

1. I think we are fortunate to live in an area where we get to experience all four seasons. Of course, the downside to that is that it means the seasons are always in transition.
2. The saying is, if you don't like the weather, just hang around for a few minutes and it will change.
3. The same is true for our lives. Life has seasons, and seasons represent transition. Which most of us don't like.
4. Transition has been described as a moving from one season, into a land of the unknown or in-between, to eventually get to a new season or territory.
5. The story of the Israelites transition from Egypt, to the promised land is an example of that type of seasonal change.
6. The wandering Israelites is a story that on the one hand makes sense. They were afraid of where the future was taking them. They were afraid of where God was leading them because where God was leading them was a place that was unknown.
7. In this story the Israelites had a choice, and we are going to talk about that choice as we go along in this study.
8. But on the other hand, they didn't really have much of a choice. To not go into the Promised Land was to disobey the command of God. To not move forward was equivalent to looking God right in the eye and saying, you're not my Lord and you are not my God.
9. Now I know that all lands in-between do not teeter on disobedience to God but yet the experience and how we handle it are just as vital to our continued relationship with God.
10. Chances are you might be in a transition place. A land in-between.
11. Now you might wonder, a land between what.
12. A land between what was once considered normal, through a place of absolute pain and suffering, and hopefully back to a place of peace and understand.
13. At various times in our lives, we go through such seasons.
14. You get called into the office and your boss says your position has been eliminated.

15. That text or call where the other person proclaims, I don't love you anymore.
16. Mom, Dad, I'm pregnant.
17. I'm having second thoughts about the wedding.
18. The call in the middle of the night, Dad, uh...I'm at the police station."
19. We're moving.
20. We think Mom has had a stroke. How soon can you get to the hospital?
21. Each and every one of those are things that rip us from everything we think of as normal and hurls us into a new world as if we were thrown from a moving car.
22. In an instant we stumble and fumble into the world of the unemployed.
23. Suddenly we are cast into the land of being single, the valley of the grieving.
24. Our new vocabulary becomes all about chemotherapy or weekly nursing home visits. That becomes our new world.
25. When our faith is strong and we are feeling confident we look at others who go through these types of things and we think we could make it if we had to, but when we are suddenly in-between and we are at a loss as to how to navigate this new territory we find ourselves in, we discover the answers don't come so easily.
26. Some are suddenly cast into this land between, but others experience a gradual entry into the land between.
27. Like the person whose business slowly deteriorates year after year until one day what stares them in the face is closing up shop.
28. For another the heart of their teenager slowly drifts away from their parents until one day they are neck deep in trouble.
29. Maybe a parent or a spouse experiences gradual memory loss and one day we awaken to realize, things can't continue on like they have been. Something has to change.
30. Whether we enter these land between experiences suddenly or gradually there is something very important that ties them together.

31. One of two things can happen as a result of experiencing a land between. We can either get better or we can get bitter.
32. In other words, these land between experiences can be fertile ground for spiritual transformation and growth to take place in our life.
33. But at the same time, these same experiences can give us an opportunity to become resentful and bitter and angry with God and those around us.
34. I love the quote Jeff Manion makes, **The wilderness where faith can thrive is the very desert where it can dry up and die** if we are not watchful.
35. That describes perfectly the opportunities that were staring the children of Israel right in the face.
36. God has just delivered them from the land of slavery. He had just delivered them from the land of bondage at the hands of their cruel enemies and in response, within a few chapters we find a leader in Moses who was on the verge of an emotional collapse, a resentful people spewing complaints all over the place, and a gracious God dealing out harsh discipline on the very people he loves with everything in him.
37. It did not go well for these folks in between the land of slavery and the land of promise.
38. And we have to know that the same challenges wait for us in our own land between experiences.
39. I know it, you know it, we have been taught it for many years. The truth is our greatest opportunities of spiritual growth don't occur when everything is going well, they usually occur when we are going through a time of disappointment, chaos or pain.
40. But we have to know that spiritual growth doesn't come naturally or automatically.
41. **Our response to God while in the Land between is what will determine whether our journey through this desert will result in deep positive growth or spiritual decline.**
42. I have heard a saying all my life that I am sure you have probably heard as well. "Time heals all wounds". How many by a show of hands has ever heard that saying?

