

## Are We There Yet?

1. Warm up: We all hate waiting. On Sunday Jeff listed a bunch of different waiting scenarios: waiting in the lobby of a doctor's office, sitting in a traffic jam, standing in a ticket line, waiting for a table in a restaurant, waiting for the Colts to win another Super Bowl, waiting for the results of a major medical test or the results of a big test in school. If you had to pick one of the waits listed here – which would you choose as the least painful – and why?
2. Although we hate waiting, much of life consists of waiting – waiting for the person of your dreams, waiting for a big break in your career, waiting to buy your first home, waiting for healing, waiting for a child to work through their challenges, waiting for your spouse to change and become the ideal person you thought you were marrying. ☺ What's something you find yourself waiting for at this point in your life?
3. Waiting is so much a part of life, none of us can live well until we learn how to wait well. So for guidance, we looked to the experience of the Israelites wandering in the wilderness for 40 years while they waited to enter the Promised Land. Read Exodus 13:17-20 and Deuteronomy 8:2-7, as printed on p. 3.
  - a. The Israelites experienced a rapid profusion of amazing breakthroughs in a very short period of time. Moses returned to lead their liberation effort. When Pharaoh refused, Egypt experienced a series of miraculous plagues until Pharaoh finally relented. The Israelites were finally free! But then Pharaoh changed his mind and came after them. But God miraculously parted the Red Sea. And now the Israelites were finally on their way back to their homeland, the Promised Land. By foot, it's a two-month journey. God was working, the dam had burst, their prayers were finally being answered. How do you imagine Moses and the Israelites felt at that moment? What do you imagine they thought would happen next?
  - b. When in your life have you experienced a burst of wonderful things where it felt like God was really working in amazing ways? How did that feel?
  - c. It turns out that, after the amazing events surrounding their liberation, the Israelites would spend the next *40 years* wandering in the wilderness of Saini – waiting, waiting, waiting. How do you imagine they felt one year into their wilderness experience? How do you imagine they felt 35 years into that experience?
  - d. What does all this remind you of as you look back over your life. When was your most extended wilderness period – a time when everything felt stuck and the wait seemed insufferably long?
4. On Sunday, we explored four core spiritual principles that Jeff suggested we must internalize if we're going to wait well. **Principle #1 – Realize that waiting is normal. If you're patient, your moments will come. So wait with hope and expectation!**

- e. Vladimir Lenin said, “There are decades where nothing happens, and there are weeks where decades happen.” What do you think he meant? Do you think he’s onto something?
- f. Jeff pointed out that Jesus spent 30 years waiting and preparing for just 3 years of high-impact public ministry. Moses lived 120 years, but his most amazing accomplishments occurred in a short window of months when he was 80 years old, then he spent the rest of his life wandering the wilderness with his people and died before they entered the Promised Land. So both Jesus and Moses spent the vast majority of their life in “ordinary time” doing a lot of waiting and preparing. Do you think this pattern is typical? Does it encourage you to know that Jesus and Moses spent most of their lives waiting? Why or why not?
- g. At another time in their history when the Israelites were waiting, God spoke to them and said, “I know the plans I have for you – plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11. How does this verse make you feel about whatever you’re waiting for in your life right now?

**5. Principle #2 – Waiting is not wasted time. It’s purposeful preparation for when your moments come. So cooperate with the process; keep learning and growing.**

- a. Re-read Exodus 13:17-18. According to these verses, why did God lead Israel on such a roundabout way through the wilderness? What might this tell us about why God makes us wait for certain things in our life?
- b. Tell us about something important you learned – either from something positive that happened to you or a mistake you made – during one of your times of waiting.

**6. Principle #3 – Remember that your breakthrough moments of great accomplishment may lie beyond the currently visible horizon.**

- a. Jeff shared how during almost 20 years of waiting to be able to find his path to ministry, God ultimately directed him to a wonderful place of ministry that *he could not have envisioned* at the outset of his 20-year waiting period. Tell us about a time God has led you to a place beyond your visible horizon.
- b. Jeff also reminded us that the things we’re experiencing as we wait here on earth may be preparing us for our ultimate greatest accomplishments when we reign with Christ in eternity. What do you think about that idea? Does it resonate? Do you think your greatest accomplishments are likely to occur in the next life? Why or why not?

**7. Principle #4 – Remember that you are part of a story that’s much bigger than you. You are a critical puzzle piece in God’s unfolding redemption plan, but only one piece along with many others. Our significance is found in doing our part in that bigger story.**

- a. Read the excerpt from Walt Whitman's poem printed below. If a child asked you what Whitman's poem means, what would you say? How would you explain it to them?
- b. What do you hope your verse will be while here on earth? In other words, what do you hope you can contribute to God's unfolding redemption plan?

### **Exodus 13:17-20**

<sup>17</sup> When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was nearer; for God thought, 'If the people face war, they may change their minds and return to Egypt.' <sup>18</sup> So God led the people by the roundabout way of the wilderness towards the Red Sea. The Israelites went up out of the land of Egypt prepared for battle. <sup>19</sup> And Moses took with him the bones of Joseph, who had required a solemn oath of the Israelites, saying, 'God will surely take notice of you, and then you must carry my bones with you from here.' <sup>20</sup> They set out from Succoth, and camped at Etham, on the edge of the wilderness.

### **Deuteronomy 8:2-7**

<sup>2</sup> Remember the long way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, in order to humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep the commandments. <sup>3</sup> The Lord humbled you by letting you hunger, then by feeding you with manna, with which neither you nor your ancestors were acquainted, in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. <sup>4</sup> The clothes on your back did not wear out and your feet did not swell these forty years. <sup>5</sup> Know then in your heart that as a parent disciplines a child so the LORD your God disciplines you. <sup>6</sup> Therefore keep the commandments of the LORD your God, by walking in God's ways and by fearing the Lord. <sup>7</sup> For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land with flowing streams, with springs and underground waters welling up in valleys and hills."

### **Walt Whitman, "O Me, O Life"**

Oh me! Oh life! of the questions of these recurring,  
Of the endless trains of the faithless, of cities fill'd with the foolish,  
What good amid these, O me, O life?

Answer:

That you are here – that life exists and identity,  
That the powerful play goes on, and *you* may contribute a verse.