



Lessons from Moses

When God Has Already Given the Direction

In the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, Moses spoke to all the children of Israel and recounted their journey. Biblical estimates place their number between 1.5 and 3 million people. Moses reminded them that God had instructed them to go in and possess the land which He had promised to their fathers (Deuteronomy 1:8).

Moses reminded them of the Lord's command concerning the mountain of the Amorites:

"And I said unto you, ye are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which the Lord our God doth give unto us. Behold, the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged"
(Deuteronomy 1:20-21).

The leaders suggested that Moses send spies to search out the land and determine which direction and which cities would be best to attack—a reconnaissance mission.

Numbers 13, also written by Moses, states that the Lord directed them to send the spies. Why would Moses seem to share entirely different accounts?

Bible scholars have suggested that Moses, as a younger leader, saw sending spies as a direct command from God. But the older, wiser Moses, reflecting in Deuteronomy 1, offered a more complete perspective: the original idea to send spies and determine how to possess the land came from the leaders. God gave permission, but it was not His original plan.

Moses confessed that he had gone along with it:



“And the saying pleased me well...” (Deuteronomy 1:23).

Life Reflection

What would've happened if they had simply obeyed God rather than trying to make His plan better or more strategic?

How many times have we tried to add our own plans to something God has explicitly directed us to do?

When the Lord called us to our mission field in Maine, we heard His direction to go, but doors weren't opening as to how we would come or exactly where we should go. I remember a few times coming up with creative ideas about how the details could work out.

Thankfully, my husband lovingly reminded me that God would work out the details in His time. God has a plan, and we must wait for it. We need to listen to His voice and follow His words without trying to add to it.

When God gives us clear direction, our responsibility is to trust and obey—not to improve His plan.

A Good Report Requires a Response

Even though the spies brought back a good report— “it is a good land!” (Deuteronomy 1:25), the people didn't act on that report.

Moses spent the next several chapters recounting how the people rebelled and murmured. They complained in their homes, spread negativity, and allowed fear to grow because ten of the spies declared that the people were greater and taller, the cities were fortified, and they had seen giants (verse 28).

Moses tried to increase their faith by encouraging them:

“Dread not, neither be afraid of them. The Lord, your God, which goeth before you, he shall fight for you...” Deuteronomy 1:29-30).

Yet his retelling of the account further indicted them with the stinging truth that they did not believe the Lord.

They eventually confessed their sin and declared that they would go and fight. But when they put on their weapons of war and were ready to go up the hill, the Lord directed them not to go up or fight. He would not be with them if they did.



Still, they marched presumptuously up the hill. The Amorites, who lived in that mountain, defeated them.

Life Reflection

What is the difference between faith-filled obedience and presumptuous action?

Have you ever tried to act on something after the right opportunity had passed because you were determined to make it happen?

There is a right time to move forward with God, and there is a time to wait. Faith is not simply doing something we believe God wants us to do. Faith also means trusting God's timing.

God Is Faithful in the Wilderness

Remembering the wilderness wanderings, Moses recounted the consequences that lasted forty years. But even during those years, God continued to bless and provide for His people.

*"For the Lord, thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy hand: He knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness these forty years the Lord thy God hath been with thee; thou hast lacked nothing."
(Deuteronomy 2:7).*

Even when they rebelled and failed to trust the Lord or His leader, Moses, God still blessed them and provided everything they needed.

Life Reflection

What a powerful reminder of God's faithfulness!

We may experience consequences for our choices, but God does not cease to be faithful. He sees us in our wilderness seasons. He knows our journey, and He is able to provide what we need along the way.

Remember:

The wilderness did not mean God had abandoned them. God was with them every step of the way.



God's Timing is Perfect

The Lord gave specific directions not to bother the Moabites or the Ammonites because that land would not be part of their possession. But He gave the Israelites permission to pursue and possess the land of the Amorites, which years before had not been the case.

God's timing is perfect.

When we trust Him and obey His voice, He will tell us when and where to pursue the promises He has given us. Even if we feel a calling to a certain ministry or have a passion from God in a particular area, we need to seek His timing before pursuing it.

Notice what happened when it was God's timing:

"This day, will I begin to put the dread of thee and the fear of thee upon the nations that are under the whole heaven..." (Deuteronomy 2:25).

| When God said it was time, He went before them.

Life Application

Is there something you believe God has called you to do, but the timing doesn't seem right?

