



## Parkway Fellowship

Waze • Why are we going this way? • Exodus 13:17-18; 14:9-18, 31 • 02/25/2018

### Main Point

God wants to lead his people to places they do not know how to get to on their own and trust that He is leading them by the best route to the destination.

### Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Have you ever started a task you were initially confident would not be difficult, only to find out that it was? What was that task?**

**What resources did you use to persevere through that situation?**

**Why is seeing a task or responsibility through to the end often difficult for us?**

Sometimes we don't understand how we can get through the challenges of life, or why God has brought certain events and trials our way. When God called the Israelites out of Egypt, He promised to free them from their past as slaves into a new life as His people. To get there, they would have to follow Him step by step. Sometimes God's ways seem illogical or downright impossible. On the journey ahead, God would provide them many opportunities to trust Him. Would they persevere in faith, or would they be paralyzed by fear? Like believers today, sometimes they passed and sometimes they failed in the area of demonstrating persevering faith.

### Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| ask a volunteer to read exodus 13:17-18.

**What did God know the Israelites would do if they faced war too soon after being set free?**

**What did He do in these verses to protect them?**

**If you had been among the throng of free Israelites that morning, what would you have been thinking when Moses led you toward the Red Sea instead of taking the direct route toward the land of Canaan?**

**When have you followed God's directions even when they didn't make sense from a human standpoint? Can you describe a time when God led you on a "detour" to get you to His goal for you?**

Sometimes we seek God's direction and feel we do not receive an answer. At other times we know where He is leading, but do not want to follow because either His directions do not seem to make sense to us, we believe our way is best, or we think the cost is too high. When we sense God's leadership, we need to persevere in our faith and follow where He leads, confident that He will guide and care for us.

| ask a volunteer to read exodus 14:9-12.

**What new problem were the Israelites facing in this passage? How did the Israelites react when they saw Pharaoh's troops approaching?**

**Can you fault them for reacting the way they did? Explain. What did they do right in their terror? Where did they go wrong? Why do you think they began to blame Moses for their predicament?**

Learning to hear from God and know that He is leading you can be challenging. So often we try to take the reins and lead ourselves.

**Where are you most prone to lead yourself instead of allowing God to lead you?**

| ask a final volunteer to read exodus 14:13-31.

**What was the Israelites' response to their deliverance?**

**What strengthened the Israelites' faith? How does voicing what God has done in your life help you and others to persevere in your faith?**

We display persevering faith by readily following God's leading wherever He directs us. This faith allows us to counter our fears and doubts with a steadfast confidence in God's ability to help us. We show persevering faith when we obey God's commands even when the benefits of doing so are not readily apparent. We can bolster our faith and encourage one another to persevere in faith by solemnly attesting to the great things God has accomplished in our lives.

## Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**What does persevering faith look like in the daily life of an “average” Christian?**

**What challenges in life are you facing now? How will you persevere in your faith in God?**

## Pray

Close in prayer, thanking God for being worthy of our trust. Pray that He would increase our faith and give us the confidence to follow Him, obeying what He calls us to do. Ask Him to give all present the boldness to testify to others what the Lord has done in his or her life.

## Commentary

| Exodus 13:17-18

13:17. The group leaving Egypt was comprised of a huge host of people. Israelite men of fighting age numbered approximately 600,000. A significant group of non-Israelites also joined with God’s people. In addition the Israelites brought many sheep, goats, and cattle (see Ex. 12:37-38). Organizing and caring for such a large group created significant challenges. People and livestock needed food and water. As their leader, Moses faced a daunting task.

13:18. God instructed the Israelites to take a southeasterly route through Sinai that would avoid the Egyptian fortresses and the Philistine threat. The route also would bring them to the Red Sea and then to Mount Sinai where Moses would receive the law. [See Exploration: Red Sea, below.] The phrase battle formation implies Israel’s armed men stationed themselves around the perimeter to protect the women and children.

| Exodus 14:9-18, 31

14:9. The Israelites left Succoth in Goshen and camped on the edge of the Sinai wilderness. [See a helpful map on p. 90 in The Holman Illustrated Study Bible.] God guided them with a pillar of cloud during the day and a pillar of fire at night. He instructed Moses to turn back from the wilderness and move to a position beside the Red Sea. The Israelites’ erratic path would lead Pharaoh to believe they were confused and would tempt him to pursue them. As He had done before, God used Pharaoh’s stubborn unbelief to bring about an event that would cause both the Israelites and the Egyptians to acknowledge His sovereign power (Ex. 13:20–14:8).

