

Wandering in the Wilderness

This article is from the “Edifying the Body” section of the Church of God Big Sandy’s website, churchofgodbigandy.com. It was posted for the weekend of July 13, 2019.

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LEE’S SUMMIT, Mo.—What must it be like to lead the life of a nomad while realizing you are supposed to be destined for a promised land?

Look at a map (see page 3) that illustrates the 40-year wanderings of Israel in the wilderness. You’ll notice that they would bivouac in one location, but once settled in a camp—and settled in their ways—the word would come to break camp and move on.

For a while they would traverse the desert only to discover after some time that they were passing by the same mountain they had passed before.

I like being comfortable. I like sitting on the porch in the front of my house and watching the world go by. But such a life without risk is a dangerous way to live, and it is clearly not the way to add purpose to your life.

Refused to take a risk

Israel was in the wilderness for 40 years because the Israelites had refused to take a risk. They needed to learn lessons of faith, and they weren’t going to learn those lessons by sitting in front of their tents and waiting.

So every now and then that pillar of fire stirred, and the people of Israel had to break camp, pack their belongings and follow that pillar wherever it went.

That means to break out of habits, routines and comfort zones. Climb out of self-imposed ruts, take some risks, and try some new things, things that are bigger than you.

Something small

Maybe that means what might seem like something small.

- Pick up that phone and make a phone call to someone who is lonely.
- Drop off a casserole to a family in need.
- Make new friends who have different interests or backgrounds from yours.

A big thing

Or maybe it might be a big thing.

- Organize a community service group.
- Run for office.
- Write a book.
- Change careers.
- Climb a mountain or two.

Little discomfort

Comfortable might be comfortable, but it can lead to stagnation, laziness and lack of personal growth. Without a little discomfort, we'll never learn new things, never hone our gifts and talents, never reach the potential that God sees in us.

When the 40 years of wandering were complete, Moses passed the baton to Joshua to lead the people to their Promised Land.

His instructions to Joshua for the new challenge they were to face: "Be strong and of good courage. Do not be afraid . . . The LORD, He is the one who goes before you" (Deuteronomy 31:6, 8).

