

When the Lord Leads the Way

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[0 : 00] and we don't have the time to really cover the chapters of this book and of this story. It's an ongoing thing where the Lord visits his people and brings them out.

There's an exodus, brings them out of Egypt, and what God does is what we're going to read portions of tonight is a real story of the hand of God on his people leading them.

He's likened to a shepherd leading a flock, and Moses was likened to his shepherd on earth leading that flock. And notice the very last verse of Exodus chapter 12, just to kind of jump into the timing.

It says in verse 51, it says, It came to pass the selfsame day that the Lord did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies. Now what God did in Egypt and what he did in the years that followed that moment was such a thing that it caused everyone to be in awe.

Even today, we look back and read of this, and skeptics say, No way, that could not have happened. It's too phenomenal. It's too amazing. But even today, even Christians, it's a remarkable story of the work of God, of the terrible acts of God, as he says in the Psalms about this time.

[1 : 21] And the Bible says these things are written for our learning. This march of this great army, Israel, leaving Egypt and going toward the promised land of Canaan is a picture of the Christian life for us.

It's a picture of you getting from the world to one day getting to heaven and all that takes place in between. Now what happened in the next few chapters here, preceding this spot and follows it, what God did for that people is impossible without him, like completely impossible.

You can't take that size, perhaps up to two million individuals, old, young, with their belongings and cattle. You can't take them and march them the direction they went and cross over water, a mighty gulf of water as it was, and then through a wilderness and supply.

You can't keep their bellies filled. There's nothing out there for them to eat. There's no water for them to drink. You can't do that. It's impossible what took place here. The amount of needs that such a large people would have had.

Could you imagine the two million people that live in this valley, the trucks that have to come in and out on a daily basis to supply and to restock our needs just for us?

[2 : 51] There was no trucks. There was really nothing. There's no Walmarts. Their shoes didn't get old and their clothes didn't get torn or staled up on them.

They just, how did that happen? It's impossible but for God. So what God did is impossible without him. And the news of what God is doing with his people spreads through the region like wildfire, and it put fear in all of their hearts.

Their hearts melted when they heard what these people were doing. And what an amazing and what a terrible God he truly is. He cannot be stopped, and his people cannot be stopped.

And in all of this, it came to be this way because God's people followed his leading for them.

And they followed his leader, Moses, really on a daily, weekly, monthly, yearly basis, as he, through Aaron, through the Lord, through the way God had his hand on them, as he led them, each place and each locality that they were to travel and to stop here for this amount of time and move and so forth, you can read it on your own time.

[4 : 07] Now this did not come without a rebellion. It did not come without problems, without them chiding against him, without them arguing, without these people resisting his leadership and his direction.

And there's flaws in this people. And that just shows you that it just pictures the sins that are in our life as we seek to serve the Lord and get away from the world and go toward what God has for us.

There's sins that just come with us and problems arise because of our sins. The picture is all there. Now, had they ignored his leading and not followed his leading or his leader, or had they turned around or given up, there's no telling what the story would have looked like.

Surely it would have been a different outcome had they not followed the Lord's direction. Now, I want to draw your attention to this aspect of the story that God led them through this man Moses, but the Lord was the one that was calling the shots.

And I want to draw your attention to this because in this life, we don't want to live in Egypt either. We don't want to live where there's bondage and servitude and where the Pharaoh, the picture of type of the devil there is killing our babies, where he's destroying our lives.

[5 : 25] We don't want to be there. And we also, as we try to get out of there and God delivers and redeems us from that, have an enemy that comes after us and attacks us and wants to bring us back into that bondage of Egypt.

And then along the way, there's things that lie ahead, land and territories we've never been before. And circumstances are going to be in front of us that we don't even know what in the world to do with.

We've never had this experience. We've been in Egypt all this time. We've never been in a wilderness. We've never had to feed our babies like this or take care of things like this. And so there's going to be things in this life you have to maneuver and you have to find a way through.

And the point I want to make is we need God to lead us. We need God to give us direction, his direction. It is without a doubt our greatest chance for not only survival at the least, but success at the best.

And he will lead us if we're willing to follow him. And I want to point out a few things here in this story about God's leading this people, which I think will help us to believe and to realize we can trust him, that we need to obey and submit to him.

[6 : 36] And so I want to say a few things tonight to you about why we should let the Lord lead us. So before we read any more in the passage, let's pray and ask the Lord to help. God, Lord, I pray that you would now help.

