

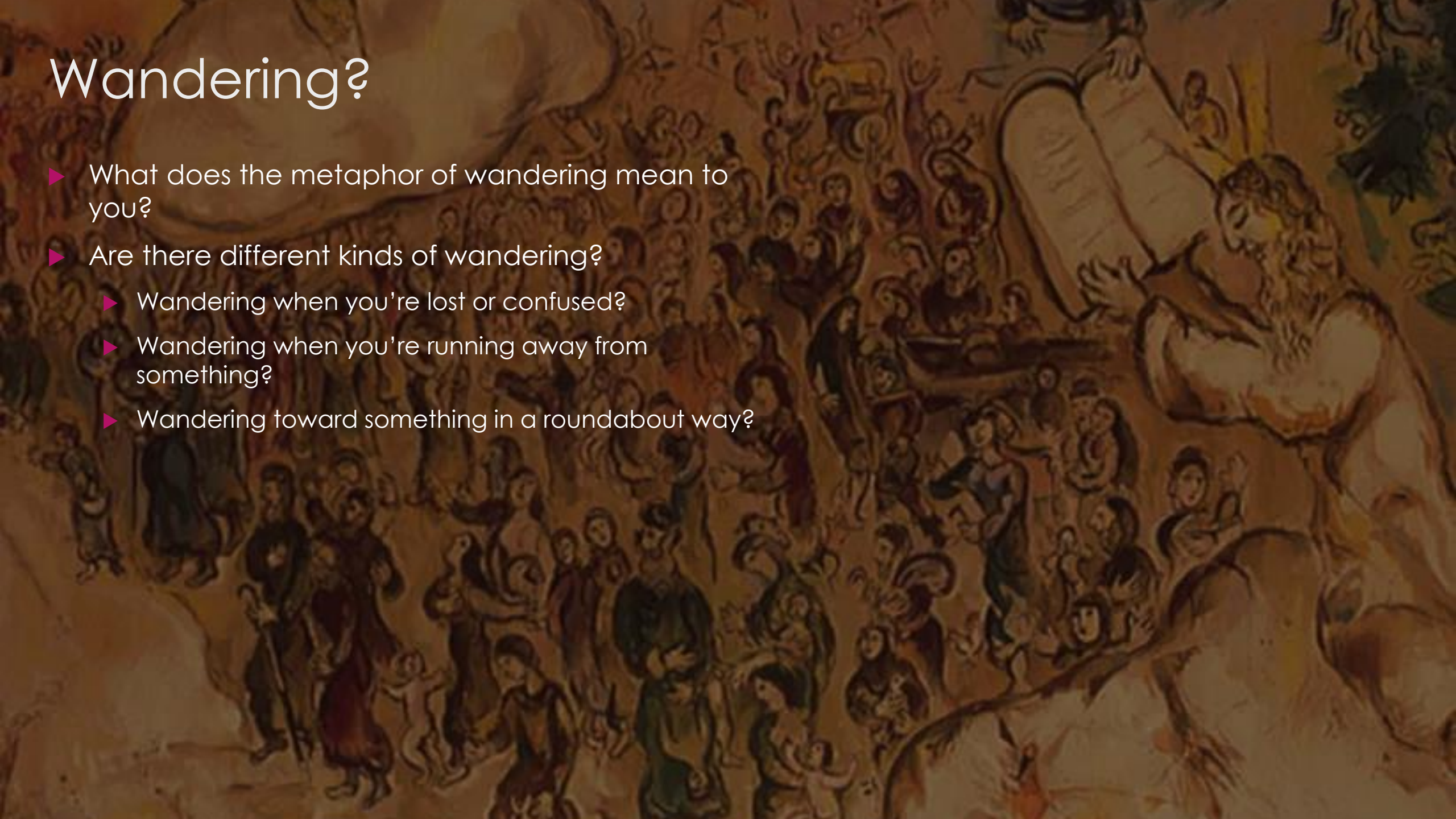


Wandering Toward God

SCRIPTURE AND POETRY READINGS

Wandering?

- ▶ What does the metaphor of wandering mean to you?
- ▶ Are there different kinds of wandering?
 - ▶ Wandering when you're lost or confused?
 - ▶ Wandering when you're running away from something?
 - ▶ Wandering toward something in a roundabout way?



It All Begins with Wandering

- ▶ Genesis 20:13 And when God caused me to wander from my father's house...



