



AMPLIFY CHRIST

VOLUME 7

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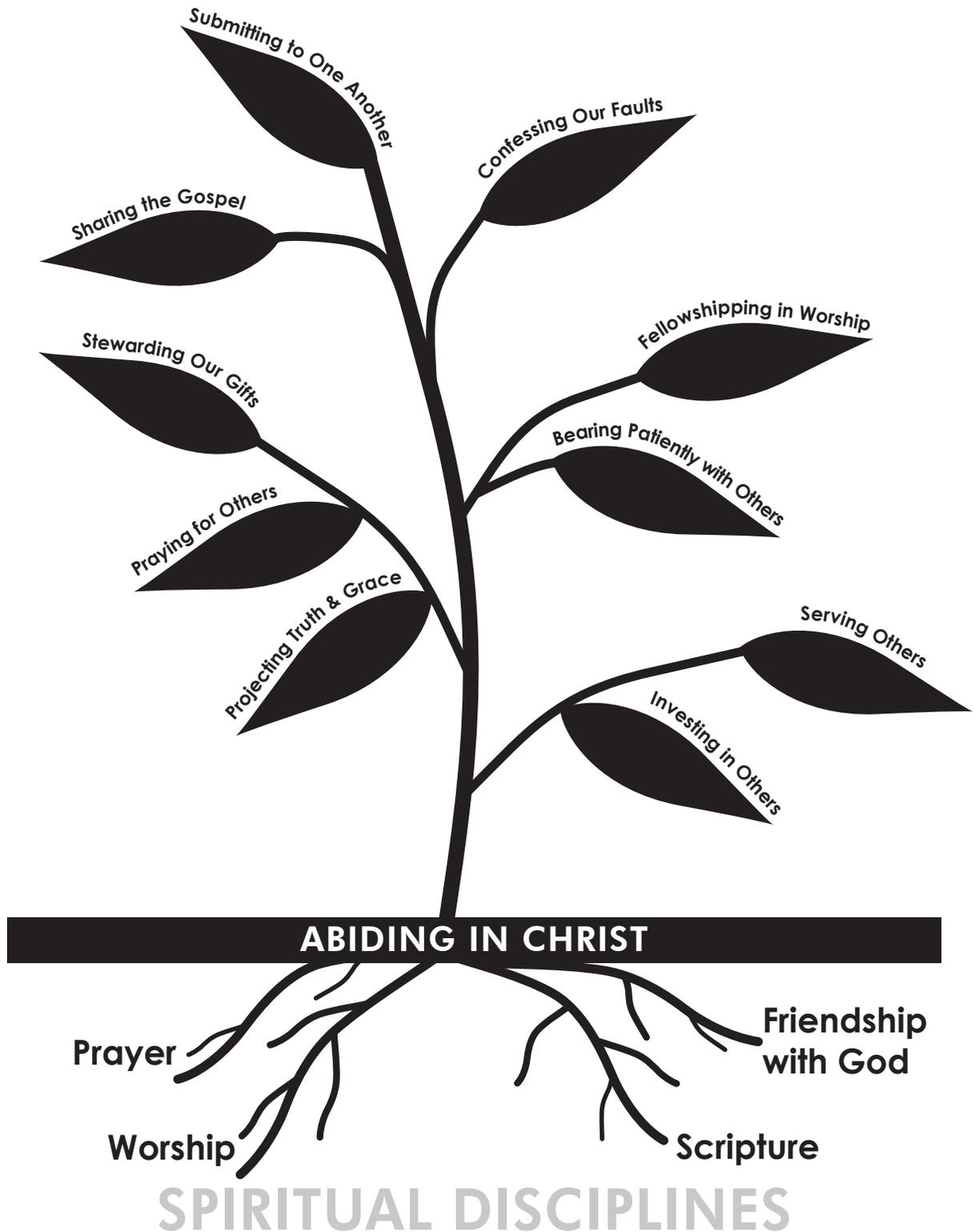
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OUR MISSION

LifeStone exists to empower **DISCIPLES** to make **DISCIPLES**. We seek to fulfill our mission by publishing Bible study and **DISCIPLESHIP** curriculum as well as offering real-life application training. We equip **DISCIPLES** as they journey through the various stages of life. As **DISCIPLES** grow in Christ, we continue to partner with them and their churches through training and other resources to empower **DISCIPLES** to make **DISCIPLES**.