Would you touch our hearts? Would you touch each mind? And Lord, just get inside of this place and move in our midst. And I pray that each person in the circumstances of their lives would realize and come to the conclusion that they need to seek you, that they need you to speak to them and they need you to lead them.

And may they be willing to submit to your leading and be obedient to that. Lord, this historical thing, these great acts that you did, we fully believe you're the same God, that you've not lost your touch and that you're not out of touch.

You're a God that hears. You're a God that sees. You'd know fully our hearts and our situations. And so, Lord, I pray that we'd submit to you and that we'd follow and know your hand of leadership.

We ask in Jesus' name tonight. Amen. So, first thing I want us to think here, look in verse chapter 13. And look, we're really just picking a few spots here.

[7 : 47] I can't read the chapters with you. But come to near the end of 13. It's about verse number 17. Exodus 13, verse 17 and 18.

And it came to pass when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them, not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near. For God said, lest peradventure the people repent when they see war and they return to Egypt.

But God led the people about through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. And the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt. First thing I want to say this evening, we should let the Lord lead us, is because the Lord knows what lies ahead.

Amen and amen. Don't just hear me talking tonight. This is the dead truth for your life. The Lord knows what lies ahead. And you should be willing to and desire for the Lord to be leading you in this life, because you don't know what's ahead.

You know what the Bible says? Thou knowest not what, what? A day may bring forth. You have no guarantees of what's going to happen to you till this day expires.

[8 : 58] You don't know. You don't know what's coming tomorrow. You surely don't know what's coming next week. You can plan for a few things, but you surely don't know.

But God knows. Amen. The Lord knows what lies ahead. So it would be wise for each one of us to consider we should let God lead us in our life.

We should let God lead our decisions and our homes and our, give them our hearts and say, Lord, what will you have me to do? Because the Lord knows what lies ahead.

For the Hebrews, it seemed the northeast. If we travel northeast, that is the straightest line from Egypt to Canaan. And that's the land that God promised our father Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

That's where Moses is taking us, the northeast. That was the nearest. That was the obvious path to take. Traveling southeast, why, that would be going down to where it's just going to be a dead end.

[10 : 03] Well, that's just traveling further into Africa or along this body of water. And then eventually just is more water and more water and the Indian Ocean. We can't get anywhere going this way.

Southeast makes no sense at all. It's away from the direction that they want to go. So that's not an option. The only option is to go northeast out of Egypt, straight to the promised land.

But God sees what lies ahead. And God says, you're going to run right into the Philistines. And you're going to see war with the Philistines. And you're not ready for war.

You're not going to be able to handle going against the Philistines. Oh, sure, God could take care of the Philistines, couldn't he? The Lord could put them down and subdue them and wipe them out if he chose to.

But that was never God's way. He always had his people fight and said, I'll be with you. And he delivered them with their fighting. Joshua, we read about that with the Amorites and others, Amalekites.

[11 : 05] That was God's way. God would have had these men soldier up. And it turns out he believed they weren't ready for that. So he didn't send them that way. They would have gotten scared and discouraged.

They weren't grown. They weren't ready to face such an opponent. What they would have done is turned back and went to Egypt. So God led them away from that battle.

Even though it seemed like the only way to go, even though it was the closest way, the most obvious direction, the Lord led them a different way. Why?

Because the Lord knows what lies ahead. And Christian, following the Lord's leading, it's not always going to seem like the obvious thing to you. It may not even resonate with your senses.

You know, in James chapter, stalling three, I think it's James three or the end of two. Fact check me on that somewhere. But I think it's James three.

[12 : 08] The chapter closes talking about two different kinds of wisdom. And there's one wisdom that he says descendeth not from above. It's earthly.

It's sensual. And it's devilish. And that's the wisdom where man lives and resides and tries to sort things out and figure them out on his own because it relates to his senses.

And he sees an issue and he tries to tackle it. But then James says, but there's a wisdom that does come from above. And that wisdom is pure and peaceable and easy to be entreated.

There's a godly wisdom that just puts peace on a thing. And then there's another wisdom that doesn't. I'm suggesting, I'm strongly admonishing you to learn to follow the Lord's leading.

He'll give the wisdom and the direction and there'll be a peace with it. Don't rely on your senses. Look at Proverbs chapter three. This is something the Lord had to teach me.

[13 : 08] And I think so many of us know these verses, could quote them. If you had a song, you could probably just go right on to Proverbs three and quote these. But knowing them is great.

