

Leaving the Wilderness Behind: How to Take—And Keep—the Promises of God

By Kameel Majdali

Have you ever noticed how some, if not many, who attend churches live lifestyles that do not mirror the promises of the Bible? People may struggle with smoking, life-controlling habits, a foul temper, runaway finances, dysfunctional family life, and more. Sometimes, people's problems become more aggravated after they allegedly come to Christ, than before.

This is not the way it should be! Jesus said that He came to this planet to give you "abundant life" (John 10:10). God has made many superlative promises in His Word and every single one of them is "yes" and "amen" in Christ (II Corinthians 1:20). Furthermore, the Christian faith is ordained by God to lead its adherents into a life of total victory: not just victory over life's daily hassles, but also over the "big ticket" items of sin, sickness, death, hell, and the devil. The basis for our victory is the atoning death and glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because He has overcome all these formidable adversaries (John 16:33), you can too.

Why, then, is there this disconnect between the Promises of God and the daily life of believers? More importantly, what can you do about?

The problem described above is nothing new. Israel had six hundred thousand men of military age when Moses led them out of Egypt; add some wives and children and you could have up to two million people. But of the entire generation who departed from Egypt with Moses, only two arrived in the Promised Land: Joshua and Caleb (read Numbers Chapters 13 and 14 for the full story).

Friend, how do you make sure that, like them, you are one in a million?

Identifying the Problem

In order to solve the problem, we need to need to identify it first. According to I Corinthians 10:1-11, Israel collectively had a common experience in God: they were baptized into Moses in the cloud and sea. They ate the same spiritual meat and drank the same spiritual drink. Yet most of them never made it out of the wilderness. The journey from Egypt to Canaan only took less than four weeks by foot, yet it last forty years. Why?

The passage identifies five problems.

1. **Lust:** This common human experience has become a multi-billion dollar industry in the media and internet. It is not just limited to “worldly people,” for even Christians struggle with these areas. One cannot overcome lust in their own strength. The only remedies are the Cross of Christ, the Blood of the Lamb, hiding God’s Word in your heart, and the power of the Spirit.
2. **Idolatry:** Worshipping the creation rather than the Creator. In western circles idolatry is often manifested through materialism and the worship of prestigious possessions, status, or money.
3. **Fornication:** This can mean any sexual activity outside of marriage. While common, it is becoming more and more condoned and encouraged by the same western world that once frowned on it. Yet God has not changed His mind on the issue: fornicators will be judged (Hebrews 13:4; Revelation 22: 15). Sexual purity is God-honoring and protects ourselves and our families, present and future.
4. **Tempting God:** Israel did this ten times despite God’s gracious care.
5. **Murmuring:** This is the native language of the wilderness. Complaining, gossip, backbiting, rumor, mean-spirited criticism, will bar you from the Promised Land. The ten spies gave an evil report of the Land of Promise and died from a plague shortly thereafter. Antidote? Praise God and bless others.

The Caleb Corps

Caleb represents an elite group of people who go where others cannot. Do you want to run with people just like him? Do you want to enjoy the promises of God? Then join the “Caleb Corps.”

The entry requirements are disarmingly simple.

First, Caleb entered in because he had “another spirit” (Numbers 14:24). What does this mean? Numbers 32:12 say that he and Joshua “wholly followed the Lord.” Wilderness dwellers are double-minded, half-hearted, distracted, and follow God part time. They are like the serial “multi-tasker” who does many things simultaneously and all of the outcomes are poor. The Caleb Corps, like Mary of Bethany, choose the “one needful thing” (Luke 10:42) to the exclusion of all else. That is why they can run the race and win.

Second, Caleb did not possess a “religious spirit” but a spirit of faith. The Middle East, where Caleb lived, exports religion even more than it does oil. If you want to learn to be “religious,” then look no further. Yet religion will leave you stranded in the wilderness! Why? Because it is the human fleshly attempt to reach God.

The Bible way of reaching God is simple: Faith. Faith helps you draw close to God and obtain the prize. Faith is easily cultivated in the developing world—because God is all they have and all they need—whereas in the westernized world we look to our money, possessions, and connections to do for us what only

God can. The Caleb Corps focuses on God through faith and they make miraculous progress.

Flesh and the Wilderness have their own language, but so do Faith and the Spirit. Let's contrast the two:

Flesh says: "We saw the Promised Land, **but** "

Faith says: "We saw the Promised Land, **and** ..."

Flesh says: "The giants are big"

Faith says: "God is bigger"

Flesh says: "The walls are high"

Faith says: "Heaven is higher"

Flesh says: "We can't"

Faith says: "Through God, we **can** do all things"

Flesh says: "Let's give up and go back to the leeks and garlic of Egypt"

Faith says: "Let us press on to Canaan."

Remember the faith is the **muscle** which propels you to the prize!

Finally, the Caleb Corps practices the principal of a good report. That is what Caleb did when he appeared before Moses after spying the land of Canaan for forty days. Proverbs 15:30 says a good report makes the bones healthy. Philippians 4:8 exhorts us to meditate on the good report so that the God of peace will be with us (verse 9).

While any wilderness dweller can focus on the negative, the person who is wholly-heartedly following God with the spirit of faith will see the great things God is doing: salvations, healings, reconciliation, revivals. After all, what the flesh and the devil do are limited, but what God does lasts forever.

Friend, make up your mind **today** that you are going to join the Caleb Corps. It is your passport and visa into the Promised Land!

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