DISCIPLE MAKING



FROM OUR PRESIDENT AND EDITOR IN CHIEF

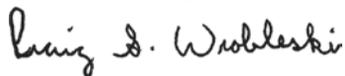
Dear Almighty Father,

Thank You for Your unconditional grace and mercy bestowed on LifeStone Ministries for 120 years. We are humbled by Your Son, the Master-Servant, who became the Living Stone rejected by men. You love us and build us up to be spiritual storehouses. We pray for Your strength and courage to be the living stones in our culture. We pray for perseverance to sacrifice ourselves to live wholly in subjection to Jesus Christ. May we glorify You in all our words and deeds as we strive to grow Your flock to spiritual maturity. We pray for the filling of the Holy Spirit as we engage Your flock.

Lord, we pray that this exposition of Your Word meets 2 Timothy 3:16. May the lessons contained in this labor of love emulate profitable teaching, graceful correction, and righteous training. We pray for all those who will be receiving instruction from these lessons. We pray for the teachers to approach this inspirational work with humility and meekness. May Your holy character and love for us leap from the pages and bring us all to our knees in thanksgiving.

Our glorious King, may we build the confidence and convictions of Christian leaders in our homes, churches, and missional fields to fulfill the Great Commission. Let us be renewed with strength and peace to empower Christian disciples to make disciples.

Under truth and grace,



Craig S. Wrobleski, M. Div., D. Min.
President & CEO
LifeStone Ministries

Dear Christ follower,

Our mission at LifeStone Ministries is to empower Christians to make disciples. We desire to partner with churches in this discipleship process. We have created a discipleship tool to help churches fulfill their calling. This new publication—*Amplify Christ*, as we call it—features a simple yet comprehensive five-step Bible study method that focuses on robust Bible learning and biblical application in a world that is often hostile to Christ's teaching.

Amplify Christ is not just another Bible curriculum. Discipleship requires a significant level of commitment from both teacher and student. Our discipleship tool likewise requires serious commitment. Leaders will need to inspire a group of people—maybe as few as one or two—to commit to spiritual formation and discipleship by investing their time and being willing to share their successes and failures. Group members can expect to read the lesson each week for an hour. Above all, group members will need to be honest with and encourage one another every week.

We have published this new discipleship tool and now prayerfully entrust it to you. We pray with all our hearts that the Holy Spirit will use it mightily to transform your lives and the lives of your group members, churches, and communities.

Sincerely,



James M. Leonard, Ph.D.
Editor in Chief
LifeStone Ministries

HOW TO USE AMPLIFY CHRIST

Christian discipleship is a matter of following the Master's footprints. The first disciples did just that—they followed Jesus from place to place, shared the same meals, slept at the same campsites, celebrated the same special occasions, and met the same people. In all these experiences, Jesus taught them verbally and through His actions. The disciples saw Jesus react to different people in different situations. They examined His work habits, observed His demeanor, and scrutinized how He practiced what He preached.

Even though we moderns can't follow Jesus physically, we are nonetheless called to be like Him in word and deed, conformed to His image. This is our calling, and we dare not ignore it. The only way we can know how to follow in Jesus' footprints is to learn about Him in the Bible. In the New Testament, eyewitnesses and other early disciples detail Jesus' life, ministry, and teaching. Similarly, the Old Testament helps us understand God's intentions for us through stories, worship materials, prophetic messages, and the Mosaic Law. God has given us His precious Scriptures to know how we should live. For this reason, disciples should have an intense thirst and hunger for God's Word.

Modern-day disciples, however, sometimes get discouraged about reading the Bible because of its antiquity and foreign culture. Sometimes they get so enthralled by the Bible's antiquity and alien culture that they fail to apply its teaching. Modern-day disciples may segment a familiar verse from its context and fail to understand its intended meaning, and sometimes they fail to integrate Scripture into theology.

For all these reasons, our new discipleship tool emphasizes five key elements for Scripture study. We hope *Amplify Christ* helps you become more like Christ.

