

Taking the Long Way

(Insights from Exodus 13:17-22)

Pastor Bob Johnson, Grace Point Church, January 29th, 2017

Early Lessons In the Wilderness

1. The longer way doesn't mean _____. (Exodus 13:17-18, Isaiah 55:8-9, Exodus 3:12, Luke 4:1-13)

- **God knows our ...**
(Numbers 14:4, Jeremiah 12:5, 1 Cor. 10:13, Romans 12:3)
- **God desires for us to ...**
(Romans 1:16, John 10:10, Galatians 5:1, Hebrews 12:1)

2. God is faithful to fulfill _____. (Exodus 13:19, Genesis 50:25, Hebrews 11:22, Joshua 24:32)

- **God's promises may ...**
(Hebrews 11:39-40, Galatians 6:9, Hebrews 10:36, Romans 5:2-4)
- **Timing involves a ...**
(Hebrews 12:1-2, 2 Peter 3:9)

3. God will not leave you in the _____. (Exodus 13:20-22, Hebrews 13:5, Psalm 9:10, Isaiah 41:10)

- **God will lead you ...**
(Psalm 119:105, Psalm 32:8-9, Isaiah 42:16)
- **God will lead you ...**
(Romans 8:13-16, John 14:16-17, 26)

How to live in light of these early lessons ...

- **T** Psalm 31:14, 13:5, 20:7, 56:3, Joshua 1:9
- **T** James 4:8, Zech 1:3, Jer 24:7, Lam 3:40-41

This Week's Discussion Guide:

Welcome to "Week 3" of this season of our small groups at GPC! Our small groups are where folks move from 'believers' to 'belongers'. May we receive lots of encouragement and support and deepening friendships in the weeks ahead as we meet together, pray together, study God's Word together and hopefully find other ways to connect outside of our group meetings. Our groups meet for nine months throughout the year. These nine months are broken up in three seasons or quarters. We meet from September - November, take December off, meet again from January - March, and then from April - June. After we take July and August off, we start it all over again :). This quarter our groups will meet for 13 weeks wrapping up the week of April 9th (the week before our Easter Celebration).

Getting Started:

This past Sunday, we looked at the passage where the Israelites finally left Egypt. When they left, instead of heading directly to the land God promised them, God took them on a longer route. We have all intentionally or unintentionally taken the 'longer route' to various places. When did you ever get lost? How long did it take for you to figure out you were lost? How did you get back on track? How long did it take?

One of the insights from last Sunday was 'God knows our current capacity'. God knows what we can handle and what we can't. When have you been in a situation that initially you thought you might be over your head, but it turned out that although stretching, it turned out to be a good thing for you to be stretched in new ways?

Regarding the journey God led the Israelites on, the long way was the better way even though at times, it didn't make sense. Do you have any stories in your own life of this happening?

Digging Deeper:

1. Rather than God providing a pillar of cloud and fire to guide us, He desires to use His Word along with other resources to guide us. Although we have 'access' to God's Word, that doesn't mean we always have 'accuracy' when it comes to understanding God's Word. Too often, passages can be taken out of context and lead us in a wrong direction. One way to help interpret the Bible correctly is to compare a verse with the surrounding passages and rest of the Bible.

Below are some examples of reading a verse and looking at broader context.

Read Philippians 4:13. What might this mean if all we had to go on was this verse? Now, read the broader context in Philippians 4:10-12. How do these verses help with our understanding and application?

Read Matthew 7:1. What might this mean if all we had to go on was this verse? Now, read Matthew 7:2-5. How can these verses help us more accurately interpret Matthew 7:1?

Read Joshua 1:8. What might this mean if all we had to go on was this verse? Now, read Hebrews 11:32-40. How can these verses help us more accurately interpret Joshua 1:8?

2. There is nothing wrong with considering and taking the 'short road'. In fact, in many cases it is the best decision. But as we've heard, the long road should be considered as it may be the better decision. Peter, one of the twelve disciples, encountered a number of situations where he needed to consider either the short path or the long path. As you read the passages below, share what Peter's short path or 'long way around' options were and any other similarities you see from the Israelites' situation we looked at this week.

Mark 8:31-33, John 18:1-13, Acts 4:3-13

3. What might be some examples of 'short cuts' vs 'long roads' we need to consider when it comes to ...

- our relationships
- dealing with conflict
- how we work
- time with God
- other ...

4. This past week, we reflected on three 'larger lessons' on following God as we journeyed with the Israelites from Egypt into the wilderness. Lots and lots have been written on how to 'follow God'. Sadly, too often, we are tempted to conclude following God is overly complicated. How do the following verses 'keep it simple' for all of those who say they are followers of Jesus?

Matthew 22:34-39

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12

2 Peter 1:3-5

Which of these verses is most helpful to you when it comes to keeping it simple?

WRAPPING UP ...

Based on last Sunday's message and our discussion, is there any specific application that God might be prompting you to live out this week?

What prayer requests can we share so we can pray for each other before we close?

