

Counting On God To Fulfill His Promises

Message 03 of the series, "Numbers: Counting on God"

I. God promised Abraham his descendants would become a great nation and have a land of their own.

The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you." Genesis 12:1-3 (NLT)

Life Application: "The LORD always keeps his promises..." Psalm 145:13 (NLT)

Note: God sent Moses to lead Abraham's descendants to new homes in the promised land. "I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob... I have certainly seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cries of distress because of their harsh slave drivers. Yes, I am aware of their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the power of the Egyptians and lead them out of Egypt into their own fertile and spacious land. It is a land flowing with milk and honey—the land where the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites now live." Exodus 3:6-8 (NLT)

Note: Jesus will keep his promise to give us new homes in heaven. "In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am." John 14:2-3 (NIV)

II. Sadly, when the Israelites arrived at the border of the promised land they refused to go in.

Moses did as the LORD commanded him. He sent out twelve men, all tribal leaders of Israel, from their camp in the wilderness of Paran... "See what the land is like, and find out whether the people living there are strong or weak, few or many. See what kind of land they live in. Is it good or bad? Do their towns have walls, or are they unprotected like open camps? ...Do your best to bring back samples of the crops you see." So they went up and explored the land... they cut down a branch with a single cluster of grapes so large that it took two of them to carry it on a pole between them! They also brought back samples of the pomegranates and figs... After exploring the land for forty days, the men returned... This was their report to Moses: "We entered the land you sent us to explore, and it is indeed a bountiful country—a land flowing with milk and honey. Here is the kind of fruit it produces. But the people living there are powerful, and their towns are large and fortified. We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak!" ...But Caleb tried to quiet the people as they stood before Moses. "Let's go at once to take the land," he said. "We can certainly conquer it!" But the other men who had explored the land with him disagreed. "We can't go up against them! They are stronger than we are!" So they spread this bad report about the land among the Israelites: "The land we traveled through and explored will devour anyone who goes to live there. All the people we saw were huge... Next to them we felt like grasshoppers, and that's what they thought, too!" Then the whole community began weeping aloud, and they cried all night. Their voices rose in a great chorus of protest against Moses and Aaron. "If only we had died in Egypt, or even here in the wilderness!" they complained. "Why is the LORD taking us to this country only to have us die in battle? Our wives and our little ones will be carried off as plunder! Wouldn't it be better for us to return to Egypt?" Then they plotted among themselves, "Let's choose a new leader and go back to Egypt!" Then Moses and Aaron fell face down on the ground before the whole community of Israel. Two of the men who had explored the land, Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, tore their clothing. They said to all the people of Israel, "The land we traveled through and explored is a wonderful land! And if the LORD is pleased with us, he will bring us safely into that land and give it to us. It is a rich land flowing with milk and honey. Do not rebel against the LORD, and don't be afraid of the people of the land. They are only helpless prey to us! They have no protection, but the LORD is with us! Don't be afraid of them!" Numbers 13:1-14:9 (NLT)

Note: The exaggerated, negative report of the 10 spies spread fear throughout the camp.

Life Application: We must NOT believe everything we hear.

"Only simpletons believe everything they're told! The prudent carefully consider their steps."

Proverbs 14:15 NLT

Life Application: If we fear God we don't need to be afraid of anyone or anything else.

“God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. So we will not fear when earthquakes come and the mountains crumble into the sea.” Psalm 46:1-2 (NLT)

“God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.” 2 Timothy 1:7 (NLT)

“If God is for us, who can be against us?” Romans 8:31 (NIV)

Note: The Israelites rejected God’s plan NOT because the land wasn’t as good as God had promised but because they were willing to settle for slavery.