Wonder as Wander – Sharon Olds

At dusk, on those evenings she does not go out,
my mother potters around her house.
Her daily helpers are gone, there is no one
there, no one to tell what to do,
she wanders, sometimes she talks to herself,
fondly scolding, sometimes she suddenly
throws out her arms and screams—high notes
lying here and there on the carpets
like bodies touched by a downed wire,
she journeys, she quests, she marco-polos through
the gilded gleamy loot-rooms, who is she.
I feel, now, that I do not know her,
and for all my staring, I have not seen her
—like the song she sang, when we were small,
I wonder as I wander, out under the sky,
how Jesus, the Savior, was born for, to die,
for poor lonely people, like you, and like I
—on the slow evenings alone, when she delays

and delays her supper, walking the familiar
halls past the mirrors and night windows,
I wonder if my mother is tasting a life
beyond this life—not heaven, her late
beloved is absent, her father absent,
and her staff is absent, maybe this is earth
alone, as she had not experienced it,
as if she is one of the poor lonely people,
as if she is born to die. I hold fast
to the thought of her, wandering in her house,
a luna moth in a chambered cage.
Fifty years ago, I'd squat in her
garden, with her Red Queens, and try
to sense the flyways of the fairies as they kept
the pollen flowing on its local paths,
and our breaths on their course of puffs—they kept
our eyes wide with seeing what we
could see, and not seeing what we could not see.

Wilderness Wandering

- ▶ **Exodus 14:1-13** Then the LORD said to Moses: ² Tell the Israelites to turn back and camp in front of Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, in front of Baal-zephon; you shall camp opposite it, by the sea. ³ Pharaoh will say of the Israelites, "They are wandering aimlessly in the land; the wilderness has closed in on them." ⁴ I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them, so that I will gain glory for myself over Pharaoh and all his army; and the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD. And they did so. ⁵ When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the minds of Pharaoh and his officials were changed toward the people, and they said, "What have we done, letting Israel leave our service?" ⁶ So he had his chariot made ready, and took his army with him; ⁷ he took six hundred picked chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them. ⁸ The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt and he pursued the Israelites, who were going out boldly. ⁹ The Egyptians pursued them, all Pharaoh's horses and chariots, his chariot drivers and his army; they overtook them camped by the sea, by Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon. ¹⁰ As Pharaoh drew near, the Israelites looked back, and there were the Egyptians advancing on them. In great fear the Israelites cried out to the LORD. ¹¹ They said to Moses, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, bringing us out of Egypt? ¹² Is this not the very thing we told you in Egypt, 'Let us alone and let us serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness." ¹³ But Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the LORD will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today you shall never see again.



We Wander in Each Other's Woods – Allen Kanfer

The gleaner gleaned: we are each other's field,
The watershed of one another's springs,
The shadow of each other's noonday hopes.

Look through the window of unspoken words
To see the contour of the land desired;
We wander daily in each other's woods.

We settle in the valley of the wave,
We rocket to the moon to map a crater;
And all the time the island sits abandoned.

Our bones so little space, so much of sun;
All day we hover in the narrow cave
Warming the night of mind to feel secure.

Look through my eyes, hear through my ears, as I
Through yours; no more make mouths at one
another:
The birds will sing in one another's bones.

America – Simon and Garfunkel

"Kathy, I'm lost," I said,
though I knew she was

Our Ancestors Wandered Like We Do

- ▶ **Deuteronomy 26:1-5** When you have come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, and you possess it, and settle in it, ² you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. ³ You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time, and say to him, "Today I declare to the LORD your God that I have come into the land that the LORD swore to our ancestors to give us." ⁴ When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the LORD your God, ⁵ you shall make this response before the LORD your God: "A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous."



Some Boys Are Born to Wander – Walter McDonald

From Michigan our son writes, How many elk?
How many big horn sheep? It's spring,
and soon they'll be gone above timberline,

climbing to tundra by summer. Some boys
are born to wander, my wife says, but rocky
slopes
with spruce and Douglas fir are home.

He tried the navy, the marines, but even the army
wouldn't take him, not with a foot like that.
Maybe it's in the genes. I think of wild-eyed years

till I was twenty, and cringe. I loved motorcycles,
too dumb to say no to our son—too many switchbacks
in mountains, too many icy spots in spring.