THE METHOD

FIVE KEY ELEMENTS

- 1. Amplify the Background.** Because the Bible was written long ago in a culture different from ours, we investigate rigorously to bridge the gap separating us moderns from the biblical writers. We present to our readers those backgrounds that help them understand the biblical passage.
- 2. Amplify the Text.** One of the legacy features of our publications is the exposition of the text. We focus on the original author's intended message to his original audience, addressing the question, What was the author conveying to them back then? We hone in on the verse-by-verse details to explain the passage's big picture.
- 3. Amplify the Context.** Many Christians see Scripture as piecemeal. We want disciples to see how individual stories and texts are connected to the whole biblical story. We read the text as sentences within a paragraph and paragraphs within a larger text unit. This is basic exegesis. But our readers should also understand how the entirety of a book fits into the whole of Scripture and the larger biblical history. We write to show how each text interconnects to form a majestic and awe-inspiring picture of God's plan.
- 4. Amplify the Faith.** Christians need to allow Scripture to inform their thinking and basic Christian doctrine. We believe that God inspired His Word and that we should accept it as the rule of our lives as we seek to follow the Spirit's guidance. To this end, we spell out how the biblical text informs Bible doctrines and how we should think.
- 5. Amplify Your Life.** Our goal is not to create a bunch of smart, brainiac Christians. Yes, we want Christians to be competent readers of the Bible, but this is not enough. We do everything we can to help disciples apply the text to their lives so that they grow in Christ's likeness. We think deeply about the text, explicitly seeking ways to articulate the principles of the ancient text to us today and to the specific individual. We are most urgent about the Christian formation of Christ followers.

TIMELINE

Unknown	Adam and Eve
Unknown	Noah
Unknown	Tower of Babel
2166-1991 B.C.	Life of Abraham
1916-1806 B.C.	Life of Joseph
1876-1446 B.C.	Israelites in Egypt
1446 B.C.	Exodus
1446 B.C.	Law at Sinai
1446-1406 B.C.	Wilderness wandering
1406-1399 B.C.	Joshua leads the conquest
1360-1075 B.C.	Judges Period
1051-931 B.C.	United monarchy
1011-971 B.C.	David reigns
959 B.C.	Solomon builds the temple
931-586 B.C.	Divided monarchy
722 B.C.	Assyria conquers Israel
605 B.C.	Babylon conquers Assyria
586 B.C.	Babylon conquers Judah/temple destroyed
539 B.C.	Persia conquers Babylon
538 B.C.	Exiles return to Judah
515 B.C.	Temple rebuilt
458 B.C.	Ezra returns to Israel from Babylon
445 B.C.	Nehemiah rebuilds the wall
331 B.C.	Greece conquers Persia
175-164 B.C.	Seleucid rule over Israel by Antiochus IV Epiphanes
63 B.C.	Rome captures Jerusalem
7 to 4 B.C.	Birth of Jesus
A.D. 26-30	Jesus' ministry
A.D. 30	Jesus' death and resurrection
A.D. 45-56	Paul's missionary journeys
A.D. 70	Rome destroys the temple

IMPORTANT DATES

God's Punishment and Mercy in the Wilderness

Written by Tom Greene

READ AND TAKE NOTE

Read Numbers 14:11-24. Look for:

- how the Lord views unbelief (vss. 11-12, 22-23)
- how Moses prays (vss. 13-19)

