

# The Last Word

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

He was referring to those Israelites in the book of Exodus who left Egypt as pilgrims but became wanderers, spending forty years in the wilderness of Sinai.

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 has lost his direction. Both are on the move, but only one is going somewhere.

I thought back to Harry Gasque. Old Harry was a wanderer. Back when I was pastor of a Baptist church in South Carolina, I had my office on busy U.S. 25. About twice a year Old Harry would ramble into my study on his way north or south—depending on the season. He was a hobo, in his mid-sixties, with wrinkled face, watery eyes and a toothless grin.

One spring morning Old Harry stopped by to chat. He was headed north, he said, to Asheville, North Carolina. He tried on several pair of mis-matched shoes from our "care closet," turned down my invitation to lunch ("I don't want to feel obligated," he grinned), and was on his way. Everything he owned was in his battered old cardboard suitcase.

Shortly afterward I left the office and spotted Harry along the highway, hitchhiking south.

"I thought you were going north," I said as I waited for the traffic light to change.

"Well," he said, spitting a stream of tobacco juice on the sidewalk, "it seems most of the traffic is headed south. So, I just crossed the road and decided to head on down to Augusta instead."

Harry Gasque, with all his freedom, was a wanderer. He had no goal.

Pilgrims aren't like this. They may have a carefree attitude, but they also have purpose. They know where they are going.



I have a friend who, even though he is at the helm of a huge charismatic ministry, is a wanderer. If there's a new path before him, he breaks into a run. As a result, he has led his sheep up several blind canyons of false doctrine and across the burning desert of impossible financial debt. He comes up with a dozen different projects a week. Even though his employees love him, they are confused by his lack of direction. Very few of his staff stick longer than two years. There is sad speculation he may die in the wilderness—still going in circles.

You see, sheep aren't the only ones who wander. So do shepherds. They don't do much damage as long as they move slowly, and have a small flock. But let an insecure man get in a hurry and he becomes a destroyer, running over structures, bashing down time-tested principles, ripping up roots trying to find himself and prove to the world that he's a success.

The true filling of the Spirit brings stability. Not the kind that keeps us from moving, but the kind that gives direction to our movement. Otherwise we wander from ministry to ministry, job to job, church to church, doctrine to doctrine—always looking, never finding.

Ten years ago when I moved into the charismatic dimension I entered as a free-floater—a helium-filled balloon. I was every place the wind of the Spirit was blowing. Conferences. Prayer groups. Conventions. I felt I had been called to meet every need. I hardly had time for my family, much less to obey God.

Now I realize that unless freedom has restraints, it leads to wandering. The free-floater may give the impression of liberty, but actually he's no different than Old Harry who was scared

to death of strings.

The hardest kind of discipline, and the most necessary, is the discipline of submitting one to another.

God not only looses those bound with chains, but he sets the solitary in families. (Psalm 68:6). And living together is the hardest discipline of all.

In the midst of his soaring passage in Ephesians 4-5, where he encourages us to fulfill our God-given ministries, Paul warns us to temper our call with submission.

The man who says, "I submit only to God" is just as foolish as the man who says, "I submit only to my shepherd." Our spiritual family consists not just of me and the Trinity, nor of me and those in covenant relationship with me. It is made up also of "other sheep which are not of this fold."

Free-wheeling charismatics need to have their strings attached to keep them from doing crazy things. Those in the "discipleship movement" need to learn to soar again.

The cry is for balance.

Recently, a man wandered through our community on his way to nowhere. He justified his wandering by quoting I Corinthians 7:23. "Ye are bought with a price, be not ye the servants of men."

He was angered, and soon moved on, when I suggested he needed to read on to I Corinthians 9:19 where Paul added, "For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more."

God has a clear word for the church today: Quit ostracizing your brothers. Submit to one another. Enter corporate life. Come into order for the perfecting of the saints.

It is the only way we'll ever cease our wandering—and enter Canaan.