

EXODUS 13:17-22

“When God says ‘Go.’”

Opening illustration: packing up and leaving Raleigh.

Main Idea of the Message: **God doesn't work on our terms. Sometimes, God calls us or moves us before we're ready. When He does, we can trust in His plan for us and look for His guidance.**

God drives Israel out of Egypt (Exodus 12:33-39)

God moved Israel out of Egypt before they were ready. *Read Exodus 12:33-39.*

What challenges did the Israelites face?

- The Exodus was *uncomfortable*. The Israelites were used to their way of life and weren't prepared to leave.
- The Exodus was *urgent* (v. 33). The people of Israel didn't have the time to gather their provisions.
- The Exodus was *uncertain* (v. 34). They people didn't know where they were going or how they would provide for themselves along the way.
- The Exodus was *unmanageable* (v. 37-38). *600,000 men* and their families left their homes and followed Moses. In addition a “mixed **multitude**” left with them, bringing “very much livestock.”

Who was the “mixed multitude?”

Exodus 12:38 says that a “mixed multitude” went out of Egypt with the people of Israel. Who were they?

They were probably slaves from other nations, as well as some Egyptians. Leviticus 24:10 mentions a young man with an Israelite mother and Egyptian father, indicating that some Egyptians took part in the Exodus.

How will the Israelites be successful? How will the Israelites provide for all those people? The same way God's people always make it: the LORD will provide.



How did God provide for the Israelites?

- He provided them with *unleavened bread* when they left Egypt.
- He gave them favor in the eyes of the people when they *plundered the Egyptians* and took their provisions with them. In Genesis 15:14, God promises that he will “bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions.”
 - As servants, the Israelites receive the wages for their labor.
 - As conquerors, the Israelites receive spoils of God’s victory over Egypt.
 - As God’s people, the Israelites receive their share of His possessions.

How does this relate to us?

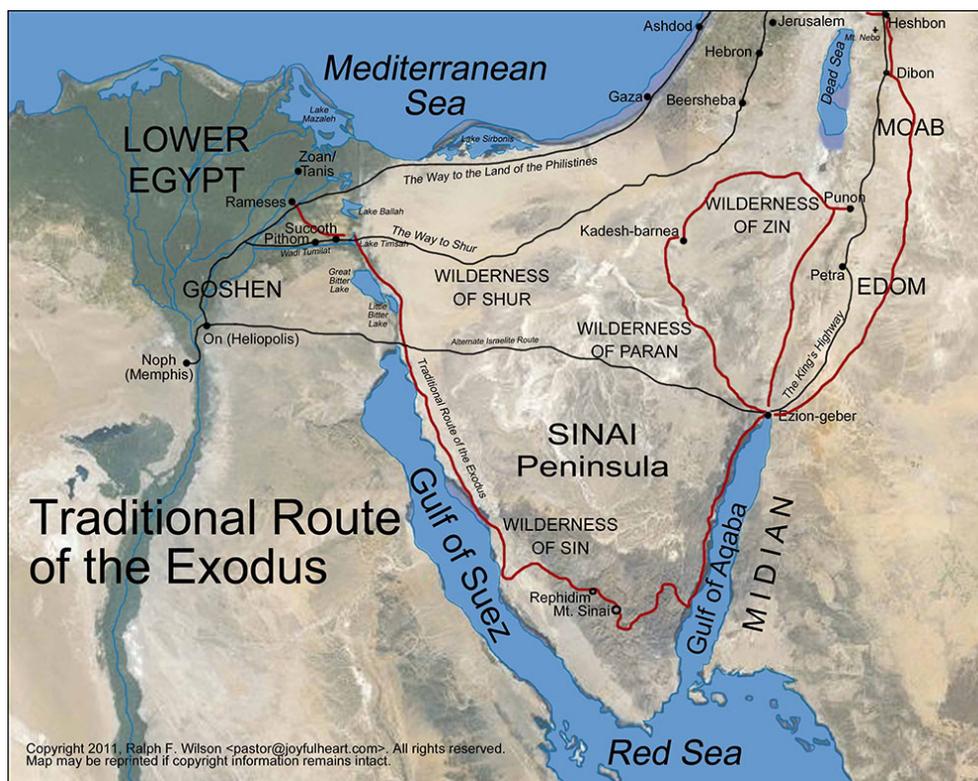
- When Jesus calls you to be a Christian, it *will* substantially disrupt your life.
- When Jesus calls you to serve His people, He will ask you to get up and go and you *will* have to leave some things behind.
- Jesus describes His return as coming like a “thief in the night” and says that we need to be prepared when He arrives.



God leads Israel into the wilderness (Exodus 13:17-22)

God leads stays with His people and guides them as they leave Egypt. *Read Exodus 13:17-22.*

Where is God leading the people of Israel?



God promised Abraham that He would create a nation from His descendants and that He would give them a land for their own possession. Israel would spend time in the bondage of slavery in Egypt, but then He would lead them into His promised land.

Why did God lead the Israelites through the wilderness when there was a faster way (v. 13:17)?

- 1. To deliver them from the Egyptians.** God is going to use their route to deliver them from the Egyptians, as we'll see next week.
- 2. To protect them from the Philistines.** The people of Israel were great in number, but they lacked the physical and spiritual preparation needed to



face battle.

- 3. To prepare them to enter the Promised Land.** As we will see in the coming weeks, God is going to use their time in the wilderness to challenge the people of Israel and to test and refine their faith in God's promises.

Psalm 107 says, "He led them by a straight [or right] way till they reached a city to dwell in." God knows what is best for His people and He will lead them by the *right* way.

How does God lead and provide for His people along the way?