FIND IT

Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy
Joshua

Who: God
Moses
Israel
the surrounding nations

What: God showing mercy to His people

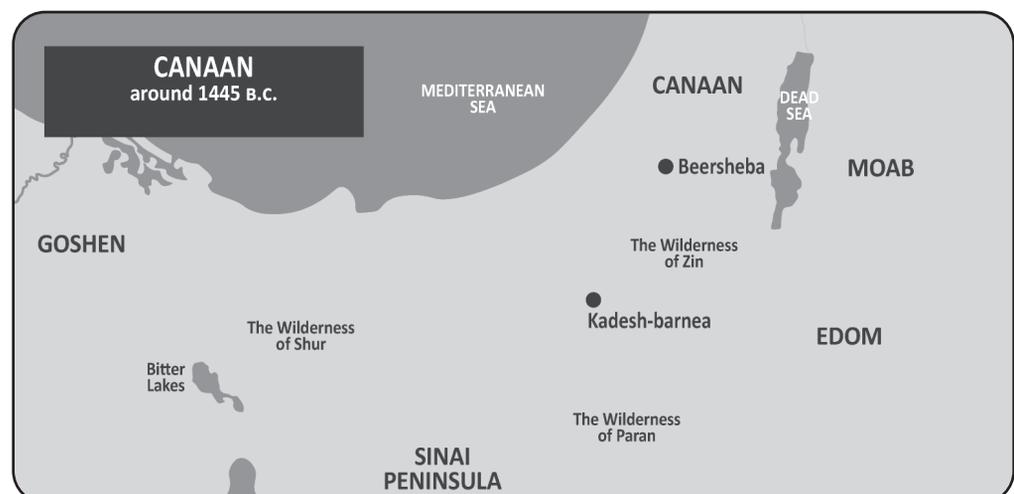
When: around 1445 B.C.

Where: Kadesh in the wilderness of Paran

Why: because Moses pleaded with God

How: by not disinheriting His people

Spiritual Formation: Even when things seem hopeless, disciples can trust the Lord.





AMPLIFY THE BACKGROUND

THE SPIES' JOURNEY

The spies initially departed from the wilderness of Paran (Numbers 13:3) and traveled from the wilderness of Zin to Rehob (vs. 21). They went through the Negeb (vs. 22) and brought back grapes from the valley of Eschol (vs. 23).

After surveying the land, they concluded that it was a land flowing with milk and honey, as God had promised (Numbers 13:27; Exodus 3:8). This poetically emphasized the good, fertile nature of the land. Sadly, the spies did not stop there in their description and compared the inhabitants of the land to some mysterious figures from Genesis.

GIANTS

The spies said that the inhabitants of Canaan were sons of Anak and sons of the Nephilim (Numbers 13:28, 33). Anak is also mentioned in Deuteronomy (1:28; 9:2) and Joshua (11:21-22). Other people are also compared to the Anakim to emphasize their height (Deuteronomy 2:10-11). We do not know much about the Anakim, but they were large.

The title “Nephilim” will likely draw much greater interest from many. Though they are only mentioned somewhat briefly in Genesis 6:1-4, they have been the subject of no small debate. This is not due to the word “Nephilim” ap-

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pearing in Ezekiel 32:27 (where it is often translated as “fallen”). Rather, it is due to the extra-biblical testimony of the book of Enoch.

Although neither Christians nor Jews consider the book of Enoch to be an inspired part of the canon, Jude 1:14-15 quotes Enoch and says that Enoch prophesied. Therefore, we must acknowledge that there is at least *some* truth in the book of Enoch. However, there are also clear contradictions with Scripture in Enoch, such as Enoch 10:2, where God supposedly commanded Enoch to talk to Noah. However, according to Genesis, Enoch was taken up into heaven *before Noah was born* (5:21-29). Sincere Christians disagree on how much of Enoch is true, ranging from just the section referred to by Jude to large sections of the book. This is worth emphasizing because of how striking the description of the Nephilim is in the book of Enoch.

In the book of Enoch, the Nephilim are described as the children of rebellious angels who lusted after and impregnated human women. In Enoch, the Nephilim are part angel, part human, and are described as massive giants. Indeed, their existence is described as God’s motivation for the Flood (Enoch 6–10). *If* this is what the Israelite spies had in mind when they said that there were Nephilim in the land (Numbers 13:33), it could have been intended literally or hyperbolically. At a minimum, they intended to convey that a very large, strong people lived there. At most, they intended to say that part-human, evil giants lived there. Either way, they feared and respected their foes’ might more than they feared the Lord.

AMPLIFY THE TEXT

After the negative report of ten of the spies in Numbers 13, Israel despaired of entering the Promised Land. They grumbled against Moses and Aaron and contemplated choosing a leader to take them back to Egypt. They even decided to stone Caleb and Joshua, the two spies who had urged going into the land! At that point, the Lord intervened (14:1-10).

