

# Losing religion, finding relationship.

## *Enjoying the Journey of Relationship with Jesus*

Everyone eventually encounters unexpected detours, delays, or dead ends on their journey with Jesus. However, these often-confusing diversions provide invaluable opportunities for us to encounter God in profoundly beautiful ways. It all depends on how we choose to see them and respond to them.

How do you typically feel when you find yourself in unexpected circumstances?

Do you believe you missed God somewhere along the way? That you must have done something wrong? That you're not where you're "supposed" to be?

When unwelcome, unforeseen events occur, we often feel doubt, confusion, fear, and even shame.

But have you ever considered that perhaps you are exactly where God led you? What changes in your perspective when you think of it this way?

Let's take a closer look at a very familiar story found in Exodus 13, after Moses led Israel out of captivity in Egypt. Read Exodus 13:17-18. Describe the route God used when He led His people out of Egypt.

God led Israel on a detour, a deviation from a direct course or the usual path. Why did God take them on a longer route instead of the shorter, more direct one?

What does this tell you about God, His ways, and His care for you?

Read Exodus 14:1-4. Where did God lead Israel to camp, and for what reason?

After Pharaoh released God's people, he changed his mind and chased them down. Read Exodus 14:10-12 and describe all the ways Israel responded when they saw the approaching Egyptian armies behind them, and the Red Sea in front of them.

How do you typically respond when God's path leads you to impossibilities?

At the Lord's command, Moses stretched his hand over the sea, while the Lord drove it back with a strong wind. Read Exodus 14:22 and Psalm 77:19. What can you learn from these verses about impossible situations?

What recent detours, delays or dead ends have you experienced in your journey with Jesus?

Read Exodus 14:4, 31, Luke 8: 22-25, and John 11:14-15. List every reason why God would intentionally lead you into impossibilities. What might He want to teach you in the midst of your detours, delays and dead ends, and how does this alter the way you see them?

Reread Exodus 14:13-14 and write your own declaration of how you will choose to respond to your impossible situation.

Sometimes the detours, delays, and dead ends we encounter in this life are the result of our own doing. We're on the right track but get distracted along the way. A distraction is something that pulls or separates, creating confusion from things that pull on the mind.

We don't have to look any further in scripture than the first humans in Genesis 3. Adam and Eve became distracted by a voice that caused them to doubt God's wisdom and God's ways. So they chose their own path and created their own dead end.

But even then, even in our own derailment, there was grace. Consequences were experienced, but God *still* redeemed. Any impossibility we encounter only provides a greater opportunity for our great and merciful God! He is SO good!

Have you encountered a detour or delay in your life because of your own choices? If so, how do you need to repent? To repent is simply to change your mind and to change your direction. To move from your own direction on the path to God's direction.

Ultimately, it's not about WHAT happens to us; it's about how we respond to what happens and what we discover about God and ourselves in the midst of it. These detours are not always accidental; they are sometimes very integral to the journey of pilgrimage. So pay close attention to your experiences, and mine the gold waiting to be discovered.

