

Explore the Bible: God Expects

December 29, 2019

- *The Explore the Bible lesson for Jan. 12 focuses on Numbers 32:20-32.*

One day, my 4-year-old daughter came home from the daycare she attends and told me, "You are my best friend, Daddy."

After I responded, "Yes, I am," she asked me, "Are you going to be my best friend forever?"

"Yes," I replied.

She looked me in the eyes and extended her little hand towards me and said, "Let's make a pinky promise."

Her comment caught me off guard. I wasn't expecting that.

As a little kid growing up in Mexico, hearing the term pinky promise was new to me. The way we made promises was to make the sign of the cross with our thumb and index finger, we then proceeded to recite our promise and kiss the cross (our fingers). We didn't do pinky promises or crossing our hearts.

This story is about keeping our promises. God expects us to keep our word. We don't have to make a pinky promise, cross our heart, kiss our fingers, or swear an oath. All we need to say is simply "yes" or "no" (Matthew 5:33-37).

Warning Issued (Numbers 32:20-24)

When the people of Reuben and the people of Gad saw that the land Jazer and the land of Gilead were suitable for their livestock, they made a request to Moses in the presence of the priest and to the chiefs of the congregation. The only problem was that this suitable place was located outside of the Promised Land.

Moses was shocked by this request. (Note his reaction in Numbers 32: 6-15.) He argued that it wasn't fair for them to settle while their brothers went to war. He reminded them, also, about the time he sent the spies to look over the land and how they discouraged the Israelites when they came back. This discouragement was punished by God by not letting anyone of that generation get into the Promised Land except Caleb and Joshua.

So, when Reuben and Gad approached Moses with this request, he warned them about this petition: If you turn away from following God, he will turn away from his people, and you will be the cause of their destruction (v.15). This was a serious warning. Imagine the other tribes looking at each other thinking about their parents' journey in the wilderness. Imagine experiencing the same journey, this time, because your brothers decided to disobey God.

In this passage, Moses reaffirmed the people by commanding them to do everything they have said. He invites them to trust in God for the victory. But, Moses said, if you fail to do all this, your sin will find you out. In other words, you will suffer for your sin. Reuben and Gad knew the repercussion of disobeying God.

Agreement Given (Numbers 32:25-27)

In this section, Reuben, Gad and Moses agreed to the request. They were

aware of the seriousness of breaking an oath. Children, wives, flocks and herd will remain in Gilead, while every man who is armed for battle will cross over to fight before the Lord. This section demonstrates that obeying and being faithful to God comes with great risk. Everything was at stake—families, possessions, time invested, etc. The Israelites knew God was a loving God but also a God faithful to his judgment.

In ancient times, people were cautious about sacred oaths and vows. In Numbers 30:1-2, God instructed Moses about this particular issue. Reuben and Gad understood the magnitude of this oath.

Accountability Established (Numbers 32:28-32)

The expectations were set before the people. Moses gathered the Reubenites and Gadites before the community leaders and informed them about their commitment.

This section deals with accountability. Moses wanted the community leaders to hold the two tribes accountable for their vows. As mentioned before, it was a severe vow. The Promised Land was at risk.

From this section, we can learn important lessons:

1. We need to be careful about making commitments. Although we live in the 21st century, making a commitment continues to be a serious issue. It becomes a matter of trust. Keeping a commitment raises the level of trust, but failing to do so generates distrust.
2. In order to increase the chances of keeping a promise or commitment, we need to hold ourselves accountable. This is why accountability groups have become so popular. Just look around, and you will see it for yourself. Holding your brothers and sisters in

Christ accountable should be highly practiced in churches. Who are you holding accountable in your church? Who is holding you accountable?

God expects us to keep our promise. God expects us to help and hold each other accountable. God kept his promises about the Messiah, and he will remain faithful to the end.

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