



Promised Land

A narrative about choosing to trust what God says is good, right, and true.

THE BIBLE

Numbers 13-14

Prepare for the Story

ICEBREAKER

- What was the last unkept promise someone made to you? How did it feel? Did you believe they were going to keep their promise, or did you doubt it?

Rewind the Story

Can someone highlight what has happened in the story so far ...

- Joseph – Dreams and Deliverance
- Moses – God rescues and redeems
- Liberation – God's people leave Egypt
- New Commands – Moses & the 10 Commandments

Hear the Story

Scene One: Exploring the Promised Land

After God delivered His people from Egypt and established what it meant to live in His ways through the laws and commands, it was time for His people to come to a new land, a promised land, a place they could call home.

The Lord said to Moses, "Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites. From each tribe, send one of its leaders."

When Moses sent them to explore Canaan, he said, "Go up through the desert and on into the hill country. See what the land is like and whether the people who live there are strong or weak, few or many. What kind of land do they live in? Is it good or bad? What kind of towns do they live in? Are they un-walled or fortified? How is the soil? Is it fertile or poor? Are there trees in it or not? Do your best to bring back some of the fruit of the land."

So, they went up and explored the land. They spent forty days inspecting every detail of it.

At the end of forty days, they came back to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community in the Desert of Paran. There they reported to them and to the whole assembly what they had witnessed and showed them some fruit from the land.

They gave Moses this account: "We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are huge and well-fortified. We even saw men who looked like giants there."

Then Caleb, one of the men who scouted the land, silenced the people before Moses and said, "We should go up and take the land God has promised us; we can certainly do it." But the men who had gone up with him said, "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are." So, they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land. They said, "The land we explored devours those who live in it. All the people we saw were giants, and we seemed like grasshoppers compared to them."

Scene Two: Fear Grips the People

That night everyone in the community raised their voices and wept out loud. All of the Israelites complained and grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, "If only we had died in Egypt! Or in the wilderness! Why is the LORD bringing us to this land only to have us die by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?"

And they said to each other, "We should choose a new leader who will take us back to Egypt."

Then Moses and Aaron fell face down in front of the whole assembly. Joshua and Caleb, who were among those who had explored the land, tore their clothes and said, *"The Land we passed through and explored is extremely good. If the LORD is pleased with us, He will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and He will give it to us. Please do not rebel against the LORD."*

Do not be afraid of the people of the land because we will devour them. Their protection is gone. The LORD is with us. Do not be afraid."

The assembly didn't appreciate their comments, and they wanted to kill Joshua and Caleb. But then, the glory of the Lord appeared to all the Israelites.

Scene Three: Moses Reasons with God

The LORD said to Moses, *"How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all my signs I have performed for them? I will strike them down with a plague and destroy them, and then I will make you into a nation greater and stronger than they."*

Moses replied, *"But then the Egyptians will hear about it! By your power, you delivered your people out from among them. And they will tell everyone in this land about it. They have already heard about how you are with these people, how you meet with us face to face, how you lead us with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night."*

If you put these people to death all at one time, the nations who have heard these things about you will say, 'The LORD was not able to get his people into the land he promised them, so He killed them in the wilderness.'

Now LORD, display your strength and love, forgive these people, just as you have pardoned them from the time, they left Egypt until now."

The LORD replied, "I have forgiven them because you have asked. But as surely as I live and as surely as my glory fills the whole earth, not a single one of those who saw my glory and the signs I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times – not one of them will ever see the land that I have promised. No one who has treated me with contempt will ever see it."

But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it. Turn back tomorrow and set out toward the desert along the route to the Red Sea."

Scene Four: Consequences of Disobedience

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron: *"How long will this wicked community grumble against me? I have heard their complaints.*

So, tell them, 'As surely as I am God, I will do to you the very thing I heard you say. In this wilderness, your bodies will fall – every one of you, twenty years old or more, who was counted in the census and who has grumbled against me. Not one of you will enter the land I swore to make your home except Caleb and Joshua."

As for your children that you said would be taken as plunder, I will bring them into the land that you have rejected. They will enjoy it, but your bodies will fall in the wilderness. Your children will be shepherds here for forty years, suffering for your unfaithfulness, one year for each of the forty days you explored the land.

You will suffer for your sins and know what is like to have Me against you. Because the whole community has banded together against Me, they will die in the wilderness."

Retell the Story

- Where does God lead His people after getting them out of Egypt?
- Who goes into the Promised Land?
- What were they supposed to do?
- What was the report?
- How did the people respond?
- How did God respond to the people's response?
- What was Moses' argument to God?
- What was the punishment that God placed on the people?

Discuss the Story

- What is your first reaction to this story? How did this story make you feel?

- What stood out to you from this story? What did you notice for the first time?
- What from this story made you wonder?
- Why do you think the Israelites responded the way they did to the report from the spies? How might you have responded?
- What keeps the people from claiming God's promise?
- In the story, God is ready to start over with ONLY Moses. Do you think God was serious?
- What does Moses use as his main argument for God not to give up on His people?
- Do you think the punishment God gives the people is fair? If you chose the punishment what would it have been?
- Did you hear anything that reminded you of *other* stories?
- From this story, what did you notice about humans?

- From this story, what do you notice about God's character or His qualities?

Join the Story

1) TRUSTING GOD INSTEAD OF OTHERS

Caleb and Joshua trusted God and went against what the rest of the spies said. How can you demonstrate on a day-to-day basis the same kind of spirit by trusting God rather than what others are saying? Give some practical examples.

2) REPRESENTING GOD

This story seems to put a heavy emphasis on how God views His reputation. Since you represent God, how might He feel about how you are currently representing Him? What could you do to improve His reputation by the way you live?

3) BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU ASK FOR

In the story, the people complain and say that it would have been better for them to die in the wilderness. And because of their rebellion, God gives them what they ask for. Imagine what life would be like if God gave us the things we wanted and desired. If God did this, would it be good for us? Explain your answer. What issue do you think is at the heart of what happened between God and His people here?

Pray

God,

I know that truth is what You say about a thing. You alone know what is good and right and true. I confess that too often, we listen to the voices of others instead of Your voice. Give us strength to resist the temptation to define truth in terms of our feelings, a majority vote, or practical results. Illuminate our path so that we may walk in Your truth and trust Your voice above all others. Amen!