

# Wings

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*"Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles."  
Isaiah 40:31*



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## If Only

One of the greatest hinderances to improving our lives is our tendency to dwell on what our lives *could have* been, instead of working to address what they really are.

"So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, 'If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness! Why has the Lord brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims?'" (Num. 14:1-3).

It had been over a year since the Israelites had crossed the Red Sea in their escape from Egypt. The journey had been long and hard, but now they stood on the border of Canaan, ready to go in and take possession of the Promised Land.

But there was a glitch in their plans. The spies who had been sent in to reconnoiter the land had brought back bad news. It was a good land, yes, but it was full of powerful enemies entrenched within strong fortresses. The Israelites were poorly armed nomads; what chance did they have against this kind of enemy? In their minds, they didn't have a prayer. So this entire enterprise had

been a fool's errand, a hopeless chase after an impossible dream.

The root problem, of course, was a lack of confidence in God. God knew what He was doing bringing these people out into this wilderness. He would provide whatever assistance they needed in overcoming the obstacles before them. But blinded by their unbelief, the people were convinced that all was lost. Indeed, it was more than mere disbelief; they charged God with leading them into a death trap. God was now their *enemy*.

So instead of stepping up to the challenge before them, the people reverted to an alternate—and far inferior—reality: "*If only* we had died in Egypt . . . *If only* we had died in this wilderness." Rather than arm themselves with God's promise and boldly tackle the task in front of them, they wished for another option, *any* option. Even death would have been better.

So God gave them their wish. He consigned them to forty years of aimless wandering in the wilderness, while that generation died off. Their "if only" fantasy proved to be far worse.

How many times in our lives do we respond to challenges just as the Israelites did? *If only* I had married someone else instead of my current spouse, I wouldn't be so miserable. *If only* my parents had better prepared me for adulthood, I would be so much happier now. So instead of working hard to mend my current marriage or improve my current lot in life, I throw up my hands and don't even try. I resign myself to a life of misery and despair *by my own choice*. And the decisions I make while in that negative frame of mind usually only make matters worse.

By projecting ourselves into these alternate realities that we create in our imaginations, we rob ourselves of the opportunity to change the real world that is right in front of us. Instead of whining about all the "if onlys" in our life, we need to lean on the promises of God and get to work addressing the issues that life deals us. Life is not certainly not perfect, and we will not always get what we want. But we don't need to add to the problems by assuming the worst and giving up.

– David King