

“The Long Way Home”

Exodus 13:17-22

INTRODUCTION

After Pharaoh released the Israelites, God began to lead them. In Christ, there is complete salvation. When you're saved, the enemy must let you go from the bondage of sin. Now God, not the enemy, determines the path.

Notice how God directs Israel. Instead of taking them the short route along the coast, He takes them another way because He knows what they don't. We want the beach walk, the fast track to milk and honey. But the short way would have left Israel unprepared. The Philistines lived along that route and facing them too soon would've sent Israel running back to Egypt. The short route also carried reminders of Egypt—their past pain and trauma. Sometimes what looks like the quickest blessing would destroy us if we're not developed first. This is God's track record: there is always a process before the promise. When God is leading, He is developing.

When God led Israel into the wilderness, toward the Red Sea, that wilderness was not punishment—it was preparation. Development always comes before destiny. Israel needed faith in the wilderness so that when they reached the promised land, they wouldn't hesitate when God told them to walk around Jericho's walls. Sanctification is rarely easy, but it's necessary.

As they left Egypt, Israel carried the bones of Joseph, a reminder of God's faithfulness. Generations before had taken the long way, and their testimonies prove the long way is the right way. God always finishes what He starts, even when we feel incomplete. And through it all, God's presence never left them. By day and by night, He was there. The wilderness isn't just the place of waiting—it's the place of His presence. Don't get so focused on the destination that you miss the God who walks with you.

GETTING STARTED

1. Can you think of a time when God's “detour” protected you from something you couldn't see?
2. Whose story of faith inspires you when you feel like your own journey is taking too long?

LET'S GET PERSONAL

1. What's your reaction when life feels like a wilderness season? Do you lean in or try to return to what feels easier?
2. How do you personally recognize God's presence in the middle of hard or waiting seasons?

3. How can remembering God's past faithfulness strengthen your faith in your current wilderness season?

TAKE THE NEXT STEP

1. What does it look like for you to shift your focus from reaching a destination to experiencing God's presence in the journey?
2. Pray and ask God to show you how He is developing your faith in this current season.
3. Want to dig deeper? Take a look at the following passages: Exodus 13:17-22; Proverbs 13:15; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Exodus 11:1; Romans 6:4; Hebrews 12:6; Ephesians 1:13; Galatians 5:22-23; Matthew 7:21-23; Ephesians 2:5; Isaiah 64:6; Genesis 50:24-25; Philippians 1:6; Psalm 16:11.

RENEW YOUR MIND

Now when Pharaoh had let the people go, God did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, even though it was near; for God said, "The people might change their minds when they see war, and return to Egypt."

Exodus 13:17