43. You know I don't know where it originated from, but I would have to disagree with its message.
44. Time does heal some wounds, but I have also found that time leaves some people crusty and scabbed over and out of sorts.
45. Time is not what determines whether we make it through the land between, our trust in God is what determines whether we make it through.
46. Let's read together where the children of Israel entered this land between.

**TEXT:** **Exodus 13:17-18** When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter. For God said, "If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt." **18** So God led the people around by the desert road toward the Red Sea. The Israelites went up out of Egypt armed for battle.

**Exodus 13:20** After leaving Succoth they camped at Etham on the edge of the desert.

**TITLE:** **Your land Between.**

**INTRO:**

1. Now as you are well aware, this was not where their journey began. In fact, it was not even where Moses' and Israel's relationship began.
2. Moses, was not in a very good place. He was tending the sheep of his father-in-law, not because that was his calling, but because his anger had turned into murder and caused him to have to run for his life.
3. Moses turns to see a bush that is burning and out of that bush he basically hears God say to him, I am the God of Abraham, and I am the God of Isaac, and I am the God of Jacob.
4. I chose them and I called them, and I provided for them and now I have chosen and called you and I will provide for you.
5. So here is what I want you to do Moses. I have heard the cry of my people, and I am ready to deliver them and rescue them and you are the guy I want to use to complete this task.
6. We know that Moses is reluctant to accept this job responsibility but finally agrees to be the leader of this nation of people, but he doesn't do so on a whim.

7. Moses does so on a promise. Exodus 3:8 So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—
8. Now that is great news, but do you see the in between there. There will be a coming out of one land and an entering into another land.
9. What is interesting however is that God never specified how long that in-between time would be.
10. Maybe Moses thought it would be very quick and painless. Maybe Moses thought it would be a short trip that would be over in a flash. Boy, was he mistaken.
11. The trouble begins for Moses and this nation of Israel before they leave Egypt, but it doesn't get any better after they leave.
12. Let's go back to Exodus chapter 13. It says that God did not lead them through the area of the Philistines even though that way would be shorter.
13. It says that he lead them around by the desert. Verse 20 says that they camped on the edge of the desert.
14. Now understand something. If they had taken the road directly from Egypt to the Promised Land it would have taken them about five days journey to arrive there.
15. But God didn't take them that way. He took them through the wilderness and through the desert.
16. Have you ever wondered why in the world God would do that? Have you ever wondered why in the world God would allow that in our lives?
17. Why would God allow you and me to go through those times of in-between, when he could take us directly to the place he has planned for us?
18. I mean God already had this land flowing with milk and honey already picked out. He knew the exact place he wanted them to enter and begin to conquer.
19. But he didn't lead them directly there, he led them through the land between.
20. Why? I'm going to give you a few answers this morning but they all are related to relationship.
21. He took them through the land between because he was trying to build a relationship with them.

22. The desert and the land between was where they would be formed as a people and where God would establish his eternal connection with them.
23. They had entered into Egypt a family some 400 years before, but now they exited a nation, but they were not a nation that was accustomed to working together with one another and they were not accustomed to working together with God.
24. They were slaves and as slaves they didn't have many options. But now here they are with the promise of a land flowing with milk and honey set before them, but they are going to have to learn how to rely on God and what kind of relationship he expects from them.
25. Let me show you three things I see they need to learn.

### **They needed to learn to not be afraid.**

1. The most obvious reason why God didn't take them directly to the Promised Land was because they were a bunch of chickens.
2. They were not accustomed to trusting in God to deliver them from the hands of their enemies.
3. In fact, they had spent 400 years bowing down to their enemies, allowing those enemies to manipulate and control their every move.
4. A little dose of freedom wasn't going to magically transform them into a vibrant army.
5. Exodus 13:17 God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter. For God said, "If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt."
6. Here is the thing. They were following God, but they weren't completely sure about the God they were following.
7. It was a great thing that they were moving out away from this land of slavery, but they were still undecided as to whether they could really trust God fully.
8. God makes it very plain and clear why he chose to take them through the desert and the wilderness rather than directly up along the road.
9. God was afraid if somebody came out and said BOO to them that they would hightail it back to Egypt and beg the Egyptians to let them come back.

