



The Way Out Is The Way Through

Date: Sunday 3rd January **Speaker:** Charles Montgomery (Vineyard Columbus, Ohio, USA)

Key Verses: Exodus 16

Talk Summary:

Charles talked about how God leads his people through the wilderness in order to grow them, using the story of the Israelites' journey from Egypt.

The Israelites first came to a place called Elim, a comfortable place with trees and water, an easy place to stay. Just like our lives when everything's going well, it would be easy to get comfortable in Elim. But God doesn't let his people stay there long - instead he leads them into the wilderness, the desert around Mount Sinai, where there is no food and little water for them and where going is hard. This is to help them grow and mature - God is much more concerned with our growth than our comfort. This is true in the 'wilderness' of Covid and current life as much as it was for the Israelites.

While in the wilderness, God fed his people with manna and quail. Not necessarily what they wanted but what they needed. They weren't to be greedy (e.g. storing up for the next day) but to learn to trust God every day and to make sure everyone had a fair share. These principles of trusting God, of rising early and starting our day with him, of laying aside greed and making sure that everyone has enough are guiding principles that Christ teaches us too, and that are central to who God is and who he wants his people to be.

God didn't rescue his people from difficulty but walked with them. He didn't let them stay in comfortable places but led them into difficulty so they could learn about who he was and to trust him. This is the opportunity we have at the moment.

Worship

Worship is not just singing, it is thanking God for who he is and what he has done and is lived out through a life of trusting obedience. Discussing this together is an act of worship.

(Small group worship resources can be found at bvc.so/sgworship)

- What are you thankful for this week?
- Where has God been at work in your life?
- When have you taken risks in faith and obedience this week?

If you have a time of singing you can skip the above questions but please do ask this question each week:

- What has God been speaking to you about this week? (*Go around the group quickly don't spend a long time on it*)

Discussion Questions (choose some which are most relevant to your group)

- Read Exodus 16 (you could pick out specific verses to read, or summarise the talk and then read the whole chapter together, perhaps with different people reading each section).
- What do you think of the idea that God leads his people into difficulty in order to grow them spiritually? Discuss how far you agree with this principle.
- What surprising or unlooked-for blessings have you encountered from wilderness periods? It could be from the last months of Covid-19 or from another time in your life.
- How is God calling you to model your life on Christ's and/or on God's character over the next year? Perhaps in similar ways to those the Israelites were invited to change during their wilderness time
- Sometimes we feel like things need to be going well before we try to tell someone else how good God is and invite them to follow Jesus. How can we use wilderness times as effective parts of our witness to the gospel?

Witness

We want to be investing in authentic relationships with those who don't know Jesus yet and inviting them to anything where they might meet other Christians and Jesus.

- How would you share what you have learned with a non-church friend?
- What church events coming up would your friends appreciate an invitation to?
 - A new online Alpha course starts on 12th January, do you have any friends or family who have questions about faith or God? Invite them to check out Alpha. Details at bvc.so/alpha