GOD’S OFFER (Numbers 14:11-12)

After delivering the people from being enslaved in Egypt through the ten plagues and providing for them with manna in the wilderness, it should have been obvious that God could miraculously drive out their enemies. Sadly, it was not. The Lord asked Moses how long the people would despise Him and not believe in Him. While it is common to read pleas of “how long” directed to the Lord by His weary people throughout the Bible (Psalm 13:1; Habakkuk 1:2), it is striking that the Lord asked that of Moses. The implication is clear that the Lord had given His people far more than enough evidence to trust Him to deliver them. The plagues on Egypt, the daily provision of manna, and the pillar of smoke guiding them should have kindled belief in them. That it did not was incredible.

Then the Lord made a very surprising offer. He told Moses that He would destroy the people with a plague and make Moses a nation mightier than them. What are we to make of this? The language is similar to that of Genesis 12, where God promised to make Abraham a mighty nation. Surely Moses knew that. Was God genuinely offering to destroy His people, or was this merely

a test of Moses? We must start by recognizing that God never lies and always keeps His promises (Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2). God would not break His promise to Abraham. Moses was a descendant of Abraham. If God destroyed Israel and created a new nation from Moses, would not Abraham's descendants technically still become a mighty nation? Seemingly yes, and so God would not have violated His promise to Abraham. Therefore, though some take this offer as merely a test, it seems reasonable to consider that it may have been a truly genuine offer.

Equally striking is that God did not seem to ask Moses' opinion on the matter but simply stated what He planned to do. He did not ask Moses whether he wanted this but simply declared that He would do it. That made Moses' following prayer much more urgent. From Moses' perspective, the situation was dire!

THOUGHTS

Moses' plea in Numbers 14 was not the first time Moses appealed to God on behalf of Israel. In Exodus 32:9-10 and 33:3, the Lord made declarations against Israel, but after Moses pleaded with the Lord, He relented both times.

MOSES' PLEA (Numbers 14:13-19)

Moses responded with a twofold appeal to the Lord. First, Moses reasoned that the Lord's name would be dishonored if He struck down His people. Second, Moses appealed to promises that the Lord had made previously and asked Him to spare His people.

God's Name Would Be Dishonored (Numbers 14:13-16). Moses first appealed to God's character and to His glory. He argued that the nations would hear of how the Israelites had died in the wilderness and question God's ability to bring His people into the land. After all, the Lord had delivered His people out of Egypt, and they would surely be keeping an eye on their former subjects. They might tell the Canaanites or other people. News might spread about Israel. If the Lord slew His people after repeatedly commanding Pharaoh to let His people go, what would the Egyptians think? What would the nations of the Promised Land think?

THOUGHTS

The ten plagues demonstrated God's superiority over the Egyptian gods.

It was a common belief in the ancient Near East that when one nation defeated another, their gods (or God) displayed mastery over the other nations' gods. During the exodus, the Lord Himself said that He was judging the gods of Egypt (Exodus 12:12). His ability to deliver His people out of Egypt and His systematic demonstration of power via the ten plagues demonstrated that He was more powerful than the Egyptian gods.

Moses speculated that the nations would assume the Lord was not strong enough to lead His people into the Promised Land and therefore gave up on

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them and killed them in the wilderness. Perhaps the nations would conclude that their gods were stronger than the Lord, and this would reinforce Canaanite worship of Baal, Asherah, and other gods. At a minimum, it certainly would not cause the nations to fear the Lord or turn to Him. Moses therefore first presented an argument *against* killing the people of Israel, saying that the Lord would be disrespected.

God Promised to Go with Them (Numbers 14:17-19). Next, Moses referred to what God had told him on the mountaintop after the golden calf incident (Exodus 33). The Lord had commanded them to continue to the Promised Land but declared He would not go with them. However, Moses had appealed to the Lord, and He had relented and promised to go with them. Then the Lord revealed His character to Moses and promised that He would drive out the inhabitants of the land (34:1-11). Moses quoted back to the Lord the description He had earlier provided of Himself and by implication reminded Him of the promise He had made to bring them into the land.