Proverbs 3 verses 5 and 6. Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding.

In order to trust the Lord with A-L-L. All thine heart. You're going to have to let go of your own understanding. The Lord had to teach me that even in moving to California.

That was a hard, hard thing to wrestle with back in Pennsylvania. And it was this verse that I knew all my life. But it was this passage. It was one of a few that just got down inside of me and made me realize I got to stop trying to figure this thing out.

And making sure that everything checks and have it all balanced before I can say yes. And I had to realize I need to trust in the Lord with all my heart. I had to lay it on him.

[14 : 23] And verse number 6. In all thy ways acknowledge him. And there's the promise. He shall direct thy paths. The Lord knows what's ahead.

In order to trust him, you'll have to drop your own understanding. But follow the Lord's leading. Follow his leading. It may not be obvious to you. It may not even make sense to you.

But as you seek him and pray and walk with him, he'll give you peace. On what his leading is. And what the direction is. And what this choice should be. And so you ought to follow him.

Let the Lord lead because he knows what lies ahead. Come back to Exodus. This time chapter 14. Exodus 14. And let's read the first couple verses here.

Moving forward from where we were. The Bible says, The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before.

[15 : 23] Pihath-hairoth. Between Migdal and the sea. Over against Baal-zaphon. Before it shall ye encamp by the sea. I want you to notice that's a very, very specific place that God told them to go and camp.

I mean, he didn't just say just head that direction. He gave them a location to park. In verse 3. For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land. The wilderness hath shut them in.

And I will harden Pharaoh's heart that he shall follow after them. And I will be honored upon Pharaoh. And upon his host. All his host. That the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord. And they did so.

Now I wanted to say secondly, We should let the Lord lead us. Not just because he knows what lies ahead. But secondly, because he has a plan. He has a plan. For our life.

He has a plan. And it may not seem it. We may not understand what God's doing. But we can trust that he does. He's got a plan for his people.

[16 : 24] And he said, No, I don't want you to go in that direction. Go this direction. Matter of fact, when you're going, I want you to go right to this point. Right there. Why, God? Just do it. I know what I'm doing.

I've got a plan. Watch and see. By the little bit later, Moses said those words in verse 13. Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.

You're going to see something remarkable. Something you'll never forget. That I'm going to do. Just do what I tell you. Follow my leading. The Lord has a plan. It wasn't a likely route.

I'm sure the children of Israel along the way were thinking, What are we doing? This is stupid. Do you know which way we're going here? Do you know there's mountains that are on our west side?

And water on our east? And just a wilderness ahead of us with no supplies? No substance? What are we doing? Moses, why are we going this direction?

[17 : 20] If Pharaoh comes after us, we are literally dead meat. We can't get out of this. They surely wonder, does Moses even know what he's doing?

But the Lord has a plan. The Lord had a plan that would destroy their enemy and glorify him in everybody's sight. The Lord had a plan that would cause his own people to grow in faith.

Notice, look down in the chapter 14 to verse number 12, as they argued with Moses over what he's doing, this direction. Pharaoh's on his way after us. We're stuck right here.

In verse 12, they said, Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? That's really what they said to him. Moses, beat it.

We'll stay. We're fine here. Leave us alone. Stop causing problems. And then they brought that back and threw it in his face when it looked like Pharaoh's coming. We can't go anywhere.

[18 : 20] We're going to die right here and right now. We told you to leave us alone. Well, thank God he didn't leave him alone. Look over at chapter 14. At the end of this, look at the very last verse.

The very last verse after the Lord took care of Pharaoh and his armies. It says, And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians, and the people feared the Lord and believed the Lord.

Wow. Now, the Lord had a plan, and part of it was to destroy the enemy that had treated his people so badly.

But another part of it was to cause his people to trust him and to learn to lean on him and to obey him from here forward. They saw what he did, and they believed on him.

They feared him and believed on him. Their faith grew. In Egypt, they said, We're fine right there, and we don't want to stay here while their babies are being slaughtered and thrown into the river, while their backs are being whipped and caused to do more service and more work, slavery.

[19 : 30] And they said, We'll stay there. We were fine there. Why did you take us out of that? Because the Lord had a plan. And so they followed him. And I reckon we ought to follow God and follow the Lord's leading, even if it's not likely, because God will get glory when his leading is followed, and you, Christian, will end up stronger than you were before and growing in faith when you choose to follow him.