When God makes his presence visible among His people, it is commonly referred to as His *shekinah* glory—a Hebrew word which means he *settles* or *dwells* among His people.

God's presence in the pillar of cloud does four things for the people of Israel:

- 1. God's presence leads His people.** In the pillar of cloud and fire, God gives His people *physical* direction leading them in the direction He wants them to go.
- 2. God's presence provides for His people.** God provides light by which the people can travel in the night and shade by which they can travel in the day.
- 3. God's presence encourages His people.** God's presence gives his people reassurance and encouragement as they deal with the uncertainty of the journey ahead.
- 4. God's presence protects His people.** As we will see next week, God's presence stops the Egyptians in their tracks as they pursue the people of Israel.

How does this relate to us?

- Jesus is the fulfillment of God's presence on earth!
- When Jesus gave us the Great Commission—to go to the nations and make disciples—He promised to be with us "until the end of the age."
- When Jesus promised that He would "build His church," He sent the Holy Spirit to give us gifts to serve one another.



Putting it all together

Main Idea of the Message: **God doesn't work on our terms. Sometimes, God calls us or moves us before we're ready. When He does, we can trust in His plan for us and look for His guidance.**

Four things to observe:

- 1. God knew that He would need to make the Israelites *uncomfortable* to get them out of their old way of life.** Discomfort is a gift from God. The Israelites spent 430 years in the bondage of slavery. They knew no other way of life. The urgency and discomfort of the Exodus were inconvenient—it disrupted their way of life—but it was God's gracious providence in delivering them from their slavery and into something better that He had in store for them.
- 2. God knew that the Israelites would be tempted to *return* to their old way of life (13:17).** God drove Israel out of Egypt by the hand of Pharaoh so they wouldn't have time to second-guess themselves or His promises. We're going to see this temptation next week when the people of Israel are threatened by the Egyptian army that is pursuing them. Fast forward 700 years to the book of Isaiah chapter 30 and the people of God *still* want to return to Egypt when times get tough.
- 3. God knew that the Israelites weren't ready to face the challenges ahead because of their broken spirits.** God leads the Israelites through the wilderness (the "long way around") in order to:
 - a. *Deliver* them from the Egyptians
 - b. *Protect* them from the Philistines
 - c. *Prepare* them and test their faith in the wilderness (Deut. 8:2)

God needed to make the Israelites a *people* before He could give them a *home*. It's in the wilderness that God will bring the people together with a Law, with a shared identity, and with the leadership structure they needed to be a nation of His people.

- 4. God knew that the Israelites needed direction and reassurance.** God, not Moses, led the people out of Egypt. His presence in the pillars of cloud



and fire not only gave the Israelites direction, but reminded them of His presence and comforted them in their uncertainty.

What shall we do?

- 1. Embrace the discomfort that God has provided for you.** If you can't tell, I don't want The Gathering Church to be comfortable. God doesn't want The Gathering Church to be comfortable. That's not part of His design for the Church!

When we get comfortable, we stop seeking after God through prayer and through His Word, we stop trying to reach the people who are dying without Jesus, and we start forgetting that God has called us to a mission to serve the Church and reach the lost.

When God makes you uncomfortable, it is a good and gracious gift to break you out of the patterns of the world and get you back to maturing into the person and *people* who He has intended for you to be. You're His people.

- 2. Follow God and don't look back.** When God calls us to be His people, we leave our old lives behind and follow Him in faith that what He has in store for us is greater than what He has asked us to leave behind. The Israelites didn't have time to take much with them; they had to grab what they could, get out of town, and not worry about what was behind them.

We, too, must learn to trust God and follow Him without worrying about what we might leave behind. God doesn't make it hard to follow Him. Like the rich young ruler, we can cling to the things that God is calling us to leave behind, we can build walls in our path and we can trip over our own feet, and the problem is never with God, but our own stubborn hearts.

Paul had honor, status, and prestige in the eyes of men, but he "counted it as rubbish" and freely gave it up so he could gain Christ.

Elisha, when he was called out of his fields by Elijah, killed his oxen and burned his plows so he wouldn't be tempted to return to his old way of life.



- 3. Trust God when he leads you around the long way.** As Americans in the age of instant gratification, we often want to take the fastest route to get to where God is leading us, but He sometimes leads us the “long way around” to guard us, test us, or teach us before we get to where we’re going.

Satan often tempts us to take shortcuts when God wants us to slow down and prepare for what He has in store for us.

When Satan tempted Jesus in Luke 4, he offered Jesus a way to go around God to get the gifts of God. Taking him up to a high place, “he showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to him, ‘To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.’”

- 4. Keep your eyes on the LORD.** God may not lead you with a pillar of fire, but He actively leads us and reassures us through His eternal and unchanging Word and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

God dwelled among the Israelites in a pillar of cloud and fire, but He would later come to dwell among men in the person of Jesus Christ.

While the Israelites got a glimpse of God’s presence in the pillar of cloud and fire, we get the fullness of God’s presence in Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit.

While God used to dwell behind the veil of the tabernacle, now every believer who puts his or her faith in Jesus Christ can come into His presence and ask Him for His power and His comfort and His encouragement.

It's the difference between following a sign post and following a tour guide. The pillar of cloud and fire could only point the Israelites in the right direction, but Jesus not only came to be our example, he has already gone ahead and made the journey for us on our behalf.

He left the comfort of Heaven and a chorus of angels singing, "holy, holy, holy" to humble himself to a sinner's cross to a chorus of the people he came to save shouting, "crucify him, crucify him, crucify him." He followed God's



will without hesitation, without looking back.

And now He's preparing an eternal Kingdom for His people, and if you're a Christian this morning, he's coming back to bring us home.