Though Moses' appeal to God's promise to bring them into the land was implicit, his appeal to God's promise regarding His *character* was not. He appealed to the Lord to be who He had revealed Himself to be. How could the Lord strike down all His people and start over after He had declared Himself to be slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and forgiving? Moses was not impertinent in the way that he questioned the Lord. He did not question God's character. Rather, he humbly asked God to keep His promises and be who He said He was. We too can pray boldly without praying in a disrespectful way.

It is worth repeating that the Lord had not asked Moses' opinion or for advice. He had not told Moses that He would do whatever Moses asked of Him. He had simply declared that He would judge the people. Moses' appeal was therefore a desperate one but not a hopeless one. Previously, in Exodus 33, the Lord had declared that He would not go up with the Israelites. But when Moses appealed, the Lord relented. Moses now appealed to God to relent once again and be merciful to His people as He had in the past.

THE LORD'S RESPONSE (Numbers 14:20-24)

As Moses requested, the Lord pardoned the people and did not destroy them with a plague. But none of the people who had seen the glory of the Lord and all the plagues poured out on Egypt, and yet repeatedly rebelled, would see the Promised Land. They would not die of a plague, but they would not experience the full blessing that awaited God's people. Those twenty years old and older would die in the wilderness (vs. 29). They had seen God's power displayed but remained obstinate in unbelief. They had said it would have been better to die in Egypt or in the wilderness, and so die in the wilderness they would (vss. 2, 28-30). They had mourned that their children would be prey, but the Lord would safely bring those children into the Promised Land. The ten spies who gave an unfavorable report of the land *did* die of the plague, seemingly quickly (vss. 36-38).

God's pardon does not always mean freedom from consequences. As Christians, we are forgiven of our sins, and we are free from God's final judgment. However, sometimes when we sin, there are natural consequences. We may experience damaged relationships if we lie or gossip. We may lose our jobs or be arrested if we break the law. God may forgive our sins without delivering us from the consequences of our actions.

The case of the Israelites seems a bit more complicated, for the Israelites dying in the wilderness may not seem to be a natural consequence. We feel tension between the declaration of pardon and the punishment here. If we look at the preceding verses, we may find some explanation. In verse 2, the people said it would have been better to die in Egypt or in the wilderness, and the Lord obliged them. They did not enter because of their unbelief (Hebrews 3:19). Sometimes God shows mercy and restrains us from what we sinfully want. But sometimes He gives us over to our sins (Romans 1:24, 26, 28). Israel said it would be better to die in the wilderness, and God let them have it their own way.

Numbers 14:21 contains a comment that could be easily missed. The Lord affirmed that these things would take place as surely as He lives and as surely as the earth will be filled with His glory. Given that this statement is being used to affirm the certainty of something else, it is clear that the Lord considers this an absolute certainty. The whole earth *will* be filled with His glory!

In Habakkuk 2:12-14, God repeated this promise and said that the earth would be filled with the knowledge of His glory as the waters cover the sea. There is no part of the sea that is *not* water! Likewise, the glory of the Lord will completely fill the entire earth. Not an inch of this planet will be unchanged.

THOUGHTS

It is an absolute certainty that the whole earth will be filled with the Lord's glory!

After affirming that the people would not enter the land, the Lord listed two exceptions. Because he had a different attitude, one of obedience to God, Caleb would be allowed to enter the land. Joshua, Moses' personal assistant, was the other spy who agreed with Caleb, and he also would be allowed to enter the land, as the Lord promised a few verses later (Numbers 14:30). Caleb is highlighted first, likely because he was the one who seemed to take the lead in urging the people to enter the Promised Land (13:30). Joshua agreed with him, but Caleb seems to have been the one who boldly contradicted the ten faithless spies. When everyone else was declaring doom and gloom, Caleb was willing to stand apart and stand alone, urging trust in the Lord. Although it is a cliché, we should not follow the crowd but follow the Lord, no matter the consequences. It is better to stand against an entire nation than it is to stand against the Lord.

AMPLIFY THE CONTEXT

PLACE IN THE BIBLE

In Numbers 13, the people of Israel sent spies into Canaan, the land that God had promised to give them. Each tribe supplied one of their chiefs to be a spy—these men were leaders in Israel. The spies spent forty days observing the inhabitants and gathering some of the produce of the land before returning to give their report.

