

**And God spoke all these words, saying, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. “You shall have no other gods before me.**

**“You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.**

*Inspired.* It’s the word used in the pages of the Bible to describe itself. But what I hope you will find as we journey through these weeks together is that it’s not just the words on the page that are inspired, but it’s the person behind the words. The Gospel of John calls this person the Word, whose Spirit flows through each page we read together in this “Inspired” book. The Bible is inspired in such a way that it’s not just a set of instructions on how to get to heaven, but it’s so much more. These stories are an adventure, a drama, a narrative about a person, a rescuer, if you will.

If you’re anything like me, you don’t really care for instruction manuals. I don’t always use them—sometimes I pay for it. So for your amusement, I brought in a few instructions from products that are less than helpful.

"Caution: Hot beverages are hot!" -- *On a coffee cup.*

"Caution: Remove infant before folding for storage." -- *On a portable stroller.*

"Do not drive with sunshield in place." -- *On a cardboard sunshield that keeps the sun off the dashboard.*

"Caution: The contents of this bottle should not be fed to fish." -- *On a bottle of shampoo for dogs.*

“Cape does not enable user to actually fly.” – *On a package containing a batman Halloween costume. (Not only bad instructions, but wrong superhero mythology.)*

These instructions are just not that helpful. And frankly, if we think of the Bible as nothing more than a set of instructions, I don’t think we’re going to find it all that helpful either. The Bible is not just a set of instructions, it’s so much more. The Bible is a drama, it is a narrative of God’s involvement in real life, in people who – even though they lived in a very different time – are human just like we are, and people who struggle just like we do with very human issues. People who have jobs that feel more like a grind than paradise; people who suffer because they love their children so much that when they wander, it feels as though their heart is being ripped out of their chest; people who have to get up and speak in front of colleagues and are terrified by it. This is real stuff, folks.

And similarly, it is easy for us to get off track, to lose our way. People from time to time just plain get lost. One of my favorite books of all time is one called *Into Thin Air*. It's the hair-raising story of a Mt Everest Expedition team who finds themselves trapped high on the mountain in dangerously unpredictable weather. What anyone who climbs these high altitudes will tell you is that it takes days, even weeks for your body to orient itself to high altitude. And even when acclimated, the foreignness of the environment can easily lead a person to make irrational and life threatening decisions. One climber, in fact, ventured out from camp in the middle of a horrendous blizzard, because he thought one of the team members was missing. He knew better, and yet three days later, he was found frozen in the snow 1,000 yards from camp.

In situations like this, it's easy to get disoriented. Even the most skilled people can very quickly find themselves lost. Climbing experts and people who do orienteering for a living will tell you that if you give the average person a map and ask them to locate themselves—more often than not, they will be wrong. That's because there are times when our mental maps aren't altogether reliable; sometimes we lose our sense not only where we are, but who we are, as well.

This is exactly what happens to the Israelites after they are set free from slavery in Egypt. Not more than a few days into the wilderness, things begin to break down. Briefly, to bridge the gap between Genesis and Exodus, fast forward a few years and there is a new Pharaoh in town, and Joseph and his family are no longer known. So the Israelites find themselves in captivity to a king who is brutal to them. Then, in a matter of God's miraculous work, another young Hebrew amazingly rises through the ranks and ends up in Pharaoh's inner circle. This man's name was Moses.

God calls Moses to lead his people out of Egypt, miraculously crossing the Red Sea and into the wilderness in a place called Shur, which I believe is just on the other side of Logansport. And it's not long after this that the memory of God's mighty act of leading them begins to fade, not long after that the memory of what they left and the hardship they endured left, not long after the promise of provision of manna in the morning and quail in the evening was fulfilled that the people began to get disoriented. Their mental maps became fuzzy and they were just plain lost.

This can happen in the desert wilderness or it can happen in our life, the inability to hold onto an accurate mental map. So I want to ask you today, where are you as you came to church today? Where are you? In what ways is the mental map that you hold onto, seem to be kind of out of sync with things? What doesn't seem right? How well is that map working for you today? I'm talking about in the day-to-day of your life, what doesn't seem to be where it's supposed to?

[Speak to congregation about where we are and where we are going...]

In life, there are times when our mental maps break down. Climbing experts and those who do search and rescue, as well as cognitive scientists, have determined that lost means

30 minutes of not knowing where you are. Maybe that's why they call it lost in love, because when it happens, we go ga-ga and forget where we are.

But the good news is that Exodus is not just a book in the Bible. Exodus is an action; and it is an ongoing action. Exodus is God's search and rescue mission for people who get lost. **God is saying to us, "I know you don't know where you are, but I know where you are. I brought you out, I provided for you in your deep need, I am leading you, and even if you don't realize or feel it or want to admit it, I am here for you."**

"I am" is actually God's way of self-identification. Who's bringing us out of captivity? "I am." Who's putting food on the table? "I am." Who is watching our back even as we're being pursued by our enemies? "I am." Who's the one who even when we've forgotten, when we've lost our way, doesn't leave our side? "I am." *I am* is a powerful identification. You see, it's not just a pronoun, there's a verb, an action, a completeness to the way God identifies himself. *I am*.

