

Set Your Mind on What Matters Most

Have you ever wondered if something is holding you back from experiencing the promises of God in your life? I remember a time when I was hearing about all the promises of God but never actually experiencing them.

I heard about peace, but I didn't have any. I heard about joy, but I was unhappy all the time. I could see God's promises in His Word and I believed them, but something was missing. As I spent time studying God's Word, I came to realize that the root of my problem was found in the wrong mindsets I was living with.

The story of the Israelites is a good example of what a difference our mindset can make. In Exodus 13, we read about how God called them out of Egypt to possess the promised land. But what was supposed to be an 11-day journey ended up being a 40-year journey through the wilderness—all because they didn't know how to think right (Deut. 1).

One wrong mindset the Israelites had was, "Please make everything easy for me because I can't take it when things are too hard." When things got hard for them and they had to fight their enemies, instead of turning to God, they grumbled and complained about their situation. They thought their enemies were the problem, but it was really their thinking.

So instead of moving forward and experiencing the good things God had planned for them, He had to take them the long, hard way through the wilderness in order to prepare them to possess the promised land.

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Like the Israelites, sometimes we're not ready for all that God has planned for us, so we spend a little time in the wilderness, growing up and learning how to trust Him. I know what this is like. There was a time when I had an "it's just too hard" attitude and mindset about things I needed to face.

For example, when God spoke to my heart that I needed to completely forgive people who had hurt me, it seemed impossible. But realizing that He didn't expect me to do it in my own strength gave me the courage to take a step of faith and choose to forgive, trusting that God would change my heart and set me free from the misery of bitterness and unforgiveness.

It wasn't easy, but the peace and joy I now have is so much better than living with the bitterness and resentment of unforgiveness. And I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing today if I hadn't obeyed God in this area of my life.

God sometimes has to bring us through hardship to test us, humble us and see if we will keep His commandments in the wilderness. Deuteronomy 8:2 (NIV) says, "Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands."

God wants to help us learn how to obey Him in the wilderness because if we don't keep His commandments when life is hard, then we won't keep them when everything is going our way. He wants us to be strong enough and mature enough to keep moving forward in His plan for our lives.

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Instead of having the mindset that says, "It's just too hard!" the truth is that with God's help, you can do whatever you need to do in life. Philippians 4:13 (NIV) says, "I can do all this through him who gives me strength."

When the enemy starts to tell you that your circumstances are impossible, you'll never make it and you should quit, you can be confident knowing this promise from God: I can do whatever I need to do through Christ who gives me strength. You can look to God for the strength you need to deal with whatever life throws at you.

Once we adopt a right mindset to replace a wrong one, we must be determined to keep our thoughts headed in that direction. Colossians 3:2 (AMPC) says to "set your minds *and* keep them set on what is above (the higher things), not on the things that are on the earth."

You do that by focusing on the promises of God in His Word, choosing to trust what He says more than what your circumstances look like, what others say or how you feel. The truth is God loves you, He has wonderful plans for your life and He wants you to experience all He has for you.

Instead of focusing on the hard things in your life, think about all God has helped you through and all He has in store for you. Set your mind on Him and follow His lead through the wilderness to your promised land.

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