14:10. Seeing the massive Egyptian army coming toward them and looking behind them to see the sea at their backs, the Israelites believed they were trapped. We can understand their terror. Many of us have felt trapped physically or emotionally with no apparent way out. Realizing their perilous situation, the Israelites correctly called to God for help.

14:11. The people also blamed God for their situation. Pharaoh may have intended to kill only Israel's leaders and to bring the rest of the people back into slavery, but the Israelites believed Pharaoh intended to kill them all. Perhaps they believed Pharaoh intended to avenge the deaths of so many Egyptians in the tenth plague.

As God's representative, Moses bore the brunt of the people's anger. They accused him of dragging them out of Egypt against their will. The people, of course, had been delighted to escape Egyptian slavery; but when danger threatened, they promptly excused themselves and blamed Moses. The Israelites reinterpreted God's deliverance as a trap to kill them. Sadly, the Israelites would continue to complain against God and Moses (see Ex. 16:3; Num. 21:5).

14:12. After Pharaoh had increased the Israelite slaves' workload by making them gather their own straw for making bricks, the people had complained to Moses and refused to listen to him (Ex. 5:20–6:9). Here the Israelites wished they had continued to ignore Moses' leadership and had remained in Egyptian slavery. Facing what they believed was certain death made "the good old days" of slavery seem wonderful.

14:13. Unlike the people, Moses believed and trusted God. Rather than defend himself and condemn the people, he calmly comforted them and provided confidence. The phrase Don't be afraid typically was spoken by angels when appearing to humans (see Gen. 15:1; 26:24) and by God to those facing overwhelming odds (see Num. 14:9; Josh. 10:8). Moses' words assured the people they had no reason to fear. The people saw only Pharaoh's army; but God, whom they could not see, was with them and would save them.

14:14. The Old Testament describes God as a warrior who fights for His people (see Ex. 15:3; Isa. 42:13). Since God would fight for His people and win the victory, they needed only to follow Him confidently. Moses declared that this time the Israelites would not even have to pick up weapons in the battle. They needed only to watch calmly and confidently as He defeated their Egyptian enemies.

14:15. God instructed the Israelites to break camp. The people needed to take down and pack their tents, gather and pack belongings, round up the livestock, and prepare to move out at God's command. The process would have taken several hours at least, but they needed to demonstrate their faith by acting with confident obedience and trust.

14:16. God instructed Moses to stretch his hand and staff out toward the sea. Moses had used this staff in bringing the first (Ex. 7:17-20) and second plagues (8:5-6). At the Red Sea, Moses again would lift his staff above a body of water. This time God would divide the water of the sea. Moses' staff possessed no magical properties. The staff represented God's power and presence. Through His power and love, God would provide an unexpected way of escape by splitting the sea so the people and livestock could walk across safely.

14:17. Since chariots could not maneuver in muddy terrain, no reasonable chariot commander would drive a chariot down a pathway between two towering walls of water. However, to ensure His victory over the

Egyptian army, God—just as He had done before—would permit Pharaoh to stubbornly reject Him and to pursue his own plans. Ignoring any advice of his commanders to the contrary, the Egyptian king would order his troops into the sea bed to capture the Israelites. In the process He would doom his army.

14:18. God's purpose included more than punishing the Egyptians. Pharaoh and the Egyptians consistently had trusted in their own gods and military might. God hoped His destruction of their army would lead the Egyptian people to realize the worthlessness and powerlessness of their false gods, to recognize Him as the one true God, and to turn to Him in worship and faith.

14:31. God placed the pillar of cloud between the Egyptian army and the Israelites, preventing the Egyptians from attacking. Moses stretched his staff out over the sea; and God parted the sea with a strong east wind, enabling the Israelites to walk through the sea on dry ground. When the Egyptian chariots entered the pathway, they began to bog down. The Egyptians recognized God was fighting against them and tried to escape; but God brought the waters cascading back together, drowning Pharaoh's army (Ex. 14:19-30).