

“Promises and Participation”

Joshua Introduction

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Discussion Questions

1. Can you think of any great or precious promises from God?
2. What do you think of when we talk about entering in and going deeper with the Lord?
3. What does it look like for you to engage and participate with God?
4. Why do you think Joshua and Caleb believed God?
5. What keeps most people you know from really participating in God’s plan?

Teaching Notes

Joshua is a historical book where God gives His people the land He promised them...

...and Joshua is the one who leads them into this land.

The Old Testament is written for our learning and example.

We can learn from the stories because even though the context changes people are people and God doesn’t change.

God loves people, and made people for a relationship with Him.

...And because of His love...

...God makes promises to bless people within that relationship.

1. God’s promises are good...

...and God makes good on His promises.

And because God loves people and desires relationship...

God’s promises often include God’s people participating to receive God’s promises.

There are many things that we all receive and enjoy...

...this is called **common grace**...but...

...there are specific things we must participate in to enjoy.

You run the race to enjoy the t shirt and the medal.

Message Title: Promises and Participation.

This participation is part of what builds our relationship.

When we do things together, we build relationship.

2 Peter 1:3-4 as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature...

2 Peter 1:5-7 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, 7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.

God has given us many great and precious promises...

...that enable us to be partakers in the divine nature...
...but our part is to add to our faith with all diligence...
...virtue, knowledge, self control, perseverance,
...godliness, kindness, and love.

2. God has given promises for a good life...

...but we must participate to enjoy that life.

And that is the problem for many people...

...they don't want to participate...they just want to take.

God has made a way, but we must take the way.

God has paid the price, but we must claim the prize.

Many people want to use God just to get what they want.

They reject a relationship with the God who loves them...

...because they love themselves...

...but they want the blessings of God.

They are like the kid on the block who hears their neighbor has a pool and he just shows up to swim but not to be a friend.

God desires friendship, and friendship is reciprocal.

- God has promised a land, but we must enter into the land.
- God has promised a victory, but we must engage in the battle.
- God has promised a life, but we must obey Him to enjoy it.

And this is what I believe God is calling us to...

The Call of Joshua

1. **Enter**...take steps to go deeper with God.
2. **Engage**...take actions to participate with God.
3. **Enjoy**...receive the results of a richer life with and for God.

So let's trace back this promise in the Biblical narrative.

It all begins with Abraham, a man called the friend of God

In Genesis 12, God called Abraham and made him a promise.

12:2 I will make you a great nation; I will bless you

And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing.

3 I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

The real blessing this nation would produce was the Messiah...

...and this nation is where He would live, die and rise again.

God restates this promise for many years...

...to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

However, the only thing they actually "owned" in the land...

...was a cave Abraham bought to bury his wife.

But...this cave became a step of faith...

...This place of death and bones...

...became a place of life and an anchor of strength.

The patriarchs asked to be buried here because they believed God would keep His word and give them this land.

And even in the places that are dead...

...we can trust that God can bring life.

Even in the places that seem like dry bones...

...God can raise an army.

Then there was a great famine...

...Jacob, Abraham's grandson, and his family fled to Egypt.

It looks like God was not going to fulfill His promise...

...But...God makes good on His good promises.

They entered Egypt as a family of about 70.

They lived there for about 400 years...

...and they grew to millions.

God's promise was being fulfilled...

...they were multiplied into a great nation.

But...the Egyptians began to fear and enslave the Jews.

Again it seems God's promise won't be fulfilled.

The Jews began to cry out for deliverance.
And God heard their cry.

And God raised up a deliverer named Moses.

With plagues and power, God set His people free.
They were finally going to the land God promised.

Moses led them thru the Red Sea on dry land
Moses gave them the Law of God from the hand of God.
God gave them His presence and provision.
...A cloud by day, a pillar of fire by night, food every morning.

**But throughout this time, the Jews had problems...
...in their relationship with God.**

They longed for Egypt and bemoaned their difficulties.