He's got a plan, and he's got a plan for your life. And it may not seem right to you. It may not make sense to you, but you've got to learn to trust him. His record, church, his record is perfect.

Can you think of one time in anybody's life, not just yours, anybody's life, where God failed them, where God was leading them, and then he retracted that?

I shouldn't have said that. I shouldn't have directed you that way. The only time things don't go the right way is when we mess them up. We mess them up. God's plans are flawless.

Remember that. We should follow his leading. He knows what he's doing. We can trust him, and he has a plan. So let him lead us. Come back to the chapter again, and I want to say thirdly, that the Lord blesses the way that he leads.

[20 : 58] The Lord blesses the way he leads. We should let him lead us because he blesses that direction, that way. It comes with benefits. Look back at chapter 13 and verse 21.

It says, and the Lord went before them. God gives us his presence. He gives his people his presence when they follow his leading.

You're not guaranteed anything at all in this world or in this life when you lean on your own understanding. You may make some good decisions.

You may hit it here or there. It might work out. It might not. You're not guaranteed. But God will be with you if you follow his leading. That's a guarantee.

The Lord's way comes with the presence of God every step, every day, through every season, through every change. He never leaves if you follow him.

[22 : 01] So often when we read that God calls a man, he did it with Moses. He did it with Joshua. He did it with so many more. Some of the prophets, many of the prophets. As a matter of fact, even, well, there's a long list.

You should catch this reading through your Bible. The Lord says this, I will be with thee. He tells them, I want you to do this, Jeremiah. I will be with thee. He says it to all of them. Jesus said it to his disciples.

Lo, I am with you always. God is offering his presence all the time if we'll follow his leading. The Lord blesses the way he leads.

He gives us his presence. Not only that, look at the verse. He also gives us relief when we need it. Verse 21, the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud.

Now, we know out here what it's like to get under the sun and be out in the sun for a long time and to have no shelter from the sun. And these people of great multitude are moving slowly through some hot, treacherous wilderness.

[23 : 09] That sun will bake you and beat you and zap your energy, make you more thirsty than you were or would have been. And the Lord sends relief.

He says, go into the driest place or go in and don't worry. I'll send a cloud. On a hot, sunny day, a cloud sure is a relief. Just to get that sun off of you.

This morning was wonderful. At least here. I know it's different in like 10 miles everywhere. It gets different. But this morning here, it was overcast for a good part of the morning. And it was nice. I just enjoy not having sun beating on me every time I walk outside.

But, you know, I love the sun. But I guarantee if you were walking with those people, you'd have longed for some relief. Longed for some shelter from the sun. And following God, letting him lead, comes with that relief.

For you, it might look like something a little better than a cloud. It might look like when God gives you a direction and you let him lead, it might look like mercy. It might look like grace to help in time of need.

[24 : 16] That'll be the relief that you get in your heart. God's all-sufficient grace to allow you to help and sustain you and relieve you when things get tough. He gives relief. The Lord's way comes with benefits.

He also gives light. Look at Exodus 13 and verse 21. It says, The Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud to lead them the way. And by night in a pillar of fire to give them light.

To give them light. The Lord gives light. It's pretty dark out there where they were. I mean, like pretty dark. You can imagine. I surely don't imagine that there was any resources available that they could have lit a fire.

Or that every family could have gathered enough to find to keep themselves going. I'm sure they would have exhausted whatever they could find quite quickly that many people. Yet the Lord gives light.

Darkness can wear you out. Go live up in the Arctic. In the wintertime, find out they're on drugs. They're on alcohol. They're taking their own lives.

[25 : 24] The rate goes way up over the winter months because there's no sun. It's dark. It's dark. It's always dark. But light comes. And light is so comforting. And light is so welcomed.

And so the Lord gives light. And Christian, when he leads you in this life, he allows his light to shine just far enough ahead for you to stay safe. For you to stay on the right track.

For you to know where you're at. The Bible says the way of the wicked is as darkness. But following the Lord and letting him lead you, there'll be light.

So there's a few things that God gives. He gives one more thing. He gives protection. Look at chapter 14 and verse 14. The Bible says, The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.

And as a matter of fact, God did fight for them. Look a little bit later in the chapter at verse number 25 or 24. It came to pass that in the morning watch, the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, and took off their chariot wheels, that they drove them heavily, so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel, for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians.

[26 : 38] In verse 27 at the end, it says, And the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And then verse number 30, the Bible says, Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the seashore.

