A Divine Detour

Text: Exodus 13:17-18 (MSG)

Israel's Wilderness Detour

17 It so happened that after Pharaoh released the people, God didn't lead them by the road through the land of the Philistines, which was the shortest route, for God thought, "If the people encounter war, they'll change their minds and go back to Egypt."

18 So God led the people on the wilderness road, looping around to the Red Sea. The Israelites left Egypt in military formation.

Background

Picture this: the Israelites have just been delivered from slavery in Egypt for 400-430 years. They have witnessed God's mighty power through the ten plagues and the parting of the Red Sea. Now they find themselves in the wilderness, unsure of what lies ahead. Let's join them on their journey.

(Picture of a Detour sign)

As the Israelites set out on their journey to the Promised Land, God did something unexpected. "God didn't lead them by the road through the land of the Philistines, which was the shortest route, for God thought, 'If the people encounter war, they'll change their minds and go back to Egypt'" (Exodus 13:17 MSG). Can you imagine the confusion and frustration the Israelites must have felt?

A detour sign can be very frustrating because it mandates that we make a course correction. Sometimes we can see the reason for the detour and other times we cannot see or know why. Either way we just have to trust and follow the signs to lead us.

God knew that the Israelites were not tested or prepared for warfare. They were not fit for the fight and could not battle the Philistines who lived on the shortest route. So he protected them by taking them the long way.

Have you ever considered that God may be protecting us from potential harm. Sometimes taking shortcuts can have unforeseen consequences that could be detrimental to various aspects of our lives. It's unfortunate to witness individuals who have taken shortcuts and ended up losing their wealth, health, jobs, relationships with

family and friends, and even their lives. So, it's important to trust in the journey and have faith that the longer way may ultimately be the safer and more fulfilling route for us.

Divine Detours Can Teach Us:

1) God's thoughts and ways are different from ours - Is. 55:8-9 (NiV)

8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
    neither are your ways my ways,"
declares the Lord.

9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth,
    so are my ways higher than your ways
    and my thoughts than your thoughts.

2) Freedom is not merely a destination but also a journey.

God designed a freedom trail for the Israelites to go from Egypt to the Promise Land.

* The Ten plagues that God hit Egypt with took approximately one year but it took 40 years to get Egypt out of them. Short term fixes will never be sufficient for freedom and lasting change because it is a journey.

3) The road to freedom is for our Development & Discipline.

Deut. 8:2-5 (NLT)

2 Remember how the Lord your God led you through the wilderness for these forty years, humbling you and testing you to prove your character, and to find out whether or not you would obey his commands. **3** Yes, he humbled you by letting you go hungry and then feeding you with manna, a food previously unknown to you and your ancestors. He did it to teach you that people do not live by bread alone; rather, we live by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. **4** For all these forty years your clothes didn't wear out, and your feet didn't blister or swell. **5** Think about it: Just as a parent disciplines a child, the Lord your God disciplines you for your own good.

Development involves continuously growing and learning, both intellectually and emotionally, to become the best version of ourselves.

Discipline involves consistently working towards our goals, even when it's challenging or inconvenient. Discipline is important because it helps in shaping our behavior. It involves self-control, orderliness, and adherence to rules and guidelines.

Question:
Are you open and flexible to God's direction if the road is longer and different that you planned?