

STANDING ON THE THRESHOLD
Numbers 33
Crossroads/La Paz, Mexico/Joyce Anderson-Reed

A. Story of Merilee’s Photo Album

1. Trip to Peru, come over, just got them back
2. I’m expecting a handful of pictures
3. A beautiful album, everything labeled, borders, wrote in calligraphy, journal entries in the side bars
4. The words, pictures stirred vivid memories of the trip

B. Our lives are full of themes that make up the journey

1. How do you recall the themes of your life journey? How do you talk about where you’ve been? Major events that have shaped your life? People that have impacted your beliefs?
2. And, even more importantly, where do you find God in the midst of the journey? Where does God show up in your life? How do you include or exclude God in your story? How has God changed your story?

C. As you ponder these questions, I invite you to this morning’s theme of “Thresholds”

1. Many of us are standing on the thresholds of new decisions, new careers, new relationships.
2. We’re looking out the door at The Promised Land. A new place God has called us to. What are you thinking?
 - a. (refer to picture) It’s breath-takingly beautiful, but also intimidating.
 - b. It gives us hope, but at the same time causes anxiety.
 - c. It’s full of light and redemption, but the dark shadows around us feel familiar.

3. Will we step through to door? Will we cross over the threshold?

D. That’s the question the Israelites faced as they finally came to the border of Canaan, the land God had promised to give them. Where they could start over after years of slavery in Egypt. Would they step over the threshold into Canaan?

Turn to Numbers 33 in your Bibles this morning. Because God asks Moses to do something fascinating at this point in Israel’s history.

Read Numbers 33.

E. Why did God have Moses write all these places down?

- a. Wanted Moses to record his missionary travelogue.
- b. Wanted to list the top 42 camping sites on the Sinai Peninsula.
- c. Wanted to provide a road map for future Biblical Archeologists.
- d. None of the Above.

F. Or maybe God wanted the Israelites to Remember.

To Remind them of the journey thus far. They had overcome the great obstacles of leaving slavery in Egypt, crossing the Red Sea and traveling through the Sinai Desert to the border of the Promised Land (Canaan).

G. **And, God also wanted them to remember** that he had faithfully stayed with them from the beginning until now. If he had not abandoned them yet, then surely he would stay with them to their ultimate goal: crossing over into Canaan.

H. So let's look at the story:

Locations #1-14

1. **Egypt**: The Exodus

2. **Succoth**: *Unknown*

3. **Etham**: Unknown

4. **Pihahiroth**: *Trapped between Egyptians & Red Sea, God parts the Sea*

5. **Marah**: Bitter Water Changed

6. **Elim**: *Twelve Springs, Abundance*

7. **Red Sea**: Remembering Deliverance

8. **Wilderness of Sin**: *Manna & Quail Given*

9. **Dophkah**: Unknown

10. **Alush**: *Unknown*

11. **Rephidim**: Water from the Rock

12. **Wilderness of Sinai**: *10 Commandments*

13. **Kibroth-hattaavah**: People tired of Manna & Quail, Plague

14. **Hazereth**: *Miriam & Aaron jealous of Moses*

Locations #15-32

15. Rithmah

16. Rimmon-perez

17. Libnah

18. Rissah

19. Kehelathah

20. Mount Shapher

21. Horadah
22. Makheloth
23. Tahath
24. Terah
25. Mithkah
26. Hashmonah
27. Moseroth
28. Bene-jaakam
29. Hor-haggidgad
30. Jotbathah
31. Abronah
32. Ezion-geber

Locations #33-42

33. Kadesh: Miriam died & buried here, Moses hit rock instead of speaking to it so denied access to Canaan

34. Mount Hor: Aaron's burial place

35. Zalmonah: Unknown

36. Punon: Unknown

37. Oboth: People grumble, God sends poisonous snakes & many die

38. Iyim: Desert that faces Moab (face to face with enemies)

39. Dibon-gad: Victory over Amorites

40. Almon-diblathaim: Unknown

41. Mounts of Aborim: Moses views Promised Land, told Joshua will succeed him

42. Plains of Moab: camped along the Jordan River across from Jericho

I. 25 Unknowns . . . 18 Unknowns Smack Dab in the Middle

WHY????