Doctors stitched back his scalp, hoisted him in traction
like a twisted frame. I sold the motorbike to a junkyard,
but half his foot was gone. Last month, he cashed

his paycheck at the Harley house, roared off
with nothing but a backpack, waving his headband,
leaning into a downhill curve and gone.

Paul Simon – Hearts and Bones



2 Kings: Self-inflicted Wandering

2 Kings 21:1-9 Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign; he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hephzibah. ² He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, following the abominable practices of the nations that the LORD drove out before the people of Israel. ³ For he rebuilt the high places that his father Hezekiah had destroyed; he erected altars for Baal, made a sacred pole, as King Ahab of Israel had done, worshiped all the host of heaven, and served them. ⁴ He built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, "In Jerusalem I will put my name." ⁵ He built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. ⁶ He made his son pass through fire; he practiced soothsaying and augury, and dealt with mediums and with wizards. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger.

⁷ The carved image of Asherah that he had made he set in the house of which the LORD said to David and to his son Solomon, "In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my name forever; ⁸ I will not cause the feet of Israel to wander any more out of the land that I gave to their ancestors, if only they will be careful to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that my servant Moses commanded them." ⁹ But they did not listen; Manasseh misled them to do more evil than the nations had done that the LORD destroyed before the people of Israel.

A Farewell – Langston Hughes

With gypsies and sailors,
Wanderers of the hills and seas,
I go to seek my fortune.
With pious folk and fair
I must have a parting.
But you will not miss me,—
You who live between the hills
And have never seen the seas.



Wandering Toward

Acts 17:22-28 Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, "Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. ²³ For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴ The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, ²⁵ nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things.

²⁶ From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, ²⁷ so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him-- though indeed he is not far from each one of us. ²⁸ For 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we too are his offspring.'

An Old Pew – Ed Madden

He wanted the God of the flannelgraph, God of the box of crayons, God of grape kool-aid and stale cookies, God of the paper tabernacle, God of the quiz bowl, God of the gold star, God of Aunt Maxine and Uncle Doug.

He got God of the tent meeting, the gospel revival, God of the cold immersion, God of the burning cross, God of *Must the Young Die Too?*, God of Brother Wyatt, God of the funeral flowers, God of the last verse, sung once again, for the lost, for the sinners, for the unsaved that remain out there—yes, *you know who you are*.

He wanted a song of the pitchpipe, song of the Rich Old King, song of the red and yellow black and white, song of clap your hands, song of stomp your feet, song of the happy shout, the song sung in rounds.

He heard the altar call song, the invitation song, the revival song, song about a fount of blood, song of the roll call and the last trumpet, song of being blind, song of sinking deep, song of the deep stain, song of the worm.

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Let there be a song for the man who doesn't sing.

Let there be a song for the man who walks away, song of the dark hand, song of the wandering feet, song of the unsung.

Let there be a god of the night bloom, god of the guestroom, god of the quince and winter wheat, god of last call and first guess, god of the frozen drink, god of the hairy chest, god of the road trip, god of the home-grown, god of the homeward and homely, god of the shared home, a repurposed god, god of the unsaid, god of the old church pew at the foot of the bed.

Graceland – Paul Simon



GRACELAND

Wandering Toward... Together

James 5:13-20 Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. ¹⁴ Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.

¹⁷ Elijah was a human being like us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. ¹⁸ Then he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the earth yielded its harvest. ¹⁹ My brothers and sisters, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and is brought back by another, ²⁰ you should know that whoever brings back a sinner from wandering will save the sinner's soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

God, God – Fleda Brown

We dressed for church. I had a white hat
and white gloves when I was fifteen, no joke.
You had to do that to show God you cared.

God's eyes were stained glass, and his voice
was pipe organ. He was immortal, invisible,
while my panty-hose itched and my atheist

father chewed his tongue and threatened to run
out the door but didn't for my mother's sake,
and she swallowed her fate, this marriage,

like a communion cracker, and my brain-
damaged brother lurched around the church
nursery, and my sweeter sister watched me

with huge brown eyes to see what I'd do next.
My God, why did I turn my eyes upward when
we were all there, then, in the flesh? I am so

sorry about God, sorry we fastened that word
to the sky. God's not even legal in Hebrew.
If you get the vowel caught between the two

consonants of your lips, it can carry you
dangerously up like a balloon over what you'd
give anything to be in the middle of, now.