10. And God knew if they went back to Egypt, they would never see his promise fulfilled.
11. God is a God that can deliver us and take us where he wants us to be, but I can assure you the road to that destination is going to be filled with attacks of the enemy. And when those attacks come, we are going to have to know how to not only trust God, but to do spiritual battle the way God requires.
12. But we don't get the best spiritual training when everything is peachy. We get the best spiritual training when we are going through the land between. The desert. The wilderness.
13. It is not in the land of peace and safety that we can brag that God is our God. It is in the land between, the hard places, the tight places where we can boldly proclaim.
14. I've been through the fire and been through some skirmishes with the devil and I am convinced that sticking with Jesus is the best plan out there.
15. God allows us to go through the desert and the land between because it is there he can remove the chicken heart from us.
16. The second reason why God allows the land between.

### **It is there God proves his awesomeness.**

1. God chose to take them out into the desert and the wilderness because that was where the Red Sea was located.
2. There was no Red Sea along the road that led through the land of the Philistines.
3. Remember what happened at the Red Sea. God parts the waters; they stand up in a heap. The children of Israel walk across on dry ground.
4. The Egyptians follow in after them but right when the Egyptians are in the middle of the sea God causes the waters to roll back into place and all of the Egyptian soldiers are drown and the victory is won.
5. Listen to the response of the people when they looked back and saw all those dead bodies floating.
6. Exodus 15:19-21 When Pharaoh's horses, chariots and horsemen went into the sea, the LORD brought the waters of the sea back over them, but the Israelites walked through the sea on dry ground. 20 Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand,



and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing. 21 Miriam sang to them: "Sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea."

7. This event was a defining moment in their history. Generations to come would sing and remember the day that God delivered his people from the hand of the Egyptians.
8. Forever they would be reminded that God came through for them when they needed it most. The story would be told of how God had done such an amazing, awesome thing for Israel.
9. But none of this would have occurred if they had taken the easy road. It only happened because God took them through the desert. The land between.
10. I'm here to tell you that your land between and my land between are the places where we have an opportunity to see God at his best.
11. I am here to tell you that our land between experiences, as painful as they may be, are the best opportunities we will ever have to see the awesomeness of a God and savior who delights in coming through for us.
12. But those experiences don't happen on the easy road. They happen in the land between.
13. And finally. God allows the land between because...

### **It is there God teaches us what he requires.**

1. I want to ask you to think about the ten commandments for a moment.
2. Did you ever consider the fact that the Ten Commandments were birthed and given in the land between?
3. The Ten Commandments, that still hang in our courtrooms thousands of years later, were delivered by God, not in the land of promise but in the land between.
4. In the land between the people learned, this is what God is really like and this is what makes him happy and this is what makes him angry.
5. It was there in the land between that they were learning to relate to God as God required.
6. I submit to you that it is through those in-between times that God has the best chance of speaking to our heart in a significant way.
7. It is through those in-between times that he has got our attention.



8. It is through those in-between times that we are faced with a choice, am I going to listen to my savior. Am I going to follow my savior?
9. Or am I going to try and make it on my own.

Conclusion:

1. It's a decision that all of us have to make.
2. Will I trust God and allow him to do what he wants to, or will I run from him and try my own thing?
3. Will I allow him to remove the fear from my life so I can be a spiritual warrior, or will I allow fear to grip my life more deeply so that I become paralyzed and afraid to do anything of any significance?
4. Will I allow God to show me how awesome he is, or will I allow myself to wallow in self-pity and doubt?
5. Will I allow God to teach me, or will I take on the attitude that I know it all and don't need to be taught.
6. They are choices we all have to make, but none more critical than when we are in the land between.
7. Ask people to stand.
8. This morning I want to ask for two responses from you.
9. I will obey the Lord and will go where he wants me to go.
10. I will be available to help others in their land between.
11. Commit to following the Lord where he leads.
12. Signal.
13. Have people sit.