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They declared that the land was good, as evidenced by the fact that a single cluster of grapes was carried on a pole by two of them (vs. 23). They confirmed that it was flowing with milk and honey, as the Lord had promised (vs. 27). That all seemed like good news! However, they quickly added that the inhabitants of the land were tall, strong, and dwelt in fortified cities. They were descendants of the Nephilim (cf. Genesis 6:4). The people of the land were giants who made the spies feel like grasshoppers, and they looked down on the spies as though they were grasshoppers. Only Caleb and Joshua urged the people to take the land; the other ten spies insisted that the Canaanites were too strong.

That was all very intimidating, but there was a small catch—it was not all true. Most of it was true—the land was good, there were walled cities, and we have no reason to believe that the people were not as large as the spies said. But we have good reason to think the inhabitants of the land did not look on the Israelites as grasshoppers they could easily crush. Decades later, Rahab told a different pair of Israelite spies that the Canaanites had heard of how the Lord had delivered Israel from Egypt and were in dread of them (Joshua 2:9-11). The Canaanites seemed to have a higher regard for the Lord's might than Israel did!

PLACE IN THE STORY OF SALVATION

The account of Moses before God was not the only time that God declared a coming disaster but relented when someone interceded. He did this many times, including in 1 Chronicles 21, after David's sin brought a plague on the people of Israel. He also did that in Amos 7, when Amos beseeched God not to bring the disasters the Lord threatened on Israel. He had already done this twice earlier with Moses, in Exodus 32:9-10 and 33:3! In all those cases, when someone interceded for God's people, God averted His wrath.

These Old Testament intercessors may be foreshadows of Christ. Moses declared that a prophet like him (Christ) would come (Deuteronomy 18:15-19). Jesus is the ultimate, promised King from the line of David (2 Samuel 7:16-17; Jeremiah 30:9). Amos is less obvious, but as a prophet, he spoke for the Lord. Jesus is the superior Word from God (John 1:1; Hebrews 1:2). Therefore, perhaps in a more limited sense, even Amos was a foreshadow of Christ.

PLACE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The author of Hebrews referred to this story when he urged his audience not to be like the children of Israel, who saw the Lord's works and put Him to the test (Hebrews 3:7-11). Instead, we ought to avoid their example and exhort one another to believe. The people failed to enter the Promised Land because of their unbelief, so we ought to take care and hold on to Christ (3:12—4:3).

AMPLIFY THE FAITH

DOES GOD CHANGE HIS MIND?

This story presents this clear question: does God change His mind? Many Christians believe in the immutability, or unchanging, nature of God. The Bible insists that the Lord does not change (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8). Yet here, He seems to

change His plans because of Moses. How are we to understand this? First Samuel 15 says both that the Lord has regret and that He is not like a man, so He does not have regrets (vss. 11, 29). If a single chapter says things that appear at first glance to be contradictions, these differences are likely conveying something nuanced.

First, we ought to recognize that the Lord never changes His mind due to new information or a change in His character. In 1 Samuel 8, the Lord foretold the fact that Saul would be a bad king, which must inform our understanding of His regret in chapter 15. He did not have regret because He made a mistake or due to new information. After all, He had warned about the kind of king Saul would be ahead of time! Rather, God is grieved whenever His people act wickedly (cf. Genesis 6:5-6).

A crucial passage for correctly understanding how God relents is Jeremiah 18:5-11. God promised that if at any time He declares a coming judgment and a nation repents, He will relent. Likewise, if a nation turns away from Him to evil, He will no longer bless that nation. God's disposition is fixed, and He always acts consistently. If we abandon Him and turn to evil or if we repent and turn to Him, His actions toward us will change. But that is not because His character has changed. We see this confirmed in Jeremiah 26:3, when God holds out the possibility of His people repenting so that He might relent. He would not relent until they repented, but He would relent if they repented. Therefore, He commanded Jeremiah to speak to the people. God's relenting was not about a change in His desires, but a change in their behavior.

