have some chance. Maybe it's a tiny one. But at the end of the day, tiny is better than zero, right?

The problem is that sometimes it's not clear which decision is "predictable" and which is "radical". Sometimes it's not even clear which decision represents confronting your fears and which one is comfortable and safe.

Just when it becomes clear which is which, you stop and you think and you realize it could be the other way around.

And if you don't know the forest from the trees, the fear from the bravery, or the radical from the conservative, what good is the advice I just gave you?

You could argue that the "wise choice" would be to go after either of your choices. You could build a story around how this reading is telling you to go after one or the other.

Therefore, my advice is worthless.

At the end of the day, you will have to live with your choice. You will have to own it. You will have to accept the positives and the negatives that come out of it and you will have to make the best of it. You will have to work hard to find your happiness in either of those two worlds.

Making a choice and sticking to it is much more important than choosing correctly. At the end of the day, what is correctly anyway?

There is no "choosing correctly". Don't let yourself think otherwise.

Remember, there will be good and bad in either choice. There will be challenges in both. Just go with your gut.

And don't dwell on deciding which one your "gut" is telling you to go after.

But remember, these forks are rare. We think we're about to reach one every day, but we usually only get them once every three or four years.

For the most part they are fake. We make ourselves think that we will have to make a choice think without having any evidence to show for it.

And we are usually wrong.

So which is it? Is your fork in the road real or fake?

If you have to decide today and live with the consequences tomorrow, it's real. If you have to choose sometime in the next week, month, or year, it's fake. You don't have to think about it now because you don't have to decide now (and it might not even happen).

Still obsessed? Can't get it out of your mind?

Maybe you like to think that you will have to make a choice because you feel restricted, bound, or trapped, and are secretly hoping that you will soon have no choice but to run away from where you currently find yourself.

Maybe you're secretly hoping for the fork in the road that you are dreading.

And if you are, you should take the necessary steps to make it happen.

Don't just hope for the fork in the road, make it happen. Get up, get to work, and don't stop until it becomes a real one.

Ask for others to help you. Do not tell yourself it's impossible. Do not tell yourself it's too late.

Go get your fork in the road.

God is waiting for you to let him answer your prayers.

Life is waiting for you to make it better.

Happiness is waiting for you to grab it.

What are you waiting for?