

## Wandering

*God has a great path planned for us  
that includes joy and intimacy with him;  
when we choose to take our own route  
the journey is harder and takes longer.*

### Introduction

Have you ever missed an off-ramp on a highway and then realized it will be many miles before you can exit, turn around, and head back in the right direction? Driving all those unavoidable miles in the wrong direction feels frustrating, disappointing, and wasteful.

The people of Israel were traveling a relatively short distance after their deliverance from Egypt on the way to the Promised Land. With a small group it should have taken a matter of weeks. With more than a million people, it should have taken a month or two.

It ended up taking forty years!

Think about it. The trip should have taken a couple of months at the most. The people of God took two hundred and forty times longer to get to their destination than they needed to. That is a lot of wandering, a lot of wrong turns, a "we're running late" story of epic proportions.

This portion of *The Story*, this season of wanderings, contains some of the saddest and most painful accounts in all of the biblical narrative. It is a heart-wrenching read. But it wakes us up to the reality that God continues to be with his people, even when they are running the other direction and walking in circles ... in a desert.

### Talk About It

Tell a story about a time you got lost on a drive or a hike. Where did things go wrong and how did you finally find your way home?

### DVD Teaching Notes

*As you watch the video segment for session 6, use the following outline to record anything that stands out to you.*

Exploration of the land of milk and honey

Conflicting reports

A forty-year detour

The ultimate GPS system

### DVD Discussion

1. Describe some of the ways that God might help us recalculate our life direction and get back on track when we are wandering.

2. All through this chapter of *The Story* God disciplines the people (sometimes quite strongly) to get them back on course. What are the values of being disciplined by one who loves us and wants the best for us?

*Our life is like a road trip. God wants to lead us every step of the way with his GPS. God sees the picture from the Upper Story and wants the best for us. He wants us to make it to the final destination and to enjoy the journey.*

3. Randy mentioned that there were no less than ten outbreaks of “juvenile behavior” by the people of Israel during their desert wanderings. How can Christians today be like this — complaining, grumbling, and rebelling against God’s leading and plan? Give an example of how you can fall into this pattern if you are not careful.

4. Ten of the men who spied out the land let their minds and eyes focus on the obstacles (Numbers 13:26–33; *The Story*, p. 75). What are ways we can be frozen by fear and fixate on the obstacles rather than the God who can help us overcome them?

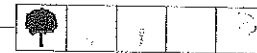
5. How have you seen the sins of one generation poison and damage those who came after them? And conversely, how have you seen good choices and spiritual maturity be passed on as a blessing to the next generation?

*We need to be reminded that whatever choice we make, our lives impact others. They will experience the blessings of our good decisions and they will experience the pain of our destructive choices.*

6. What is one way you are seeking to pass on a healthy and positive legacy to the next generation? How can your group members pray as you seek to be a blessing to children, grandchildren, or the young people you influence?

7. Randy talked about the vision God has for his children to be responsive to his leading. When God says to go left or right, we turn and go. When he says stop, we hit the brakes. What kinds of things can get in the way of us responding to God's clear direction?

8. What will help us hear and respond more quickly when the Lord is seeking to lead us? What is one area of your life where you would like to be more responsive to God's leading and how can your group members support you in this?



9. Read movement 1 of *The Story* (p. 10 of this participant's guide). How have you experienced God pursuing you and seeking to build a strong relationship with you?

### **Closing Prayer**

*As you take time to pray, here are some ideas to get you started:*

- Thank God for his loving discipline and invite him to help you stay on his course for your life.
- Confess where you have wandered from God's plan for your life and ask him to help you recalculate.
- Pray for a mature heart and spirit that does not complain, grumble, and whine when things do not go your way.

### **Between Sessions**

#### *Personal Reflections*

Reflect on any ways your life has gotten off course. Ask God to help you recalculate and get back on the right path. Confess where you have been stubborn and rebellious, and think deeply of the grace you have received in Jesus. Then, identify ways you need to change your actions, attitudes, and motives to bring them in line with God's will for you.

#### *Personal Action*

One of the best things we can do is listen to people of wisdom and faith. In chapter 6 of *The Story*, Joshua and Caleb came back from their exploration of the land and gave wise counsel. Unfortunately, the people did not listen to them. Find one or two wise men or women of faith that know you well and ask for their insight and perspective on your life. Share how you are seeking to follow God and where you feel you are wandering off course. Invite their wisdom and prayerfully listen to them. Consider asking if they will meet with you on a regular basis to be a sounding board as you seek to walk with Jesus.

#### *Read for Next Session*

Take time before your next small group to read chapter 7 of *The Story*.