

Why There are No Shortcuts for You in Christ

I once knew a young man who felt called to ministry. He wanted to become a pastor. He was so certain of this calling on his life, he felt he did not have time to finish Bible school.

Despite warnings to the contrary, he dropped out of school and started looking for an open pulpit. Though he was only 22 years old or so, he was a gifted teacher, and he quickly found a position in a small church.

His immaturity, however, began to cause problems with the congregation. He was disrespectful to the elders, tyrannical with the people and heedless with his words. In less than a year, he found himself forced out of the ministry, depressed and dejected.

The children of Israel had a quick lesson to learn about following God. They knew they were heading to the land of Canaan. They would have assumed that they would simply follow the coastal route up out of Egypt, along the Mediterranean and be back in Canaan in a few days. God does not take shortcuts.

Now when Pharaoh had let the people go, God did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, even though it was near; for God said, "Let the people change their minds when they see war, and they return to Egypt" (Ex. 13:17).

The coastal highway was guarded by Egyptian garrisons. God did not want the military confrontations to dissuade the people. Besides, He had some important things to teach them in the wilderness before they arrived at Canaan. He wanted to deliver them at the Red Sea, teach them about His provision and give them the Torah at Sinai before leading them to the land.

We are often in a hurry to reach our dreams and our goals. It

is frustrating to take long cuts through the wilderness. God is more interested in seeing us develop in spiritual maturity than He is in seeing us arrive at our dreams and goals.

He will often lead us on long, seemingly circuitous routes in order to teach us and prepare us for the things that lie ahead. He wants to build our character. When we rush in without His leading and training, we find ourselves surprised by the challenges and quickly overcome.

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