



Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

No More Wandering

The speaker at church last Sunday, Devern Fromke, pointed out the difference between a pilgrim and a wanderer.

He was referring to those Israelites in the book of Exodus who left Egypt as pilgrims on their way to Canaan, but became wanderers — spending 40 years in the wilderness of Sinai before they finally reached their destination. According to Fromke, a pilgrim may do a lot of wandering but he has direction. He knows where he is going. A wanderer, on the other hand, has no goal. He's lost his direction. Both people are on the move — but only one is going anywhere.

Every once in a while I think of Harry Gasque. Harry was a wanderer. A number of years ago when I lived in Greenwood, S.C., I had my office on busy U.S. Highway 25, which was the main highway between Asheville, N.C., and Augusta, Ga. About twice a year Harry would stop by my office. He was a hobo, hitchhiking up and down the roads of

the south. In his 60s, with no known family, he carried everything he owned in a battered old suitcase.

One afternoon I left the office early and spotted Harry near the traffic light, hitchhiking south — toward Augusta. I stopped and chatted with him for a moment, talking through the car window while I waited for the light to change so I could get home to mow the grass.

"You got business in Augusta?" I asked.

"Nope."

"Then why are you going there?"

"Well, I really wanted to go to Asheville. But it seems like all the cars are heading south this time of year. So I just crossed the road and decided to go to Augusta instead."

Harry Gasque was a wanderer. He had no goal.

Pilgrims, according to Fromke, look like wanderers. They stop and start. They occasionally change direction. They may even have a carefree attitude about them. But eventually they'll be back on the

path — heading toward their goal. They know where they are going.

Not so with the wanderers. All they do is clog the passageway.

I've been doing a lot of thinking about that since last Sunday. A lot of what I do is meaningless. It has no purpose or goal. It is senseless activity without design. I sit and stare at the TV. I eat junk food. I argue with my wife over stupid things. I worry about tomorrow. I feel guilty about yesterday. I do things because I've always done them, or because others "expect" me to do them. It's all wandering.

On the other hand, there are many things in my life which have real purpose. They move me closer to my goal in life. Maybe it's time, as I come up on my 46th birthday, to differentiate between the two — the wanderings and the pilgrim activities — omit that which takes me no place and give priority to that which moves me closer to my goal.

If not, I could be like my friend, Harry, and when I am 66, still be hitchhiking with the traffic.