And it's this same "I am" who offers the people the Ten Commandments. **I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.** Look at the way this verse is phrased. It tells us so much about how I believe God wants us to understand these Ten Commandments. Do you see? "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt. **These aren't the things you have to do to become my people, you're already mine. You're already rescued.**" And so when we see the Ten Commandments in this light, having already been rescued, we begin to see that they're not set of instructions on what to do or what not to do. What we see in them is the person behind them, the person who led them and who leads us out of places of bondage and into new life.

But anyone who has ever had to use a map or a compass knows that the line between being located and being lost is sort of fuzzy. Expert climbers, expert scuba divers, have found themselves very confident in their location, only to realize that they were well off the map. I heard someone once say that you know you're lost when you start tapping the compass. "This can't be right, the compass must be broke." But in the Ten Commandments, God gives Moses and the people 10 ways in which they can find themselves lost. I want to go through them very briefly:

1. Verse 2: Lost in our faith.
2. Verse 4: Lost in our addictions.
3. Verse 7: Lost in empty words.
4. Verse 8: Lost in our work.
5. Verse 12: Lost in our families.
6. Verse 13: Lost in our anger.
7. Verse 14: Lost in our sex lives.
8. Verse 15: Lost in our money.
9. Verse 16: Lost in our relationships.
10. Verse 17: Lost in our yearnings.

The good news is we have a guide, we have a resource that can help us get through the wilderness: the Bible. And all we have to do is look to the stories, look to the promises.

A couple years ago, around the time the movie *Castaway* was made, there was a FedEx commercial that aired during the Super Bowl with a similar theme. It's this bedraggled delivery guy who has had this package with him as he was stranded on a desert island. Finally, he's able to make the delivery to the owner and then as he's about to leave, he says to the woman, "You know I brought this package all the way back to you, I'm wondering what is so important, what's in this box." And she says, "Oh, not much, just a GPS tracking device, sat phone, compass, water purification system, and some seeds."

I don't know about you, but I don't want to be that guy. I don't want to be the guy who doesn't realize that within these pages is Jesus Christ. He's our guide, he's the one we can turn to.

Do you know where you are? This week, we worked with a young man who aged out of White's Residential services and was set up to succeed here. He had a good job down at Eugenia's, an apartment, and people who wanted to see him succeed. But every turn in the road, it seemed like he was making precisely the wrong decision. He was letting the wrong people speak into his life, instead of letting Jesus Christ define him, letting the pages of the Bible be his narrative. And it's heartbreaking to see him spiral even as people are trying to help him. He's lost and he doesn't even realize it.

Where are you this morning? Did you wake up this morning in the middle of a white out? Are you disoriented and unsure where to turn? The good news is that in the pages of this book in the story of the Bible. Even here in the Exodus, there is a Savior, there is one who doesn't keep us from ever having to face the wilderness, but someone who leads us into the wilderness. And that person is Jesus Christ

And this Exodus story is not just an isolated story; it becomes a paradigm for the rest of the Bible, and for our lives. Exodus will be the thing that God enters within each of us, leading us out. Jesus will allow this to define his ministry. Matthew says, "Out of Egypt my son was called." Jesus begins his ministry in the wilderness; he actually recapitulates the Exodus for everybody. The early church was the same; they understood themselves to be living in exile in a time and place where they felt alone.

So I ask you again, where are you this morning? Are you facing something that looks just bigger than yourself? Or maybe you don't know that you're lost, or are too ashamed to admit it. Do you know Jesus? Do you know that he died and is risen for you? Maybe you're unsure or afraid to follow Jesus because he's a rugged guide and will lead you through some pretty intense wilderness times in our family, in our work, in our relationships. This is a difficult journey, and I want to encourage you to get to know Jesus and ask him to increase your capacity to face and endure struggle.

Where are you today? And let me also ask, where else would you turn? Jesus says that he came to seek and save the lost. He talks about being a shepherd who goes out after that

one lost sheep. He says to you and me, “I have come that you might have life and life to the full.” And that means letting Jesus, his life, his love, his grace be your compass will lead you into more beautiful and important vistas than you will ever see.

Briefly in closing, at the end of Deuteronomy, it says that Moses never actually makes it into the Promised Land. And this could be discouraging if we didn’t know the rest of the story. Moses does make it. Matthew 17, in the story of the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus is there with Elijah and Moses. You see, no matter what, with Jesus you will make it. It may take time. Heck, it may even take a lifetime, but with Jesus as your guide, hope is never lost. Amen.