

# **Down Home: Grace & patience, or a big ol' crash**

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## **Down Home: Grace & patience, or a big ol' crash**

Road construction ought to be labeled Texas' State Business. You know, like the mockingbird is the State Bird and the monarch butterfly is the State Insect.

Almost anywhere you go across the Lone Star State, particularly in the cities and suburbs and along the interstate highways, you confront road construction. We're growing so fast, and our roads are so run-down, we can't build them or repair them fast enough. (Note to parents: If you want your children to be employed all their lives, set them up as paving contractors.)

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All this road building has prompted a singular desire: Just one day before I retire, I will drive all the way to and from work without taking a construction detour or passing a construction cone. When I describe this dream, my spiritually sensitive friends stammer in wonder: "You really do believe in miracles, don't you?" Most lack such faith. "It'll never happen," they predict.

Usually, road construction is simply annoying. We live by the clock, and time is precious. So, creeping through a construction zone at 5 miles per

hour gets on the ol' nerves. Worst of all, unless you can afford a helicopter, you can't do much about it. But wait, and wait, and wait.

Sometimes, however, road construction is plain dangerous. Take the intersection of Interstate 30 and Loop 12 in far west Dallas, or Irving, or Grand Prairie. (Who knows exactly where the city limits are out there?)

Since I-30 between Dallas and Fort Worth used to be a tollway, the interchanges are, in precise engineering terminology, goofy. If you haven't been on them, I can't describe them so you'll understand.

Now, in an effort to widen the interstate and simplify the interchanges, the Texas Department of Transportation is laying miles of rebar and pouring tons of concrete. Meanwhile, the engineer who designed the I-30/Loop 12 interchange has given northbound drivers who want to go to Fort Worth and southbound drivers headed for Dallas about, oh, 17 inches to swap lanes.

Judging by the looks on faces, driving from Loop 12 to I-30 will improve your prayer life. Or make you cuss like a sailor.

Panic sets in when a driver in the next lane—frustrated by crawling through construction delays—hugs the bumper of the car just in front of her. It's the closest normal drivers ever get to NASCAR, only without all that high-tech safety equipment.

Unexpectedly, this insane interchange between two too-busy roads has taught me lessons about the spiritual qualities of grace and patience. Although we're both headed in different directions, we're crossing paths in dangerous territory, and we have more in common than we have apart. If we're both bound-and-determined to get our spot, the results would be disastrous. But when we show respect and allow the other a little room, we swap lanes easily.

This highway interchange is like a lot of other “intersections” of life, even in church: When we respect the image of God in fellow travelers, our journey is safer and more pleasant. Even if it’s still scary.

*-Marv Knox*

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