“God can do anything, you know—far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams!” Ephesians 3:20 (MSG)

III. The Israelites’ rebellion set in motion far-reaching, painful consequences.

Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “...I have heard the complaints the Israelites are making against me. Now tell them this: ‘As surely as I live, declares the LORD, I will do to you the very things I heard you say. You will all drop dead in this wilderness! Because you complained against me, every one of you who is twenty years old or older and was included in the registration will die. You will not enter and occupy the land I swore to give you. The only exceptions will be Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun. “‘You said your children would be carried off as plunder. Well, I will bring them safely into the land, and they will enjoy what you have despised. But as for you, you will drop dead in this wilderness. And your children will be like shepherds, wandering in the wilderness for forty years. In this way, they will pay for your faithlessness, until the last of you lies dead in the wilderness. “‘Because your men explored the land for forty days, you must wander in the wilderness for forty years—a year for each day, suffering the consequences of your sins. Then you will discover what it is like to have me for an enemy.’ I, the LORD, have spoken!” ...The ten men Moses had sent to explore the land—the ones who incited rebellion against the LORD with their bad report— were struck dead with a plague before the LORD... only Joshua and Caleb remained alive. When Moses reported the LORD’s words to all the Israelites, the people were filled with grief. Then they got up early the next morning and went to the top of the range of hills. “Let’s go,” they said. “We realize that we have sinned, but now we are ready to enter the land the LORD has promised us.” But Moses said, “Why are you now disobeying the LORD’s orders to return to the wilderness? It won’t work. Do not go up into the land now. You will only be crushed by your enemies because the LORD is not with you... But the people defiantly pushed ahead toward the hill country, even though neither Moses nor the Ark of the LORD’s Covenant left the camp. Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who lived in those hills came down and attacked them and chased them back as far as Hormah. Numbers 14:26-45 (NLT)

*****WARNING***** Sin always has consequences. “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.” Galatians 6:7 (NIV)

*****WARNING***** The consequences of our sinful choices impact others.

*****WARNING***** We must not be stubborn and allow our hearts to become hardened against God.

That is why the Holy Spirit says, “Today when you hear his voice, don’t harden your hearts as Israel did when they rebelled, when they tested me in the wilderness. There your ancestors tested and tried my patience, even though they saw my miracles for forty years. So I was angry with them, and I said, ‘Their hearts always turn away from me. They refuse to do what I tell them.’ So in my anger I took an oath: ‘They will never enter my place of rest.’ Be careful then, dear brothers and sisters. Make sure that your own hearts are not evil and unbelieving, turning you away from the living God. You must warn each other every day, while it is still ‘today,’ so that none of you will be deceived by sin and hardened against God.” Hebrews 3:7-13 (NLT)

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Connect Group Discussion Questions:

1. Have you ever been promised something only to be let down? How did you feel about the person who promised you, and how did that impact your ongoing relationship?
2. Has there ever been a time when you doubted God? What were the circumstances?
3. Read John 10:10. Do you believe that part of the Good News is that Christ wants to give us an abundant, full, rich and satisfying life? Why or why not?

4. Read Proverbs 14:15. How does this passage look in our society today? What should we do in considering our steps?
5. Read 2 Timothy 1:7. The fear of the unknown is not unusual, but is not from God living within us. What would you say to someone who is afraid to follow God's plan for their life, when you know it is a lack of trust in God's promises?
6. Read Hebrews 11:1-3 and 24-29. Name some times you walked by faith and God was faithful to His promises. How difficult is it to walk by faith in today's struggles knowing those times you just listed? Read Hebrews 11:40, do you trust that God has something better in mind for you?
7. Read Hebrews 10:23-25. What are some ways we can help each other to trust God?

Quotations to consider:

"Fear of the LORD is the foundation of wisdom. Knowledge of the Holy One results in good judgment." Solomon in Proverbs 9:10 (NLT)

"So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is...fear itself — nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance. In every dark hour of our national life a leadership of frankness and of vigor has met with that understanding and support of the people themselves which is essential to victory. And I am convinced that you will again give that support to leadership in these critical days." Franklin D. Roosevelt in his first inaugural address
"F-E-A-R' stands for 'False Evidence Appearing Real'." Unknown

"F-E-A-R' has two meanings: 'Forget Everything And Run' or 'Face Everything And Rise'. The choice is yours." Unknown

"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." God in Isaiah 41:10 (NIV)