What do they mean?

What's happening during this part of the journey?

- J. **We know that life didn't stop during these other camp sites.** People were still being born, dying, getting married, preparing meals, caring for livestock, learning their crafts, participating in worship. In short, they were going about their normal, every-day tasks. Nothing too special going on. No miracles. No special scenery to take note of. No enemies to fight. In essence, no drama. But God is there. Being faithful. Plodding along beside you, day to day.

Have you ever felt like that? Life is so ordinary, almost boring, not really going anywhere, just the routine of daily tasks. God is there but no spectacular fireworks. It just feels like an UNKNOWN. Not sure why you're there or even if it makes sense in the grand scheme of life, but God appears to have led you there, so you stay . . . until God says to move again.

What is this part of the journey about?

God is giving validation to the ordinary parts of the journey. The day in, day out grind. Just struggling from day to day in order to get to the next threshold.

All those stopping places were important, even if they didn't seem important. They encouraged you to be faithful even when you didn't feel like it, even when there wasn't a miracle to renew your faith, even when your diet was always the same, even when all you saw before you was more, and more, and more desert!

God told Moses to write all those times down. To include them in the story. Because without them, they wouldn't be where they were today.

- K. **Are you standing on a threshold?** Has God brought you to a particular place in your personal journey, and now he's asking you to stop for a minute, to recall the places you've "camped" in order to get you to this place? What would you discover if you took time to do this? Well . . . I'm going to invite you to remember on a small scale this morning. (Pass out paper)

- L. **2006**
2005
2004

What significant event(s) happened during each year?

(Marriage, Divorce, Birth, Death, Career Change, Started a business, Move to new location, Illness, Recovery, Accepted Christ, Baptism, Acquired new hobby, Learned a new sport, Exercise regularly, Adopted new eating patterns, Read my Bible every day, Pray regularly, Started a Charity, Volunteer at a Charity, Took a significant trip, Celebrated a memorable anniversary, Went back to school, Graduation, Awards earned)

OR

Was it just an ordinary year?

Everything was normal, routine.

- M.** As you examine some of the major events of your life the last three years, where was God? On the sidelines? In the thick of it? Holding your hand? Carrying you? Chastising you? Cheering you on? Wiping your tears? Sharing a good laugh? Or just simply walking beside you through routine, through the ordinary?
- N.** Now remember, our text was not about an individual story, but it was a community story. It took everybody's individual stories and wrapped them up in one big story of faith. So what does that mean for you and me today? We might stand on the threshold of an individual story, but what about the larger picture?

O. As an individual . . .

**You bring your personal journey to
Crossroads Christian Fellowship
Where it becomes part of the community journey of faith!**

N. All the events in your life for the last three years . . .

You bring to the community journey of Crossroads.
All our journeys get woven together for this time and this place.
God honors them all.

So maybe we need to take the risk to share more parts of our individual stories, so that our community story makes sense. This way we have a clearer understanding of how it's taking shape. Of why God has woven this particular group of people together.

When we begin to rehearse our separate stories to each other, then we begin to see how they fit together. Why God has let our lives intersect herein La Paz.

That's my challenge to you this morning: **First**, that you'll pray for guidance from the Holy Spirit to risk sharing some piece of your personal story with a person in this room that you've never shared with before. And **Second**, that God will bless you with wisdom to see how your two stories fit together. And **Third**, how your two stories might fit to 2 stories over there, and then your four stories to 2 more stories over there, and so on!

- O. We stand at the threshold of 2007**, all our stories gathered in this room, and we wait for God to unveil his community story for Crossroads.

What's waiting for us outside the door? What Challenges? Obstacles? Surprises?

God is urging us forward, while at the same time saying:

*Do not be afraid.
I will go with you.*

Are WE ready to cross over the threshold?