Instead of forcing a door open, ask God to help you wait for His timing.

God's promise does not require our manipulation. His timing does not require our assistance.

When God Fights for Us

Moses recalled Israel's victory over King Sihon and Og when God promised to give those lands to the Israelites.

No matter how fortified the cities were or how high the walls, the Israelites won because God fought for them.

We do not need to fear when God has promised something! No mountain is too high for God. No army is too strong for God. When God is fighting for us, we can trust Him with the outcome.



Faith asks, “How great is my God?”

Fear asks, “How great is the enemy?”



Listen to What God Has Already Taught You

One impressive fact about this long, five-chapter account is that Moses spoke to a mass of people about events they had experienced. Perhaps some were children at the time, but many were firsthand witnesses of the victories and defeats, the times they did and did not trust God, and the consequences and rewards.

We can imagine that they listened respectfully and intently to Moses’ words.

We can apply this practically by listening respectfully and intently to preachers, teachers, and elders in our lives—even when they recount things we already know and have heard many times.

If we give honor, the Lord will honor us in return. Perhaps a deeper understanding of that sermon or Bible study will be revealed to us in that moment.

Moses told the people:

*“But watch out! Be careful never to forget what you yourself have seen.
Do not let these memories escape from your mind as long as you live!
And be sure to pass them on to your children and grandchildren.”*
(Deuteronomy 4:9, NLT)

We can apply each of these lessons to our lives:

- Watch out. Be careful.
- Never forget what you have seen.
- Keep the memories alive.
- Pass them on to your children and grandchildren.

Life Reflection

What has God done in your life that you must never forget?

What testimony of God’s faithfulness should you intentionally pass on to the next generation?



There Is Always a Way Back to God

Toward the end of his discourse, Moses shared that the Lord told him he would die before entering the Promised Land. Yet he charged the Israelites to possess that good land and to carefully remember the covenant of the Lord.

He reminded them:

“The Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God” (Deuteronomy 4:24).

After warning them about what would happen if they did not remain faithful to the one true and living God, Moses gave them this powerful proclamation:

“But if from thence, thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him, if thou seek Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul. When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the Lord thy God, and shall be obedient unto His voice; (For the Lord, thy God is a merciful God;) He will not forsake, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which He swear unto them” (Deuteronomy 4:29-31).

Life Reflection

What a beautiful promise!

Even after all their rebellion and failure, God made a way for them to return. If they would seek Him with all their heart and soul, they would find Him.

God’s mercy gives us a way back when we have failed.

The Danger of Unbelief

Looking into the New Testament, Hebrews 3 summarizes that the children of Israel could not enter the Promised Land because of unbelief.

We can miss the promises God has for us if we allow unbelief to control our decisions.

Hebrews 4:11-13, a beloved and powerful passage, fits into this discussion of unbelief. The Lord knows our thoughts and the intentions of our hearts. We must ensure we have trust and faith at the core of our being.



“So let us do our best to enter that rest. But if we disobey God, as the people of Israel did, we will fall.”

“For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. Nothing in all of creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before His eyes, and He is the one to whom we are accountable.”

(Hebrews 4:11-13, NLT)

Life Reflection

Are there areas of your life where fear has replaced faith?

Are there areas where you know what God has said, but you are still trying to figure out another way?

Are you trusting God’s direction or trying to strategize your own solution?

Don’t Strategize—Obey

If the children of Israel could get sidetracked and distracted, so can we.

The most important decisions we can make in our entire lives are to trust and obey God.

Don’t try to strategize. Just obey.

Seek the Lord and ask Him to show you areas where you might lack trust and areas where you can trust Him more.

Allow Him to search your heart and reveal whether there is any part of you that you are holding back—essentially saying “no” to God.

Is there anything God has instructed you to do, but you are trying to figure it out your own way? Are you trying to manage or manipulate the outcome?

Surrender and submit all these shortcomings to God. He will give you strength and guidance.



Life Application

Take a few moments to prayerfully consider these questions:

- 1. Am I fully trusting God's plan, or am I trying to improve it with my own strategy?***
- 2. Is there an area where God is asking me to wait for His timing?***
- 3. Has fear or unbelief influenced a decision I need to make?***
- 4. What has God done for me that I must never forget?***
- 5. What testimony of God's faithfulness can I pass on to the next generation?***
- 6. Is there anything God has asked me to do that I am holding back from doing?***

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