

The One Way You Learn to Trust God

“[He] fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might prove you, to do good for you in the end” (Deut. 8:16).

Moses is reviewing with the people how God’s care has been evident as they wandered through the desert toward the promise. Read it for yourself.

“You must remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you, and to prove you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. He humbled you and let you suffer hunger, and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man does not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord. Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your feet swell these forty years. You must also consider in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, so the Lord your God disciplines you.

“Therefore you must keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him. For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs that flow out of valleys and hills, a land of wheat, barley, vines, fig trees, and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey, a land where you may eat bread without scarcity, in which you will not lack anything, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you may dig copper.

When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you. Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping

His commandments, and His judgments, and His statutes, which I am commanding you today. Otherwise, when you have eaten and are full and have built and occupied good houses, and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold multiply, and all that you have multiplies, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery, who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, where there were fiery serpents and scorpions and drought, where there was no water, who brought forth for you water out of the rock of flint, who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might prove you, to do good for you in the end. Otherwise, you may say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.' But you must remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to get wealth, so that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is today" (Deut. 8:2-18).

The people had some trying times. Desert years are no picnic. In those years, though big in population, they were small in power. No land. No home. No houses. No fields of their own. Like the patriarchs before them, they were living in tents and wandering. They wandered in circles with the Promised Land just out of reach.

Yet, when they looked back, they could see the hand of God ever present. In the moment, they found plenty to grumble about as they journeyed. They did not always feel the presence and power of God as they wandered. But in hindsight His provision was clear.

Did they think they were wandering? Hindsight revealed that God was leading them. Did they think they were deprived because they lived with a day's provision at a time? Hindsight revealed that daily provision meant they were rich and well supplied.

Did they feel that they had to wear the same old clothes for years and years? Hindsight revealed that their clothes stayed new, so really they had new clothes every day. Did they resent the long, arduous walk through “that great and terrible wilderness, where there were fiery serpents and scorpions and drought”? Yet, hindsight reveals that with all that walking, their feet never swelled. They might have been carried, as far as the condition of their feet goes.

In those years, for the most part, they repeated the same obedience day after day with no hint that it really mattered. Manna, quail, cloud, fire. Worship, offer sacrifices, pack, unpack. Set up camp, take down camp. Over and over. No change on the horizon. No evidence of the promised land anywhere in sight.

Obedience by obedience, they followed the Lord. Small acts of faithfulness every day for 40 years. As Moses recounts it and refreshes their memories, he doesn't soft soap the hard edges. It was tough. It was vast and terrible. He reminds them how it felt because they are about to enter the promised land and leave the thirsty and waterless land behind. The abundant living in the promised land has been prefaced by the long walk in the dry desert. Why?

During their extended training in the desert, they learned by experience to trust the hand of God. For example, He fed them with manna day by day. If God had not sent the day's manna, they would have starved in the wilderness. Every morning required confidence in God's provision. See how Moses warns them to remember the desert days when they get into the promised land?

Moses says that all this training and desert traveling was “to do good for you in the end.” Have you ever known anyone who achieved all they ever dreamed of, then lost it all through their own actions and choices? Moses tells the people that not

only is God about to release the fullness of the promise into their lives, but He has prepared their hearts to live large in the abundance of His provision.

Small Change

In some areas of your life, you have moved into the promised land and are living large. Look around and remember on purpose that God is the provider and sustainer. In some areas of your life, you are on a desert walk. When you feel the desert's heat, step back mentally and look for how God's provision is evident.

Today, find one thing that you will thank God for instead of complaining about.

Pray: "Do Your work, Refiner's fire, that in the end it may go well for me."

Adapted from The Power of Small: Think Small to Live Large by Jennifer Kennedy-Dean.