

# Message Reflections

a little something extra to keep you connected to Jesus this week

*Message Reflections accompany the [weekly message](#).*

In December, I took my family on a journey. We set out from Noblesville with a plan to see the Grand Canyon. But, we didn't take a direct route; we went a roundabout way. We drove west to the Rocky Mountains, then we turned left. We drove south around the Guadalupe Mountains in Texas, then we headed west again. At Tucson, we turned north and headed toward Phoenix. A snowstorm in Flagstaff led us to go a little farther west than I planned, and eventually, we made it to the Grand Canyon. Why did we go in a roundabout way? I had two goals: see the Grand Canyon and don't drive through the mountains in a snowstorm.

Before we left, I told my kids, who aren't so little anymore, I don't want to hear "Are we there yet?" I said, "On this vacation, the journey is the destination." I gave them each a journal and I said to them, "On the journey, you are going to see beautiful and amazing things, things God created. Write about what you see in these journals, reflect on the goodness of God, and thank Him for all He has done."

I planned the trip meticulously, down to the half-hour when we would arrive at and depart from stops on the journey. Our journey was 4500 miles over ten days, and we were captivated by the beauty of God's creation day after day. Even with all my planning, things never quite went as I planned. We didn't get to see everything we wanted to, and we saw some things we didn't plan to. There was one day, when at the last minute I said, "Should we take a detour and go to Saguaro East?" and my wife said, "Why not?" So, we did. We arrived just as the sun was descending and saw the most beautiful sunset I have ever seen over the Arizona desert. Then we turned around and watched the full moon rise over the Arizona desert. Those 2 hours, watching God's glory on display, were probably my favorite moments of the entire journey, and guess what, it wasn't in my meticulous plans.

Do you ever feel like the journey of life takes a roundabout path? Do you find yourself thinking, "Why is it taking so long?" or "When we will get there?" or "Are we there yet?" Or maybe you wonder, how can this be the way? God, I think you took a wrong turn somewhere. This isn't going according to my plan! It's been said if you want to make God laugh, tell Him you have a plan.

The truth is God sees what we cannot, and He always leads His people in a perfect path and perfect plan. And He somehow does this even when we don't take the best way. God

has a way of making our good decisions and even our bad decisions work for our good. I don't know how He does it, but if we decide to keep seeking Him, and purpose in our hearts to trust and obey, He takes hold of us and helps us on the journey.

Paul said it this way, "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:12-14) Like Paul, I have not figured it all out yet. But this, I have learned, on the journey, I must keep my focus on the goal. If I don't, the things that don't go according to my plans will knock me off course and my journey will be even more roundabout as the LORD graciously brings me back to His plans and purposes for my life.

One more thought from our journey to the Grand Canyon... the journey brought us to a point where I could no longer accomplish my two goals. If we wanted to see the Grand Canyon, I would have to drive through a snowstorm in the mountains. (Who knew it snowed so much in Arizona?) Looking at the forecast for snow and the roads I would have to drive to reach the Grand Canyon, I had a moment of hopelessness. But rather than give in to the hopelessness, I prayed, "LORD bring us there and back safely, and I press on toward the goal." My plan was to spend an entire day at the Grand Canyon... in the end, we had about two hours. But we made it, and we enjoyed every minute.

The lesson here is sometimes God brings us to a place of hopelessness. Why? Well, sometimes, our goals conflict with each other. We want to follow Jesus, but we want to be comfortable. We want to follow Jesus, but we want to be safe. We want to follow Jesus, but we don't want to go through difficulties. When our goal of following Jesus conflicts with another life goal, God allows us to come to a place of hopelessness to remind us to keep our eyes on Him. He alone is the goal of our life. He alone is our hope. He gave this promise to the people of Israel after leading them through a hopeless situation at the Red Sea and He gives it to you and me in every step of our journey: "With our unfailing love You lead the people You have redeemed. In Your might, you guide them to your sacred home." (Exodus 15:13)

If right now, on your journey, you feel like God has taken a wrong turn, or things just aren't quite right, or you are feeling a little hopeless, I am "confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 1:6) It might be in a roundabout way, but He will complete it.

- Is God leading you on a roundabout journey right now?
- What is He teaching you on the journey?
- If you are stuck, asking, "Are we there yet?" have you considered keeping a daily journal of how and where God is leading you?

- How can the words Paul wrote to the Philippians encourage you today to press on toward your goal?

