

Revitalize: Thinking about Journeys

After traveling with my family and my dad on a quick vacation, I was thinking about some of the journeys in the Bible. Noah, Abram, Moses, Jonah, and Paul (among many others) all had notable journeys. There was a lot of traveling in Bible times. Of course they travelled by foot, horseback, donkey, camel; while we travel in air conditioned cars, trains, planes & buses. We think we are a mobile society. The world always has been! It's in our blood to move around, explore and commute! We have wanderlust. We have itchy feet.

Now Noah's journey was probably the trip with the greatest amount of preparation and preplanning in the history of the world. It took Noah and his family years to build the ark and set up everything for their 'passengers'. Even the first moon landing didn't take as much time. Noah, with God's guidance, was the first doomsday prepper! He was preparing for a natural disaster of 'Biblical proportions'. And his journey was the ultimate reboot. God chose Noah for this journey because He was a righteous man and was faithful to the plan.

Abram's (pre-Abraham) journey was one of complete mystery. God said, 'get your stuff together and let's go!' Actually in Genesis 12: 1, "The Lord said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.'" Then verse 4 says; "So Abram left as the Lord told him". The opposite of Noah's time to prepare. Just a 'let's go now'! But again, Abram's faithfulness (not without a few goof-ups) gave him the ability to just get up and follow God in this mysterious journey. Abram didn't really know where he was going, he just followed the signs.

Moses took a few journeys in his life. The first was in a basket down a river, before he had any say in the matter. But God was watching out for him, so was his big sister. The journey separated him from his birth family legally, but it was an open adoption and he had the guidance and love of two families, one of wealth and power and one of Godly wisdom and heritage.

Moses' second journey was all about running away. He committed murder then ran. He was running away from authority, fear of retribution, and the consequences of his actions. He pretty much traveled alone on that journey. But he did find a new family and a new purpose. Sometimes it takes running away from your old life (of privilege) to really find God.

Moses' third journey is more like a road trip with your family or a youth group (only 40 years long). It was full of arguing, whining, and someone always asking, "are we there yet?" . Tempers flared. People were tired of the road trip food and there was lots of drama. It was hard to rein in all the cranky travelers. They were worse than people waiting in a line at an airport! Moses lost his temper a time or two and he had to suffer the consequences. You thought some of your road trips were tough, stuck in a car with your family for eight hours a day. Think of Moses and his whole million plus family just following God's road signs. Ugh! And it was not a very organized exodus either. Just pack it all up (including the loot from your neighbors) and go. It might have taken 40 years to repack and organize after that hurried departure.

Jonah's journey in some ways makes me laugh. God told Jonah to go this way, so Jonah turned and went the opposite way. But God pulled the ultimate reroute with his infinite and perfect GPS and made Jonah not only turn around, but forced him to use the most unique alternate transportation! Jonah finally made it to his arranged destination, but he was the definition of grumpy traveler on a business trip to his least favorite place. Not only that, but he lost his luggage on the way! Grumble, grumble, grumble; he was really unhappy with his 'boss'. In 4:9 Jonah says, "I am angry enough to die". What an unhappy man! I think we have run into these people in airports, hotels and restaurants. In spite of his grumpiness he still made the sale!

When I think of Paul and his journeys, I think of a world traveler, experienced, almost a jet-setter. Maybe today he's be that guy with all the frequent flyer miles. But I'm not sure I'd want to travel with him. "I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked." 2 Corinthians 11:23b-27. He really attracted disaster! But he always took every opportunity to go. His past disasters never stopped him. He was an extreme traveler! He makes me think of a race car driver that climbs out of a wreck, but races again the next week.

As I look at these journeys they speak to me about our journey as believers. Like Noah we have to be in tune with God's long range plans and be persistent in building ourselves up through prayer, worship, studying God's word, listening to Him and being aware of where He is at work. Noah had a gift for building; use your gifts as well. Be willing to reboot and restart or start something new, like Noah did. Maybe helping with a church plant is part of your journey.

Abram was willing to just say yes and start his mystery journey. The lesson here is to say yes and start walking.

Moses first journey involved having the right people around him to guide and protect him. This is another way God is telling us to be with a 'family' that will teach us about Him and give us the education for our future journeys. I think of our youth and faithful young adults that want to know more about how God wants them to live.

Moses' second journey was lonely. He ran away from his sin and tried to avoid consequences like we all do. But God confronted him, God forgave him, God put him to work because of his background and more importantly, because of his repentance.

Moses' third journey was long and hard. He had to deal with other people on this journey, and honestly on a good day that can be far from easy. Personalities clash, every form of pettiness and sin reared their ugly heads. When other people are involved, our patience can be sorely tested. And the longer you are with some people, the more irritating they can be. It's not always intentional. We need to

pray for the fruit of the Spirit to be strong in our lives when we have to deal with other people. Galatians 5:28-29, “For the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control. Against such there is no law.”

Paul was an unstoppable, intrepid, willing traveler. He was excited to take every opportunity to share the good news of Jesus. What an example. Interruptions in his travel itinerary didn't faze him—they were just extra opportunities to share! We don't have to travel as far as Paul. We can do what he did in our own community. Remember the population was smaller in Paul's time, and though he travelled far and wide to big cities like Rome and Corinth—Greeley and Fort Collins are the size that Corinth was back then. Even Rapid City, SD has 67,000 people. That's a lot of people that need to hear about Jesus.

So look at the type of journey you are on right now. Is it well planned, a mystery, educational, running from God and your shame, long and full of whiney children, running from God to be rerouted or full of excitement and adventure?!

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