**They wanted God's promises...
...but they didn't want to participate in God's plan.**

**Despite God's power and provision...
...the Jews would not fully follow the Lord.**

A trip of less than two weeks...
...turned into a journey that lasted nearly a year...
...and eventually a death march of 40 years!

Their lack of faith, grumbling, and continual longings for Egypt...
...led them on a cycle of failure and a lack of moving forward.

- God would direct them,
- The people would disobey Him,
- God would discipline them,
- The people would apologize and return to Him

Later they would start it all over again...
...This is the wilderness wanderings.

This is where we often find ourselves...

3. When we want what God has but don't do what God says...
...we make very little forward progress.

When they finally arrived at the Jordan River after nearly a year...
...they sent 12 spies into the land.

All 12 spies agreed that the land was beautiful...

...it was "Flowing with milk and honey".

...But there was a problem...there were giants in the land.

The land that God gave them to possess was actually already possessed by other people.

These big, bad people would have to be engaged to get the land
...and the spies were afraid.

(Just so we understand...)

The Promised Land called Canaan, belonged to the Lord...

...it was a gift to Israel, but it was a judgment on Canaan.

Canaan was full of wickedness...

...God had given them centuries to change, but they would not.

God is merciful, but He is also just...

...And when His mercy has run out, His judgment begins

God was bringing judgment on the land of Canaan.
And He was giving it to the Israelites.

So the 12 spies saw that the land was good...

...but they also saw the giants were big.

They all thought the Land was great, but 10 spies said we can't.
We are too weak, we are not able, our future will be grim.

They were looking at themselves...

...instead of looking to the Lord.

And this is often what gets us off track as well!

4. We see that God is good and think His promises sound good

...but we are afraid to do our part.

I am afraid I am too weak, I am not able, my future will be grim.

The 10 spies convinced the people not to cross the Jordan...

...not to receive what God had promised...

...not to obey what God directed.

And the scary things is...the Lord said, fine.

He turned them around and sent them to wander the wilderness for 40 years until that entire generation was dead.

But it wasn't just this one rejection, this one lapse of faith...

Numbers 14:22-23

because all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice, 23 they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it.

Over and over they tested Him and rejected Him.

It wasn't just not entering, it was a continual refusal to follow.
It wasn't just one rejection, it was ten.

They were afraid. They were unsure. They were unwilling...

...What they feared actually came upon all of them.

...And they ended up dead in the wilderness.

After 40 years of wandering...

...all but two from that generation was dead.

And here is something we don't often realize.

5. Our lack of faith and unwillingness to engage impacts our entire community.

When we don't enter and engage, our families, our church, and our community won't enjoy what God desires to do.

The 10 spies gave a fearful report and the people followed their habit of unbelief and fear and lack of forward progress.

But, there were 2 that believed God was able.

They knew God would give them victory.

And Joshua was one of those 2 spies.

This is what Joshua said to those afraid to enter and engage...

Numbers 14:7b "The land we passed through to spy out *is* an exceedingly good land. 8 If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, 'a land which flows with milk and honey.' 9 Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land, for they *are* our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the Lord *is* with us. Do not fear them."

God is calling us to enter, engage, and enjoy.

We cannot enjoy all that God has for us unless we are willing to enter and engage with Him.

**And what kept them back centuries ago...
...can keep us back today as well.**

They were afraid, they were distracted, they wanted comfort.
They had created unhealthy and unhelpful habits of unbelief.

They were afraid to trust Him, unwilling to sacrifice, uncomfortable with giving up our own way.

But that is exactly what Jesus said needed to happen.

Matthew 16:24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me.

For those who do follow Him there is peace and pleasure, and purpose and power and ultimately eternal life.

God has given us many great and precious promises...

...but we must participate...

We must enter and engage to enjoy them for ourselves and our communities...

...and we can know that God makes good on His promises.