It seemed like the most dangerous way to take, and it turned out for their sakes, it was the safest. And in this place, that same ruler that had oppressed them and afflicted them all their lives, when they chose to follow the Lord and let the Lord lead them, it turns out they'll never see him again.

They're dead on the shore. And that's an end of that. The Lord gives protection. Somebody once said, Where the Lord guides, the Lord provides.

And so following the Lord, you're going to find that his way comes with benefits. Now, lastly, I want to point something out here. For this, come back to chapter 2 of Exodus.

Exodus chapter 2. And I want you to notice that the Lord's way is the way of rejoicing.

[27 : 54] And that's what we all want. Every single one of you, whether you want to admit it or not, you want rejoicing. You want peace. You want good times. You want to relax. You want joy.

You want to enjoy life. You don't want misery, affliction, and sorrow. Nobody wants that. Nobody wants that. In Exodus chapter 2, and look at verse 23 and 24.

And it came to pass in the process of time that the king of Egypt died, and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage.

And they cried. And the cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and with Jacob.

And God looked upon the children of Israel and had respect unto them. They cried. A little bit later, in verse 9, he's talking to Moses.

[28 : 57] He says, Now, therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come unto me, and I have seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Somewhere in here, it talks about their sorrow.

Oh, verse 7. The Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows.

So that's what Egypt was. It was oppression. It was sorrow. It was bondage. And they cried. That was life in Egypt.

And they cried. And the word cry, cry, cry. That's not fun. That's bitter. That's anguish. That's pain. But come on now to chapter 15, after they see the great work which the Lord did on those Egyptians.

And notice that the Lord's way is the way of rejoicing. And that's what you want. That's where you want to be. In Exodus 15, in verse 1, Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord.

[30 : 08] And spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song. He has become my salvation.

He is my God. And I will prepare him in habitation. My father's God. And I will exalt him. As you skim the passage, they're just glorifying the Lord and praising him.

Saying in verse 6, Thy right hand, O Lord, has become glorious in power. Thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. And in the greatness of thine excellency, thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee.

Just exalting God, lifting him up. Verse 11, Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?

And they sang. And they praised the Lord. Later in the chapter, in verse 20, Mariam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand. And all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.

[31 : 10] And Mariam answered him, Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. It's a place of celebration and of rejoicing in the Lord.

That's where the Lord's way leads. His way leads to the way of rejoicing. But the way of transgressors is hard. And come to Proverbs.

We'll close with this one. It's the last verse we'll look at. Proverbs chapter 1. We should let the Lord lead us. And we should follow his leading.

It's not a guarantee of health and wealth. But he will lead in the way of rejoicing. Even if there's trials, even if there's suffering, they're still rejoicing. And Proverbs chapter 1.

Just come to the end of that chapter. I'll start in verse 29. For that they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would none of my counsel.

[32 : 11] They despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way. Their own way. They went their own way. Instead of letting the Lord lead them his way.

And be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them. And the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. But follow the Lord's way. Verse 33. Whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely.

That's what you want. And shall be quiet from fear of evil. That's what you all want. So hearken unto him. The Lord's way is the way of peace.

And life. And rejoicing. So allow the Lord to lead you, Christian. He wants to. He really wants to.

And he's capable. Again, his track record is perfect. Perfect. He knows what lies ahead. You don't.

[33 : 11] He has a plan that will work out if you'll follow him. He will be with you. He will give you light. He will give you relief. He will give you protection and provision.

And in the end, there's rejoicing. Not shame. Not regret. Not broken, miserable. Not knowing what to do with yourself.

If you allow the Lord to lead, you will one day look back and say with rejoicing, the Lord was right. But if you don't allow the Lord to lead, you will look back and say with regret and a broken heart and a broken life and say, the Lord was right.

Do you see that? He's right. My challenge tonight to us, every one of us, in any circumstance you find in front of you, any one of you, learn from this story.

Learn to seek and follow God's leading in your life. He is better than you at making decisions that will affect your life short term and long term. He knows the end from the beginning.

[34 : 16] So what may not seem like the easiest way or the nearest or the clearest path to take, when the Lord leads, it's the right one.

And you can trust the Lord. So I hope you understand that. I hope you believe that. And I hope you'll exercise and apply that. Seeking the Lord and following his leading.

Because he knows what he's doing. Let's close in prayer tonight. Father, as we dismiss, thank you that we can look back on this. This...