The Lord's character does not change, but His relationship with us changes as we change. Whenever people repent, He will relent of judgment. The prophet Jonah was so certain of this principle that he avoided preaching to Nineveh—he knew that if they repented, God would spare them. But he wanted to see them judged (Jonah 4:2)!

THOUGHTS

The Lord's character does not change, but He changes His responses when people change their ways.

THE GLORY OF THE LORD

The Lord declared that His judgment against Israel was as certain as the fact that His glory would fill the earth. His glory filling the earth is a complete certainty! Isaiah declared that the world would be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea, as did Habakkuk (Isaiah 11:9; Habakkuk 2:14). The author of Psalm 72 prayed that the king would rule the whole earth and that it would be filled with the Lord's glory (vss. 8, 19). Daniel foresaw that the Lord's kingdom would fill the whole earth (Daniel 2:35, 44; 7:13-14). Jesus compared the kingdom of God to a mustard seed that grows to be a mighty tree and to leaven that causes an entire loaf to rise (Luke 13:18-21). At the finale of history, we will see a new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 21:1-3). The heavenly city will come down to earth, and all creation will be renewed. Our ultimate goal is to see the earth completely remade and restored to its original paradisaal state. Then the whole earth will truly be full of the Lord's glory!

AMPLIFY YOUR LIFE

FAITH OVER FEAR

There are times in our lives when we face seemingly impossible obstacles. The Israelite spies feared that it would be impossible to overcome the inhabitants of the Promised Land, who were mightier than they were. Only Caleb and Joshua held by faith to the promises the Lord had made and urged obedience. What do we do in hopeless situations? Do we despair, or do we turn to the Lord in prayer?

Even more striking, when the Lord told Moses that He would destroy the people of Israel, He did not seem to hold out the possibility of repentance. Although the Lord seemed to be intent on destroying the people, Moses reminded God of His prior revelation of who He is. There may be times in our lives when we think the Lord has abandoned us. There may be times when we feel compelled to pray for things despite an uncertainty if God will answer. It is one thing to pray that the Lord's kingdom would come and that He would fill the earth with His glory—we know He will do that, after all. It is another to pray that the Lord would save a specific person we love, especially when it seems as if they are past hope of redemption. Yet Moses provides us with an example of tenaciously holding on in prayer, even when things may seem hopeless.

The people of the Bible were not superheroes or figures with magical powers. They were just like us, yet their prayers accomplished mighty things (cf. James 5:13-18). Likewise, God answers prayer in mighty ways today. How often do we worry about something, listen to advice on the matter, make plans on how to address it, and fail to pray? Prayer should be our first response rather than our last resort. Is your life defined by fear or faith?

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

Like Moses, we should pray for those around us who do not pray for themselves. Whether they are unbelievers who have never known the Lord or believers who are starting to wander, our prayers can dramatically bless the lives of others. Instead of merely lamenting things that happen around us, we should pray. Instead of merely shaking our head sadly at how people have fallen, we should bring them to the Lord. Instead of our first instinct being to strategize for hours about how we will change the world, we should quickly go to our knees and afterwards plan. Because the Lord answers prayer and nothing is too hard for Him, let us pray boldly for large, audacious things. If God's people pray, He will change the world in ways we cannot imagine.

While God sometimes does not answer our prayers the way we would like, sometimes we give up too quickly. When God told Moses that He would destroy the people, He did not seem to hold out any hope. Yet Moses did not throw up his hands, sigh at Israel's inevitable doom, and move on. He prayed earnestly for what could have seemed like a lost cause, for He had seen God respond to prayer in such situations before. Jesus taught that we ought to always pray and not give up (Luke 18:1-8). Are there people or situations you have given up on and stopped praying for? Bring them to the Lord!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Can you think of a time in your life when it was hard to trust the Lord? What happened?

2. Have you ever seen God answer a seemingly hopeless prayer?

3. Do you consider a lack of faith to be “despising” God? Why or why not?

4. What should we do when God’s Word is clear, but it is hard to trust Him?

5. Think of people in your life who need prayer. What can you do to ensure that you pray consistently for others?

6. What current obstacles in your life make it hard to trust God? What can you do to strengthen your faith in these areas and follow Him?
